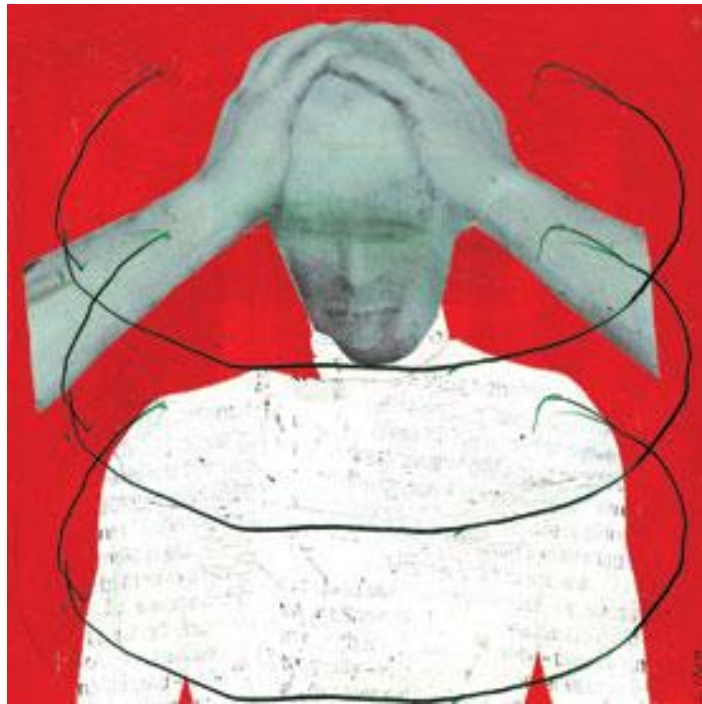


RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS AND SELF-EFFICACY IN YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



WHITEPAPER

Stress in Young Professionals

She thought she could handle the stress.. But then, one night after weeks of 18-hour working days and constant travel, she staggered home at 7 a.m. Not to sleep. To shower. As she stood in the water, she started crying.. JP Morgan isn't the only firm driving its young employees insane.. All hire the brightest Ivy League grads and make them a deal: We will pay you \$60 000 or more a year and give you glimpses of corporate luxury.. In exchange, you must work 70,80,100 hours a week through the best years of your life.

This is an example of a Young Professional who's experiencing a lot of pressure and stress, which eventually could result in a burn-out. Research shows that 13,8% of the Young Professionals between the ages of 25 and 29 experience a burn-out (TNO, 2013). Professionals between the ages of 20 and 35 years old are generally labeled as Young Professionals.

These outcomes of TNO shocked us and we went to talk to Young Professionals. The conversations show that the percentage of Young Professionals who feel stressed out and experience (too much) pressure on a regular basis are significantly higher in practice. This while Young Professionals are our future!

We started a couple of activities to support Young Professionals. First of all we developed a website where Young Professionals are able to find information, articles and tips about personal and professional development:
www.theyoungprofessionalgroup.com.

We also developed a training to reinforce the Young Professionals so that they are able to cope with the challenges they will come across in organizations and society today and in the future. Take a look at the website for more information about this training:
www.theyoungprofessionalgroup.com/training-young-professionals/.

In addition, our intern Nanniek van der Wel, master student Work and Organizational Psychology, did some research on the possible causes of these stress-related feelings. This research shows that several different factors, such as job-insecurity, having unrealistic high goals and expectations, role conflict and social conflicts, play a role in these feelings. Furthermore we found that the concept of self-efficacy could explain these causes for a large extent. Nanniek has elaborated this further and I proudly present to you the whitepaper she wrote in which you can read her findings.

Also I would like to point out the test she developed. It's a useful tool for Young Professionals to determine their level of self-efficacy, but also to create a clear vision of their mental health and to get tips on coping with stress-related feelings they get when they carry out a task.

Further, this whitepaper has two attachments. The first attachments describes a couple reactions by Young Professionals who participated in the training. The second one reports an interview with the trainer of the training for Young Professionals, Ivo Boelens. In this will be described what Young Professionals come across in their jobs in practice. These findings support the significance of this whitepaper.

I hope you enjoy reading this whitepaper,

Jacqueline Weesie, February 2015
Director Digne Consult

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My findings and conclusions in this whitepaper are based on a literature review. Afterwards I interpreted and translated these findings into the situation of Young Professionals.

Nanniek van der Wel, February 2015

1. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the extent to which a person has the idea/feeling that he or she is able to complete a task (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In other words, a person believes in his/her own capacity to persevere and to successfully complete a task. Self-efficacy is something else than self-confidence. Self-confidence is mostly seen as an evaluation of the self: if you like yourself and if you think you are a valuable human being. An example will follow below to clarify the difference:

A scientist could have a very low self-efficacy in dancing in contrary to doing research. However, he could decide that he's satisfied with this and that this won't deteriorate his overall evaluation and feelings of himself.

Self-efficacy is important because it influences a lot of components. I will give some examples of this.



Self-efficacy influences the level of the goals you set, the extent to which you hang on to your goals (Locke et al., 1984), someone's initial choices concerning activities and tasks, someone's way to cope with the execution of those tasks (Lent et al., 1987), the interpretation of feedback (Silver, Mitchel & Gister, 1991) and the affective reactions to the task (Gister et al., 1989; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). This eventually influences the performance of individuals. Besides that, self-efficacy influences the mental health of employees. For example, self-efficacy influences depression and decreases anxiety (Robbins, 1985).

2. Self-efficacy in Young Professionals

A large proportion of the Young Professionals are employees who recently graduated and just started working. Because they graduated, they often feel that they're capable to carry out the necessary tasks to obtain the diploma. They performed tasks such as reading books/summaries, making exams and cases and doing a presentation in front of a group. This means their self-efficacy in these tasks is often high. However, when they make the transition to working life their self-efficacy is low on work-related tasks. For example, they could start interning, enter into a traineeship or start working full-time. Everything they do here is often new for them, from their first phone call to the first personal assignment of their own. Frequently they haven't got the chance yet to master these tasks. Because everything is new and because they don't know yet if they're able to carry out the task, feelings of stress could commence in the Young Professionals. These feelings emerge because their self-efficacy is low. To clarify this process I would like to point out the four ways of learning.

