

Returning to school checklist

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Resources



Chris Hartley is a Psychologist with the Career & Advanced Learning Centre. The centre provides counselling to help those in school or thinking about going to school.

Going back to school can be an exciting opportunity, especially if you do your homework before returning. People who successfully complete an educational program gain valuable new skills and knowledge which will help them become more employable. Also, they can make new life-long friendships and gain self confidence.

People who are thinking about going back to school may have questions and self-doubt, particularly if they have been out of school for some time. Making a plan for returning to school and getting help to address any barriers can help you succeed.

The following checklist outlines things to think about as you consider going back to school.

Getting started

Your decision to go back to school should be part of a larger overall plan to get you where you want to go in life. Ask yourself:

- ✓ What do I want to do with my life?
- ✓ Have I researched occupations that interest me?
- ✓ Will my choice of schooling lead me toward that employment goal?

Developing a realistic vocational plan will help determine if going to school is your best choice at this time. Work with a career counsellor, research your options on-line, and talk to people in your field of choice to develop a plan of action.

Am I ready, willing, and able to go to school at this time?

Sometimes people start school without being fully ready. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Do I understand the commitment I am about to make?
- ✓ Do I feel pressured into making this decision?
- ✓ Am I physically and mentally healthy?
- ✓ Can I manage stress?
- ✓ Is my family healthy?
- ✓ Do I believe I can succeed?
- ✓ Is transportation, finances or time an issue?

If you can't resolve these questions, it may be better to put off your education or find an alternative to help you reach your goals.

Am I taking the right course for me?

To find the type of education that is right for you, ask yourself:

- ✓ Is the course presented in the best way for me to learn?
- ✓ Have I researched alternative programs from other schools?
- ✓ Do I understand how marketable graduates of this program are?
- ✓ Have I considered other ways of gaining these skills? Mentoring, job shadowing, on-the-job training, and work experience can be good alternatives.

Do I understand the financial costs of going back to school?

Consider the cost of tuition, books and materials, travel to and from school, childcare, and the possibility of a reduced income. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Have I considered all the costs of going back to school?
- ✓ Have I arranged funding?
- ✓ Have I made a budget and can I stick to it?

What about the impact on my family and my present life?

- ✓ Have I discussed the impact of going to school with my spouse/partner, children and family? Do I have their support?
- ✓ Have I considered how to balance my usual family, household, social, recreational, spiritual, and volunteer activities with going back to school?

What learning needs do I have?

- ✓ Do I know my learning style and needs?
- ✓ Have I developed a plan to help with learning before I start school? A tutor, technology to help with learning, and building organizational skills can all lead to success.
- ✓ Have I met with student support staff at the school?

Do I have a study plan?

Going to school requires the ability to make a commitment and stick with it over the course of the program. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Do I have strong study habits?
- ✓ Have I organized a physical space where I can study?
- ✓ Have I made a time management schedule?

Making the decision

Most potential students find that thinking about these questions and talking things over with their families helps them develop confidence before they start their program. Sometimes students have more difficulty weighing their options and determining if school is right for them. They sometimes find it helpful to talk things over with a counsellor.

Psychological counselling

The Career and Advanced Learning Centre has psychologists on staff to provide services to those presently enrolled or planning to enroll in post-secondary education. They can help deal with stress, anxiety, depression, anger, back to school adjustment, sleep issues, pain, and other issues that can affect your ability to go to school or stay in school. They also provide assessments to help identify educational barriers, learning disabilities and ADHD and other related difficulties.

It is a free service for those in school or thinking about going to school, and who have a student loan, are supported by SkillsPEI, or are connected with a social services program.