

# Happenstance

Self-Direction: Goal Setting

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Happenstance

**Point of the Assignment:** To understand and apply the theory of “happenstance” and how it impacts career success. Happenstance theory states that “unplanned events – chance occurrences – more often determine life and career choices than will all the careful planning we do.”

Authors Drs. John D. Krumboltz and Al S. Levin explain in their book *Luck is No Accident: Making the Most of Happenstance in Your Life and Career* (Krumboltz, J.D., Levin, A.S. 2010. Atascadero, CA: Impact.) Unplanned events – chance occurrences – more often determine life and career choices than all the careful planning we do. A chance meeting, a broken appointment, a sudden job loss, a “fill-in” job, a hobby – these are the kinds of experiences that lead to unexpected life directions and career choices. The book encourages readers to prepare for the unexpected, and to take advantage of chance events, to make the most of random “happenstances.”

## Happenstance Applied

**Think of a time in your life when a chance or unplanned event or encounter ultimately had a positive outcome on your life or career.**

**Describe the situation:**

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**1. What action did that unplanned event cause you to take?**

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**2. What was the outcome of the situation?**

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**3. What did you learn from the situation?**

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**4. In looking back, do you think you handled the situation well? (Explain your response.)**

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**5. If you had an opportunity to make the same choice again, would you? (Explain your response.)**

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## Happenstance

**Think of a time in your life when you faced an opportunity to experience happenstance, but but you did not take advantage of it.**

**1. Describe the situation:**

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**2. Why did you not take advantage of the situation?**

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**3. What was the outcome of the situation?**

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**4. What did you learn from the situation?**

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**5. In looking back, do you think you handled the situation well? (*Explain your response.*)**

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**6. If you had an opportunity to make the same choice again, would you? (*Explain your response.*)**

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### **Tips from the book for creating happenstance in your life and career:**

**1. Make the most of unplanned events in your life**

- a. Adapt to changes in the economy, technology, and government
- b. Take advantage of unexpected disappointments
- c. Be open to changing occupations and locations
- d. Share your interests and experiences with people you meet
- e. Convert frustrations into opportunities
- f. Realize that unplanned events can lead to more unplanned events
- g. Make the job fit you

**2. Always keep your options open**

- a. Avoid tunnel vision
- b. React to pressure by remaining open-minded
- c. Liberate yourself from unrealistic expectations
- d. Respond positively to challenging questions
- e. Refuse to live a life sentence of misery

- 3. Wake up – before your dreams come true**
  - a. When dreams fail, move on to something else
  - b. Test your dream – one step at a time
  - c. Don't stick with a bad choice
  - d. Listen to advice, but make up your own mind
  - e. Reassess priorities as circumstances change
  - f. Create passion by taking action
  - g. Don't "marry" an occupational goal
  - h. Open yourself to other alternatives
- 4. Try it – without knowing the outcome**
  - a. Take risks that are likely to pay off
  - b. Be prepared for unexpected opportunities
  - c. Discover something unknown to you
  - d. Take risks that may fail
  - e. Take risks with unknown outcomes
  - f. Use media to suggest unlikely career opportunities
  - g. Stay in touch with friends and colleagues
  - h. Solicit encouragement from others
  - i. Assume your interests will change
- 5. Go ahead and make mistakes**
  - a. Recognize that failure and mistakes are common, normal and instructive
  - b. Make use of your mistakes
  - c. Recognize that chance plays a part in every decision
  - d. React to mistakes constructively
  - e. Get on with your life
- 6. Take action to create your own luck**
  - a. Go one step at a time
  - b. Realize the future starts right now
  - c. Take advantage of timely opportunities
  - d. Always do your best work; it pays off later
  - e. Ask for what you want
  - f. When desperate, remember those you've helped
  - g. Don't let self-doubt keep you from trying
  - h. Persist in the face of rejection
  - i. Consider other illustrative actions for creating unplanned events
- 7. Go for the job – then learn the skills**
  - a. Never "complete" your education
  - b. Make every job a learning experience
  - c. Use the skills learned in one job to qualify for the next
  - d. Don't underestimate your skills
  - e. Learn what you enjoy from your own experience
  - f. Give yourself a promotion
  - g. Treat obstacles to learning as challenges
- 8. Be all you can be**
  - a. Put yourself in charge of creating a satisfying life
  - b. Learn through taking up a hobby
  - c. Take temporary employment
  - d. Get into politics

Happenstance

- e. Volunteer doing something you enjoy
- f. Go to school

**9. Overcome Self Sabotage**

- a. Overcome obstacles to action
- b. Develop helpful beliefs
- c. Some work experience is better than no work experience
- d. You can change your career direction now regardless of what you have done in the past
- e. Failure is a normal part of life and learning – not a disaster

**Applying these tips:**

Which of the tips listed above are already easy for you to use? Why?

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Which of the above tips are new to you?

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Which of the above tips are something you should consider trying?

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List 2 or 3 goals you can set for yourself to learn how to create more happenstance in your life:

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**Test your understanding:**

**What is the main point of this assignment?**

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**Why were you expected to do this exercise?**

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**What type of person would need to do this exercise?**

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**How well do you fit the profile of the person for whom this assignment was created?**

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**Reflection:** *(Write down your response after completing this assignment.)*

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