3. Four ways of learning

These ways of learning influence someone's development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). With that they also influence someone's performance and health. Although these four ways of learning influence the level of self-efficacy, in the end the level is determined by the way someone interpreters and integrates these learning experiences. The processes that take place in the interpretation and integration of these learning experiences will be discussed in the next paragraph (4. Interpretation processes). First we will look into the four ways of learning.

1. Own experiences: someone learns from the experience in the extent to which he/she does or doesn't know how to do a task. This way of learning has the most influence on self-efficacy. The experience of success heightens the level of self-efficacy while experiencing mistakes lowers self-efficacy.

2. Examples of experiences: an individual could also learn by observing someone else. This is what we call *examples of experiences*. When we see that someone else completed a task, our own self-efficacy could increase. But when we see someone else fail, our own self-efficacy could decrease. This happens even more when we see someone who looks like ourselves. These 'examples of experiences' effect us less than our 'own experiences'. However, 'examples of experiencing' seem to be very useful for people who are insecure.

3. Verbal belief: one could also learn from receiving verbal encouragements or verbal discouragements. Discouragement generally has a greater negative effect on someone's self-efficacy than encouragement has a positive effect.

4. Physiological factors: in addition, someone could learn by interpreting different kinds of feelings, such as pain, fatigue, anxiety and nausea. The interpretation of these perceptions could have a great influence on someone's self-efficacy.

For example: Someone with a low level of self-efficacy could interpret the feeling of butterflies in his/her stomach before doing a presentation as a sign of incapability, which could result in a decrease of self-efficacy. Whereas people with a high level of self-efficacy experience these signals as normal; they don't link this to capability. Thus the thoughts about these reactions cause the de- or increase in someone's self-efficacy instead of the reactions itself.

It has become clear that Young Professionals could master the work-related tasks in these four ways. Often the Young Professionals and managers haven't got the chance yet to learn these four ways and it's important for them to realize that. Therefore it's significant they get the time and space to learn these tasks. But it has also become clear that the degree in which someone has self-efficacy is not only determined by the amount of time and/or space someone gets to learn.

4. Interpretation processes

Eventually someone's self-efficacy is determined by the interpretation and integration of these learning experiences. This happens on the basis of three processes (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), which I will explain below:

1. The first process could be described as the *analysis of task requirements*. In this process will be considered what is necessary to complete a task on different levels.

For example: when someone is considering to do a market forecast, he/she will determine the extent to which knowledge of statistics is needed to complete this task and how much time is needed for this.

This task analysis is executed the most extensive when a task is new or with an observation. It's likely a person looks more into the causes of the previous performance (what is the reason it went well/badly the last time, process 2) when someone has executed the task more often in the past.

2. The second process is the *attribution analysis of performances* and the *attribution analysis of feelings*. In these analyses individuals assign judgments or attributions to why they feel certain feelings and why certain levels of performances were achieved in the past.

For example: last year I successfully did a market forecast, due to my statistical skills and/or my great effort.

3. In the third process a person judges him/herself to the extent to which he/she has the resources and limitations to complete a task. Besides that, he/she will look into the situational limitations and resources. In this that person considers both different personal factors which influence future performances (level of certain skills, anxieties, wishes and available effort) as situational factors (other requirements, distractions).

The three processes occur relatively separate. However, the processes are often varied and repeated. The more often a task is executed, the quicker it's possible to judge a person's self-efficacy and the more stable this judgment becomes.

5. Example in order to clarify the interpretation processes

In order to clarify these processes I will give an example of a Young Professional. I will call him Jan. In his first job he's a policy officer and he's going to do some research to substantiate a policy paper. Since this task is new for him, he's experiencing a certain level of stress. These stress-related feelings could make him wonder if he's even capable enough to execute this task to satisfaction. With that he asks himself the question: how is this task put together and what can I do complete the task/policy paper (analysis of task requirements). Jan could also explore if he is capable enough to do this research and/or if he has any limitations. Jan thinks he has learned enough skills at the university where he studied (analysis personal resources). However, Jan's energy level is quite low because he has been ill lately (analysis personal limitations). Besides that he's exploring to which extent his surroundings could influence policy research in a positive way. A colleague he got to know has often written good policy papers. Because of this Jan can always ask for his advice (analysis of situational resources). Furthermore Jan realizes that the stress-related feelings he has been experiencing are due to the fact that he's executing a *new* task. It's normal to experience stress-related feelings when executing new tasks (attribution analysis of feelings). However, he could also assign these feelings to the thought he's not capable enough to complete the task (attribution analysis of feelings). It's possible for him to think that these feelings of anxiety indicate that he won't be successful in completing the task. If he would think like that his self-efficacy would decrease. However, Jan is aware of this process and assigns stress-related feelings to the fact he's executing a new task. Eventually Jan will put all his judgments, which he obtained on the basis of the different processes, together. In this example he concludes that he's capable to do the research to substantiate a policy paper well. In other words, Jan has a high self-efficacy concerning the completion of this task. This results in an actual lower level of stress.

The example of Jan shows that certain processes take place when he starts a new task. He analyses the task content and his personal and situational resources. Based on this he

assigns stress-related feelings to certain factors. The most important thing I would like to point out is that Jan assigns his stress-related feelings to the 'new' task instead of incapability. This results into a high self-efficacy. Because of this high self-efficacy it's possible that someone sets higher goals or is willing to put more effort into completing the task to satisfaction. This has the result that someone actually performs better and feels better about him/herself. This all together eventually influences the way the self-efficacy will be established the next time a task is executed. However, there is still one process up for discussion: assigning performances from the past (attribution analysis of experience). This will be elaborated further.

Another process is involved when Jan is going to do research to substantiate his policy paper for the second time. Jan is now able to look back to the first time he executed the same task. Afterwards he's able to consider what (possibly) went wrong or well the last time. Ultimately the interpretation of *why* a task was (un)successfully completed influences someone's self-efficacy, not *if* it was completed (un)successfully. In the same way someone could assign stress-related feelings to different factors, accomplishments in the past could be assigned to different factors. For example, it's possible for Jan to conclude that he completed the last research successfully because he has enough skills and knowledge. However, Jan could also assign this to other factors, such as the fact he received help.

6. Different factors where one could assign to

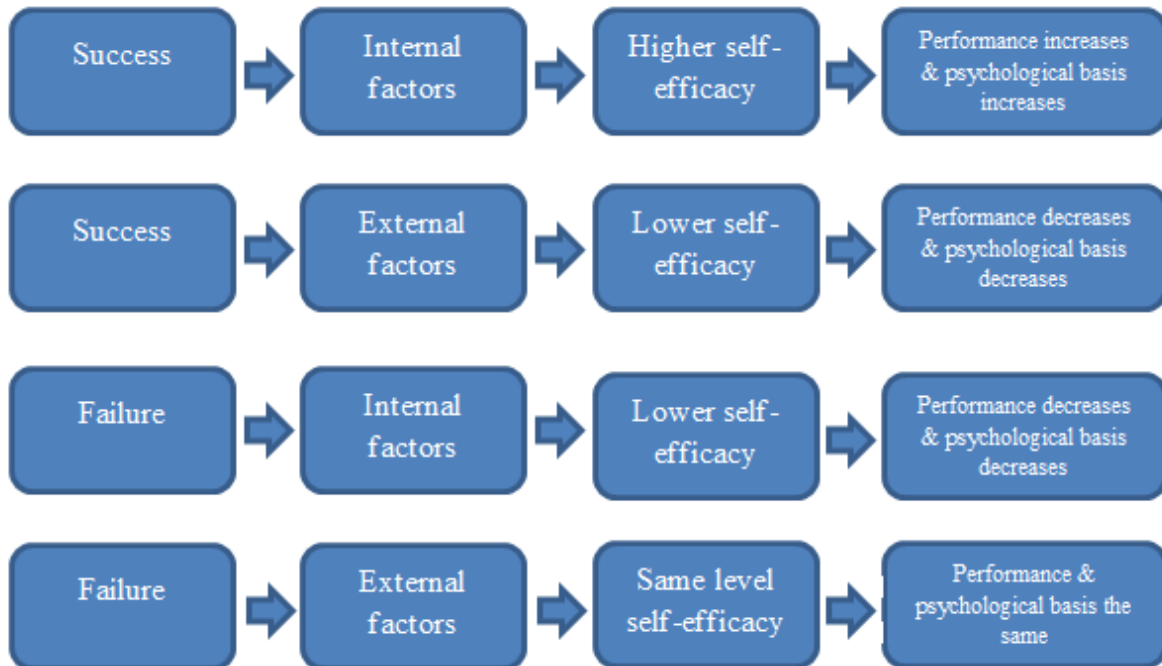
Different factors are described in the list below to which feelings and performances could be assigned. The first list describes the internal factors and the second the external factors. Internal factors are factors within a person that influence someone's self-efficacy. External factors are environmental factors.

Internal factors	External factors
<u>Skills</u> : the more skills someone has for the task, the higher the self-efficacy	<u>Complexity of a task</u> : the easier the task, the higher the self-efficacy
<u>Knowledge</u> : the more knowledge someone has for the task, the higher the self-efficacy	<u>Bad luck</u> : the more bad luck someone experiences, the lower someone's self-efficacy
<u>Effort</u> : the more effort someone is willing to make, the higher his/her self-efficacy	<u>Distraction</u> : the more (frequent) someone is distracted, the lower his/her self-efficacy
<u>Psychological basis</u> : the better someone's psychological basis, the higher his/her self-efficacy	<u>Risk/danger</u> : the more risk or danger someone is in, the lower his/her self-efficacy
<u>Physical health</u> : the better the physical health, the higher the self-efficacy	<u>Codependence between employees</u> : the higher the dependency, the lower the self-efficacy
<u>Mood</u> : a positive mood leads to higher self-efficacy than a negative mood does	<u>The place where you execute the task</u> : the self-efficacy is mostly higher when the task is executed in a familiar surrounding than it is in a new environment
<u>Personality</u> : different characteristics have different influences on the degree of self-efficacy. Example: people with high self-confidence have a higher self-efficacy	<u>Interpersonal relationships</u> : the self-efficacy is higher when the interpersonal relationships are good than when they are bad
<u>Strategies to cope with certain tasks</u> : behavioral strategies, analytic strategies, psychological strategies. The better your strategies fit the execution of the task, the higher your self-efficacy.	<u>Number of available resources</u> : the more available resources, the higher the self-efficacy

(Gist & Mitchell, 1992)

7. Influence assignment to different factors

The assignment of someone's previous accomplishments or failures to internal or external factors has a great influence on someone's self-efficacy (attribution analysis of performances). I will explain this with the support of the model below. Then I will apply this model to our example, Jan.



When a task is completed *successfully* Young Professionals could assign this to internal or external factors. If Jan concludes he succeeded in doing research the last time because he has the sufficient amount of skills and knowledge, he's assigning the accomplishment to internal factors. This eventually leads to Jan being proud of himself and the next time he executes the same task, he'll have the feeling that he's capable to complete this task. This because he's sure he has the sufficient amount of skills and knowledge to complete this task. In other words, because he assigns his accomplishment to internal factors, his self-efficacy increased in this task.

However, if Jan assigns his success to the fact he had help from a co-worker, he assigns his accomplishment to external factors. This could have the result that he'll feel not capable enough to complete the same task in the future because he only succeeded because he had help the last time. In other words, assigning accomplishments to external factors could result in a decrease of self-efficacy in the task.

When someone *fails* to complete a task it could also be assigned to internal and external factors. If Jan concludes he failed to do proper research because he, for example, experienced a lack of self-confidence, he's assigning the failure to internal factors. This makes Jan feel insecure and it makes him think he wasn't capable enough to complete the previous task. So, if he has to do the same task again, he probably won't feel capable enough to complete the task. This eventually leads to a low self-efficacy in this task.

On the other hand, Jan could also assign the failure to bad luck. In that case he's assigning the failure to external factors. This won't result in a lower self-efficacy, unlike assigning it to internal factors. This because he doesn't think he failed last time because he wasn't capable enough, but because of other factors.

This shows that it's better for someone's self-efficacy when one assigns accomplishments to internal factors and failures to external factors. You could say it's best to always do that. However, this is not always realistic. It's particularly about the fact it's disastrous when an individual always assigns things the opposite way; accomplishments to external factors and failures to internal factors. Besides the fact this is also not realistic (failure isn't always someone's own fault), it puts someone in a negative spiral.

Namely, when someone assigns good accomplishments to external factors such as luck and failures to internal factors like insufficient self-confidence, the execution of a task will result in a lower level of self-efficacy either way. Lower self-efficacy eventually leads to a deteriorated psychological basis and an actual worse performance. This eventually results in lower self-efficacy the next time the task is executed. When one finds him/herself in a negative spiral, it's hard to get someone out of it. However, there are concrete strategies which could be implemented. I would like to elaborate these further below.

8. Concrete Strategies for Young Professionals

The first significant thing to keep or get Young Professionals out of a negative spiral is they should realize that stress related feelings in new tasks and events are due to the fact new things always produce stress related feelings. Therefore it's important to assign these stress-related feelings to the fact something's new and not to the incapability to successfully complete a task. It's also important for Young Professionals to realize that the best way to learn is to learn by *experience*. Therefore they should give themselves the time and space to learn in this way.

Besides that it's significant for Young Professionals to assign their previous accomplishments to the right factors. Like we've seen, it's important for someone's self-efficacy to not always assign accomplishments to external factors such as luck or help from others, but assign them to internal factors such as one's own skills and knowledge. In addition it's important that failure isn't always assigned to internal factors such as skills, knowledge and personality, but to external factors such as bad luck. This doesn't mean one shouldn't look objectively to which factors caused certain accomplishments. It means it could be disastrous for someone's self-efficacy, performances and psyche when someone repeatedly assigns accomplishments to the wrong factors. Therefore it's very important for Young Professionals to learn to *assign properly*.

The first thing that could help with this, is to continuously bring into focus which factors could've influenced the accomplishment. As a result you'll be more aware that there are multiple factors that could've caused a possible failure.

Another helpful way, and a way to get someone out of a negative spiral, is asking for *feedback*. It's important for a Young Professional to receive detailed feedback often. Feedback could clarify the relationship between the factors which determine your performance.

Often individuals have a certain vision of what they think is effective behaviour or how they think a task should be executed. This vision is based on previous experiences and interpretations. Feedback could provide information to detect and correct incorrect visions.

Eventually a result of this could be that someone realizes he/she is assigning the performances to the wrong factors. As soon as performances and stress-related feelings are no longer only assigned to factors that decrease self-efficacy, but also to factors that make individuals proud of themselves, eventually someone's self-efficacy, performances and

psychological basis could improve again. Though I have to point out it's important for the person who gives feedback to have expertise and be credible and reliable (Bandura, 1977).

By assigning the performance to the right factors it will become clear which factors have led to not reaching the desired level of performance. With this information Young Professionals can take further steps to make sure the desired level of performance is reached the next time. For example, Young Professionals could find out that they don't have enough knowledge or skills to execute a task. It's possible to do a couple of things to increase the amount of knowledge or skills, such as a follow-up education and gaining significant experience. When these Young Professionals haven't reached the desired level and assigned this to insufficient self-confidence, are less prone to do a follow-up education and possibly get into a negative inner spiral.

Not only Young Professionals are able to increase their levels of self-efficacy. Managers are also able to contribute to this. Therefore we will look into concrete strategies for managers to help Young Professionals with this.

9. Concrete Strategies for Managers to help Young Professionals

As previously described, Young Professionals are able to increase their level of self-efficacy or get themselves out of a negative spiral by becoming aware of the fact that *new* events/tasks always cause certain stress-related feelings and by assigning performances to the 'right' factors. There are two things that could be helpful with this. The first is becoming aware of the different possible factors which could influence performances and feelings. The second is asking for the sufficient feedback to clarify the relationship between their performances and the influence of several factors.

Logically, this shows it's also important for managers to become aware of the fact that Young Professionals encounter a lot of new events/tasks during the first five years. All of these new events/tasks could evoke certain stress-related feelings in the Young Professionals. Interpreting these feelings wrongly or not knowing what to do with the task could result in a decrease in self-efficacy. It's also helpful for managers to be aware of the fact that the self-efficacy in Young Professionals could decrease when previous performances aren't assigned properly.

Furthermore, managers can help Young Professionals to get a clear vision of the different factors which (partially) determined the performance and provide them with detailed feedback. Feedback makes it possible for Young Professionals to learn to assign performances to the right factors and to clarify the tasks.

Besides giving the sufficient amount of feedback it's important for managers to provide enough information about certain tasks. It's significant for Young Professionals to receive specific task- and job descriptions and task-oriented leadership (Blanchard, Situationeel Leiderschap II). When it's clear how a new task should be executed, Young Professionals are more able to conduct a good task analysis. This results in a higher level of self-efficacy. In addition it increases the change a task will be executed the right way. Another way to clarify a task for Young Professionals is sub-goal setting. This has a great influence on someone's self-efficacy and both Young Professionals and managers are able to apply this.

In conclusion it's particularly important for managers to realize this mechanism works this way in Young Professionals. Furthermore it's significant that they provide enough feedback for the Young Professionals and conduct a task-oriented leadership with specific task and job descriptions. Sub-goal setting is something that could be helpful with this.

Thus, there are several concrete ways for Young Professionals and managers to make sure that Young Professionals have a high level of self-efficacy. Even though these ways may cost some time and effort, it's extremely important for the future of Young Professionals and, in that way, eventually also for the managers.

10. Expectations towards the Young Professional

Based on actual practice and the conversations we've had with Young Professionals, we actually think the stress-related feelings and thoughts could be understood on the basis of the previous described mechanism. This because the Young Professionals come across a lot of new tasks/events and when the task or feelings are wrongly interpreted, the levels of self-efficacy could decrease. It could also decrease when the previous performances aren't assigned to the right factors. Something that came up a lot in the conversations with the Young Professionals was the word 'expectations'. Young Professionals do not only have high expectations of themselves, they frequently feel their surroundings and managers have high expectations of them as well.

That's why we're going to explore how expectations could influence the previous described mechanism of self-efficacy. If someone performed well in University, has been part of several different commissions and also exerted top-level sport, this probably results in higher expectations the self. However, this could also determine the expectation-level of the manager. High expectations of the self and high expectations of the manager could increase someone's self-efficacy. When a manager trusts you to the fullest and is able to verbally convince you of this, your self-efficacy could increase, as we've seen in the four ways of learning. However, it could have an opposite effect when the expectations are high. This could actually lead to a lower level of self-efficacy.

High expectations will soon be reality when Young Professionals still have little work experience but enter the working life at a high level. When that's the case, Young Professionals will have a lot of experience with study-related tasks, but not yet with work-related tasks. The expectations could become very high when both Young Professionals as the managers aren't aware of this. When tasks aren't completed as expected because they and their managers thought it would've been easy to pull it off, the 'failure' could be assigned to personal (internal) factors. As soon as this happens time and time again, someone's level of self-efficacy and psychological basis could decrease. Eventually it's possible that someone who studied at, for example, Harvard performs at a low level while he/she was previously welcomed with open arms. Thus it's important that the expectations of a Young Professional and the management aren't too high. It's also important for a Young Professional to assign the performances the right way. The managers are able to help the Young Professionals with learning to assign properly.

This process is strengthened because of the deteriorating economy. Young individuals study longer because of this and thereby enter the working-life at a higher level. This enlarges the gap between the self-efficacy concerning working and learning. That's why it's important for Young Professionals to start gaining working-life experience at an early age (Call & Mortimer, 2001). This could lead to an easier transition from studying to working and an increase of the self-efficacy level concerning work-related tasks.

Another advice we would like to give Young Professionals is to look at a task as a process. Because of the high expectations, the urge to execute the task perfectly is high. When someone wants to execute the task perfectly it could actually have the result that he/she experiences the task so big and difficult that he/she doesn't even want to try anymore. That's

why it's important to realize it's often impossible to execute a new task perfectly straight away. The execution of a

task is a process. Firstly you're going to do one part of the task while you're not sure yet if you're doing it right. Then you're going to think about it or ask someone's advice. With this you're eventually able to adjust (components of) the task and to finish the task properly. Managers are also able to assist the Young Professionals in this process by giving them time and space and by creating a setting in which it's allowed to make mistakes and where someone can learn from those mistakes.

Another way to cope with big and difficult tasks is divide the task into smaller subtasks. When an individual has to execute a big and complicated task there's a chance he/she doesn't quite know what to do with it. This could result in a massive decrease of self-efficacy. Splitting up the task into smaller subtasks could increase the self-efficacy because the chance that someone completes a small task properly is much bigger. Because of this someone is more confident he/she is able to complete the next small task, which probably results in an actual better performance in this next task. In this way someone's self-efficacy increases bit by bit and it's possible to complete big and complicated tasks successfully. When something doesn't work it's not directly considered a failure, but as a delay in the process to the final goal (Weick, 1984). It's important for the management to offer their assistance if Young Professionals fail to execute this.

The last significant thing in coping with high expectations is social support. Research shows that the absence of sufficient social support means a lack of sufficient resources to cope with the high demands of working (Lee and Ashfort, 1996). Supporting relationships could increase the levels of self-efficacy because in this way they are able to learn (by exemplary conduct) employees to apply certain strategies and attitudes when certain problems occur. In addition social relations could serve as positive rewards (Bandura, 2000). Also part of this is maintaining good relations with the management.

11. Expectations of Young Professionals towards the job

Young Professionals not only have high expectations of themselves but also of their job. They're often idealistic and optimistic compared to mediors and seniors (older than 35) when they enter the workplace. For instance, Young Professionals believe they'll get promoted when they work hard more than older employees. However, Young Professionals could be disillusioned when they enter the workplace because their hopes and wishes sometimes aren't fulfilled (Coy et al., 2002).

The first important thing for Young Professionals to mend this is to realize that working isn't always 'fun'. In addition, beginning with experiencing working-life at an early age could make expectations of a job more realistic.

Furthermore research shows it's important to uphold someone's self-efficacy by creating intrinsic motivating jobs. Managers could pay attention to this when they select people for several jobs and Young Professionals could request some changes when this is needed. The Job-Characteristics model Bandura (1997) created shows what intrinsic motivating work is. According to this model, five dimensions define to what extent a job is significant. Eventually this leads to higher motivation, better work performances, higher satisfaction, fewer absence(s) and fewer lay-offs.



The five dimensions are:

1. *Variety required skills*: the extent to which a job requires different skills/talents/activities of an employee.
2. *Task identity*: the extent to which you're fully or partially occupied with a product or service.
The making of a complete product (or the producing of a complete service) is more valuable for an employee than being responsible for a little part of the product/service.
3. *Task significance*: the extent to which a job has an impact on the life or work of others. This means both the influence on the organization itself and on the environment of the organization.
For instance, people who fix the important parts of an airplane feel more significant than people who fill little boxes with paperclips.
4. *Autonomy*: the extent to which the job provides the employee freedom, discretion and independency in the planning of his work and in defining the procedures.
5. *Feedback*: the extent to which the activities that should be executed provide the employee with direct and clear information about the effectivity of his performance.

In conclusion, the Young Professionals have certain expectations towards themselves, their job and experience certain expectations from their surroundings (managers). Several tips and ways are previously described for both the Young Professionals and their managers. These tips and ways could lower the effects of the expectations and the expectations themselves so people are able to cope with them better.

12. Summary

Young Professionals just graduated from University and have a high level of self-efficacy concerning study-related tasks because of this. Namely, they haven't got the chance yet to learn in the four ways (own experiences, example-experiences, verbal persuasion and interpreting physiological factors). If someone's self-efficacy actually decreases depends on the interpretation of these learning-experiences. The interpretation is established based on three processes: analysis of task requirements, attribution analysis and judgment of personal and situational resources and limitations. Assigning to certain factors of stress-related feelings and performances has a great influence on someone's self-efficacy. Assigning stress to the fact a certain task is new instead of not being competent enough results in a higher level of self-efficacy and with this it improves someone's actual performances and mental health. In addition self-efficacy increases when good performances in the past are assigned to internal factors and failures to external factors. Concrete strategies are described to help Young Professionals with assigning to the right factors. One of the most important strategies is asking for feedback or receiving feedback from the managers. Feedback could be used to clarify the relationship between performances and factors which defined the performance. Another component which plays a role in this mechanism is expectation. Young Professionals have high expectations of themselves and their surroundings, as their managers also have high expectations of the Young Professionals on a regular basis. This could have the result that someone isn't able to live up to the expectations which eventually causes a decrease in someone's self-efficacy. Young Professionals also have high expectations of their job, which are often not lived up to. That's why it's important for expectations to be adjusted, something that's hopefully achieved by reading this paper.

13. Test

RELATIONSHIP SELF-EFFICACY – MENTAL HEALTH – STRESS

Do you want to know the relationship between your self-efficacy, mental health and stress? We developed a test to measure your own level of self-efficacy and mental health. You can fill out the test below and afterwards you can score it yourself!

The main goal of this test is to determine certain factors which possibly cause heightened levels of stress in someone. We would like to ask you to fill out two statement lists truthfully. The information in these lists will be treated strictly confidentially and will not be used for other purposes or passed on to third parties.

Statement list 1

Think about the required skills to complete tasks in your job. Keep your own image of your work-related, personal skills in mind when you answer the questions/statements below.

Circle around the number that fits your image. I fully disagree (1) and I fully agree (6).

1. I'm confident I'm able to do my job well.

disagree=1	2	3	4	5	agree=6
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2. There are certain tasks in my job I can't do properly.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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3. When I'm performing badly, it's because of a lack of skill(s).

1	2	3	4	5	6
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4. I doubt my capacities to do my job well.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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5. I've got the required skills carry out my job very well.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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6. Most people in my work environment are able to do this job better than me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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7. I'm an expert in my branch.

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

8. My future in this job is limited because of my lack of skills.

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

9. I'm very proud of my skills and capacities in this job.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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10. I feel threatened when others look over my shoulder while working.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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Statement list 2

WATCH OUT: the scale below goes from *better* than normal (1) to *worse* than normal (4).

Did/have you recently:

1. Been able to concentrate whatever you do?

better=1	2	3	worse=4
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2. Been sleep deprived because you were worrying?

1	2	3	4
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3. Got the feeling you make meaningful contributions in things?

1	2	3	4
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4. Felt capable enough to make decisions?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

5. Constantly felt tensed?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

6. Got the feeling that you couldn't get over your difficulties?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

7. Been able to enjoy your normal daily activities?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

8. Been able to face your problems?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

9. Felt unhappy and depressed?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

10. Lost confidence in yourself?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

11. Thought about yourself as a worthless person?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

12. Felt reasonably happy considering?

1	2	3	4
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TEST SCORING

RELATIONSHIP SELF-EFFICACY – MENTAL HEALTH – STRESS

Statement list 1: Personal Efficacy Beliefs Scale (Riggs et al, 1994)

This list measures the level of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the extent to which a person has the idea/feeling that he or she is able to complete a task (Bandura, 1977).

Scores

In statement list 1 you can circle the numbers 1 to 6 to which extent you agree with the statement. Keep in mind that certain statements are formulated negatively, like statements 1, 5, 7 and 9. It's important to switch the numbers in these negative statements to obtain an accurate total score of self-efficacy. This means that in these statements the number 1 has to be switched with 6, 2 switched with the 5, 3 switched with the 4 and 4 switched with the 3. Only apply this to statements 1, 5, 7 and 9. Afterwards you add all your numbers together. The eventual added up score is the total score of statement list 1. The lower the total score, the higher the self-efficacy and the higher the score, the lower the self-efficacy.

Statement list 2: Psychological Health = General Health Questionnaire, Goldberg, 1972

This questionnaire measures someone's mental health. It measures the level of stress that someone's been experiencing the last couple of weeks. These stress related feelings could be caused by different factors. The questionnaire doesn't test personality traits, but looks into the extent to which there is a disturbance in the normal functioning during a short period of time.

Scores

For every statement you've circled a number to show to which extent you agree with it based on the last couple of weeks. Numbers 1 and 2 stand for a score of 0, numbers 3 and 4 stand for a score of 1. These scores are eventually added up and the total score results into a score from 0 to 12. The lower the score, the better someone's mental health and the higher the score, the worse. Most of the time people with a score of 5 or 6 are more prone to develop and experience psychological problems.

Combination two statement lists

Test background and motivation for using these two lists:

Research shows that executing a (new) task or assigning performances wrongly could cause a heightened stress level. Especially for Young Professionals since a lot of activities are new for them in the first years of their career. Assigning and interpreting where this stress comes from defines someone's self-efficacy. The level of someone's mental health also plays an important role in this process of assignment.

We're using the **Personal Efficacy Beliefs Scale of Riggs** to measure someone's level of self-efficacy and the **Psychological Health = General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg** to determine someone's mental health.

We believe the two list are connected. The combination of the two scores provide you with a clear vision concerning your proneness to experience stress in your job and where you assign this to. Furthermore we would like to give you some tips so you're more able to reduce your stress level.

Effectivity low, mental health low

When someone has a low score on both self-efficacy and mental health it's possible that someone already is deep in a negative spiral. One could wind up in a negative spiral if he/she wrongly assigns or interprets stress-related feelings. For instance when someone's has the tendency to assign these stress-related feelings to internal factors ('I can't do it'), while these feelings could be assigned to external factors ('It's a very complex task') or to the fact a new task always results in higher level of stress. Internal factors are factors inside a person which influence someone's self-efficacy, while external factors contain environmental factors. The table below describes some examples of both factors.

Internal factors	External factors
<u>Skills</u> : the more skills someone has for the task, the higher the self-efficacy	<u>Complexity of a task</u> : the easier the task, the higher the self-efficacy
<u>Knowledge</u> : the more knowledge someone has for the task, the higher the self-efficacy	<u>Bad luck</u> : the more bad luck someone experiences, the lower someone's self-efficacy
<u>Effort</u> : the more effort someone is willing to make, the higher his/her self-efficacy	<u>Distraction</u> : the more (frequent) someone is distracted, the lower his/her self-efficacy
<u>Psychological basis</u> : the better someone's psychological basis, the higher his/her self-efficacy	<u>Risk/danger</u> : the more risk or danger someone is in, the lower his/her self-efficacy
<u>Physical health</u> : the better the physical health, the higher the self-efficacy	<u>Codependence between employees</u> : the higher the dependency, the lower the self-efficacy
<u>Mood</u> : a positive mood leads to higher self-efficacy than a negative mood does	<u>The place where you execute the task</u> : the self-efficacy is mostly higher when the task is executed in a familiar surrounding than it is in a new environment
<u>Personality</u> : different characteristics have different influences on the degree of self-efficacy. Example: people with high self-confidence have a higher self-efficacy	<u>Interpersonal relationships</u> : the self-efficacy is higher when the interpersonal relationships are good than when they are bad
<u>Strategies to cope with certain tasks</u> : behavioral strategies, analytic strategies, psychological strategies. The better your strategies fit the execution of the task, the higher your self-efficacy.	<u>Number of available resources</u> : the more available resources, the higher the self-efficacy

(Gist & Mitchell, 1992)

When someone assigns a heightened stress level to the wrong factors it could lead to lower self-efficacy. This lowered self-efficacy could then cause a decreased performance. Because of this someone could eventually wind up in a negative spiral. This could ultimately lead to a worsened mental health. A low mental health could indicate that someone has been in a negative spiral for a long time and/or has a negative self-image. At the end of the description of the scores there are some concrete tips described which could help someone out of an negative spiral.

Self-efficacy low, mental health high

A low score on self-efficacy and a high one on mental health could indicate one experiences stress-related feelings because everything is new or because he/she is assigning past performances the wrong way. It's possible he/she assigns these stress-related feelings to internal factors, while these feelings could be assigned to the 'new' (external factor). Internal factors point to factors within a person which influence someone's self-efficacy, while external

factors point to environmental factors (table above). Assigning factors the wrong way could lower the self-efficacy. The lowered self-efficacy could eventually result in decreased performances and because of this someone could wind up in a negative spiral. Though this indicates that the person isn't that deep in this negative spiral. It's important for someone to learn to assign factors properly. Otherwise it could lead to a decrease in someone's mental health. Below this some concrete tips are described which could help to keep someone out of a negative spiral.

Self-efficacy high, mental health high

When someone scores high on both self-efficacy and mental health there's probably no problem in this/these area(s).

Self-efficacy high, mental health low

There are multiple causes for a lowered mental health when the self-efficacy is high and the mental health is low. Increasing someone's level of self-efficacy probably has little effect on someone's mental health because the self-efficacy is already high. When you have a low score on mental health it's recommended to, possibly with a coach, search for the causes so you're able to feel better in the future.

The next page contains concrete tips for Young Professionals on increasing your self-efficacy on psychological basis. Concrete tips are also given for the managers of the Young Professionals.

Tips for Young Professionals:

1. Be aware of the fact you learn the most from your own experiences. Allow yourself to make 'mistakes'. You learn from your 'mistakes', so label them as positive.
2. Be aware that doing something new always causes stress. These feelings are normal. These stress-related feelings are caused by the fact something is 'new', not by being incompetent.
3. Be aware of the fact that different factors could cause a bad performance.
4. Try to assign your feelings and performances properly. Make sure you don't always assign your good performances to external factors and a 'failure' to internal factors.
5. Ask for help. Become aware of the fact that feedback, a good description of the job and the tasks and task-oriented leadership of the manager could help you to assign the right factors to your performances and feelings.
6. Find ways to improve certain factors that cause a lessened performance (like doing a follow-up education when there's not enough knowledge or skill).
7. Give yourself time. Be aware that in your first job your self-efficacy concerning study related tasks is high, but not yet high concerning work related tasks. This takes time.
8. Also be aware that the expectations of yourself are possibly too high. This could have a negative influence. You should try to hold on to the slogan: good is good enough.
9. Talk to your manager. You possibly feel burdened with the high expectations of your manager. Because of this you could feel tensed and stressed while performing.
10. Look at the execution of tasks as a learning process instead of something that has to be perfect the first time. Learning contains trial and error.
11. Divide big tasks into subtasks so your self-efficacy per subtask remains high.
12. Be aware of the fact that social relations could improve your self-efficacy. Talk to co-workers, learn from them and possibly ask them for help.
13. Be aware that work isn't always 'fun'.
14. Be aware of this: you're a Young Professional with a lot of talent, knowledge and skills. The more you allow yourself to learn, try, ask, make mistakes, explore who you are, what you like and what you're good at, the more meaning you'll be able to give to your own work and life and to the organization you're working for/in.

Tips for the manager of the Young Professional:

1. Be aware that most things, or sometimes everything, are/is new for Young Professionals. New things cause a heightened level of stress. Give them time and space to learn and make mistakes. Pressuring them too soon could have negative consequences and lowers the self-efficacy.
2. Help the Young Professionals with assigning the factors that determine their performances properly so their self-efficacy remains high. It's important to give Young Professionals enough detailed feedback and create a positive mindset towards 'it's ok to make mistakes'.
3. Try to create intrinsic motivating jobs. One could do this by applying variety in tasks, giving them autonomy, giving them work they think is valuable and including them as much as possible in what you, as manager, want to achieve with your team/division.
4. Apply task-oriented leadership and try to give the clearest possible task and job descriptions. The time you invest in this will be returned double.
5. Help the Young Professionals to feel comfortable and keep the in mind that every person is different. If you don't ask for the impossible, they'll always be willing to contribute extra.

14. Used literature

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Attachment 1:

Quotes Young Professionals participation training Young Professionals 2014:

Lennert Jonker, of Oord:

"The Digne Young Professional course helped me to gain more insight in my own actions, but also the actions of others in your organization! Furthermore it helps you to structure things, prioritize and makes you think about your goal and mission. The course helped me very much. I've received very useful tools to develop myself further. The individual coaching also helped with this. Personally I've learned the most of the model with different influence styles. In this my weaker points were highlighted. Because of this and the trainer I've been able to work on these points in practice. In addition I structured my work better, I'm more able to prioritize and feel more at ease."

Joost van Putten, Elsevier:

"The TUDelft teaches you everything about technique, but nothing about learning to work effectively in a multinational. It's a myth that you learn to work effectively just by working hard. You can make big steps by combining 'learning on the job' with a fitted theory doses and coaching, especially when it concerns working effectively."

Floor Kroft, Radar Advice:

"It was very pleasant to pay serious attention to and be aware of my own way of handling things, skills and development four times a week. During the training 'Professionalize the Young Professional' you're in a group with likeminded, starting employees. Therefore we recognize a lot in each others stories and experiences. The training was a great completion to the workshops I receive in my traineeship. The chief point are the general, most important skills in working life, like working efficiently and personal leadership. In the training you learn practical skills which are directly applicable and also more theoretical models which give me insights in my own way of handling things. The three conversations with the coach also contribute in an important way to personal development."

Nikki Rijnen, Ministry of Social Affairs:

"I've learnt a lot during the Digne Consult training and still profit of it this day. They showed me that not everything is my responsibility. I've learnt to say no at the right times so my workload becomes more controllable."

Ellen Meijer, Pré-Consultants:

"Thanks to this training I've learnt to recognize my own behaviour and got the feeling I'm more in control over my career. The different exercises during the training and the models that were used made me more aware of things. Both my strong and weak sides became clear and recognizable. Applying practical resources in real life showed me I most definitely do have an influence on my surroundings. The conversations and shared experiences with 'fellow sufferers', who come across similar problems, showed I'm not alone. Because of this I gained more self-confidence to actively start with achieving my goals. Altogether it was a very useful training for me as a Young Professional."

Raisha Portisch, Saxion College:

"The training gave me the strength and self-confidence to first formulate my goals clearer and then successfully implement these goals into the organization. I've learnt to correspond my own wishes with the goals of the organization. The personal coaching made me step in the right direction. The pieces of the puzzle fell into place in a very beautiful way."

Els Donkers, RSZK housing and care centre:

"Workload and stress? I now dare to make one in the place, to structure my work tasks and to look into the causes. Things that are labelled as 'normal' by me or our organization could be criticized by Young Professionals (who work in different branches). It's very clarifying when someone makes you aware of your own behaviour and makes you aware of things. I learn a lot from that."

Attachment 2:

Interview with Ivo Boelens, trainer of the Young Professional course

What are the challenges for Young Professionals?

One thing I've noticed during the training is that Young Professionals find it hard to make the transition from studying to working. They wonder: how do I manifest myself, what are the relationships, what is my position in this and what can and can't I do? Themes they struggle with are: determination of the position, roles and responsibilities. Some are afraid of the consequences of their behaviour. They think about who they are, what they are all about and what do they add. In addition, a lot of Young Professionals are perfectionists and simultaneously want to be helpers. They're looking for their own identity on a practical, personal and inter-personal level. It's of great importance to learn to manage themselves and their surroundings. This is something we pay a lot of attention to in the Young Professional course.

Managers give Young Professionals tasks like being responsible for a certain project easily. In this managers expect that Young Professionals can do it themselves. This way a lot of Young Professionals are thrown to the wolves. They find it hard to ask for direction. They also think they should be able to do this. They just start working and then, often too late, check what the manager wants to see or hear. They sometimes have no idea what the precise goal of the task is. They know that they should make steps, determine a goal and sub goals and determine the desired result, but a lot of them don't know how to do these things. Besides, they're often impressed by their surroundings. Therefore the opinions and expectations a manager has of them means a lot to them and they dread to ask questions to the manager. A lot of Young Professionals have a substantial amount of job responsibilities, keep saying yes and think they're able to do things but eventually can't live up to those standards. They work day and night and experience a lot of pressure on the job. The bar they've set for themselves is often very high although that's not always on request of the client.

Some Young Professionals can't answer the question: who is your manager? The manager is invisible and unattainable because he/she is so busy. The manager doesn't take the time to go through business with the Young Professionals and their team. That's how Young Professionals learn to pull back, take a wait-and-see position and do business their own way.

Profiling themselves, communicating about what they want and making clear where their boundaries are; these are all skills they haven't fully mastered yet. They've got the idea they have to do it all by themselves. A couple of Young Professionals will be able to make it, based on the amount of guts and/or energy level they've got and present. They aren't afraid to present themselves as powerful. Some exaggerate this and it's good to learn what the effect of their behavior is on others.

A lot of Young Professionals feel insecure, have fear of failure and they've got the idea that someday they'll be exposed as incompetent, that they're not good enough and can't live up to the standard. They also feel that the manager doesn't always listen, feel misunderstood and show insufficient proactive behavior concerning asking the manager if he/she really feels that way about them. It's good for them to enter into a dialogue with the manager and to ask for feedback.

This while Young Professionals often want a lot and this results in a mismatch between what they actually want and the behavior they display. This also causes inefficient behavior. Often they have a substantial amount of good ideas and creativity and sometimes this isn't recognized or appreciated enough by the management. Generally the management pays insufficient attention to the Young Professional in a team and expect the Young Professional

to claim their attention. But Young Professionals are mostly indulgent at the beginning and adjust themselves to the situation in a team.

When a Young Professional executes a task it sometimes becomes a solo plan and he/she isn't able to complete the task. They have a lot of ideas relating to the content, but achieving something in a organization eventually comes down to the processes, the politics, game of interests and money. They don't know this and don't know how to play the game.

What could Young Professionals do?

- Make contact with other Young Professionals. Share your findings, talk to them and listen to how everything works.
- Go look for a mentor, someone's who's in the business for a longer period of time and enjoys guiding you.
- Invest in contacts in your job to learn from.

What helps the Young Professional?

- Learn to put things into perspective.
- Give yourself the time to gain experience(s).
- Learn as much as possible about how to communicate, set boundaries, about your personal attitude and behaviour and train yourself in these things.
- Learn to work effectively, efficiently, proactively and to cope with the workload and stress. Train yourself in these things.
- Stay close to who you are, and if you don't know something, ask for help and make mistakes. This is the best way of learning.
- Stay close to who you are and learn to play the game with interests etc. You don't have to if it doesn't fit with who you are.
- Ask feedback from your manager on tasks you execute.
- Experiment. Get out of your comfort zone. If something doesn't work out, do it another way and see what's effective.
- Pay attention to your personal branding. Learn to position and profile yourself properly.
- Also, give yourself time. Insecurity disappears when time goes by. All the ways people think about you can bother you. Look into these things for yourself. How do you think about yourself and your work? Which values do you want to pursue and which beliefs do you have of the daily reality of your work. Is this right? Explore all the limitations you experience. Do these play a role in other people as well?
- Find a coach who supports you for a while and together you can explore what your mission and vision is, who you are, what you want and which talents you have.

If you're interested in the Young Professional course, you can call us: 035 - 531 82 88 of e-mail to info@digneconsult.com

February 2015