



Pursuing a Postdoc Proactively: Why Postdoc?

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RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
VIRGINIA TECH.

Let's hear from
you...

What one word do you associate with the term postdoc?



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

What is a postdoc?

An individual holding a doctoral level degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing.

Definition from the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA)

The mentor & training environment matters immensely for the postdoc.

Access FREE membership in the NPA
through your Organizational Membership!

nationalpostdoc.org/



Opportunity Costs of Pursuing a Postdoc

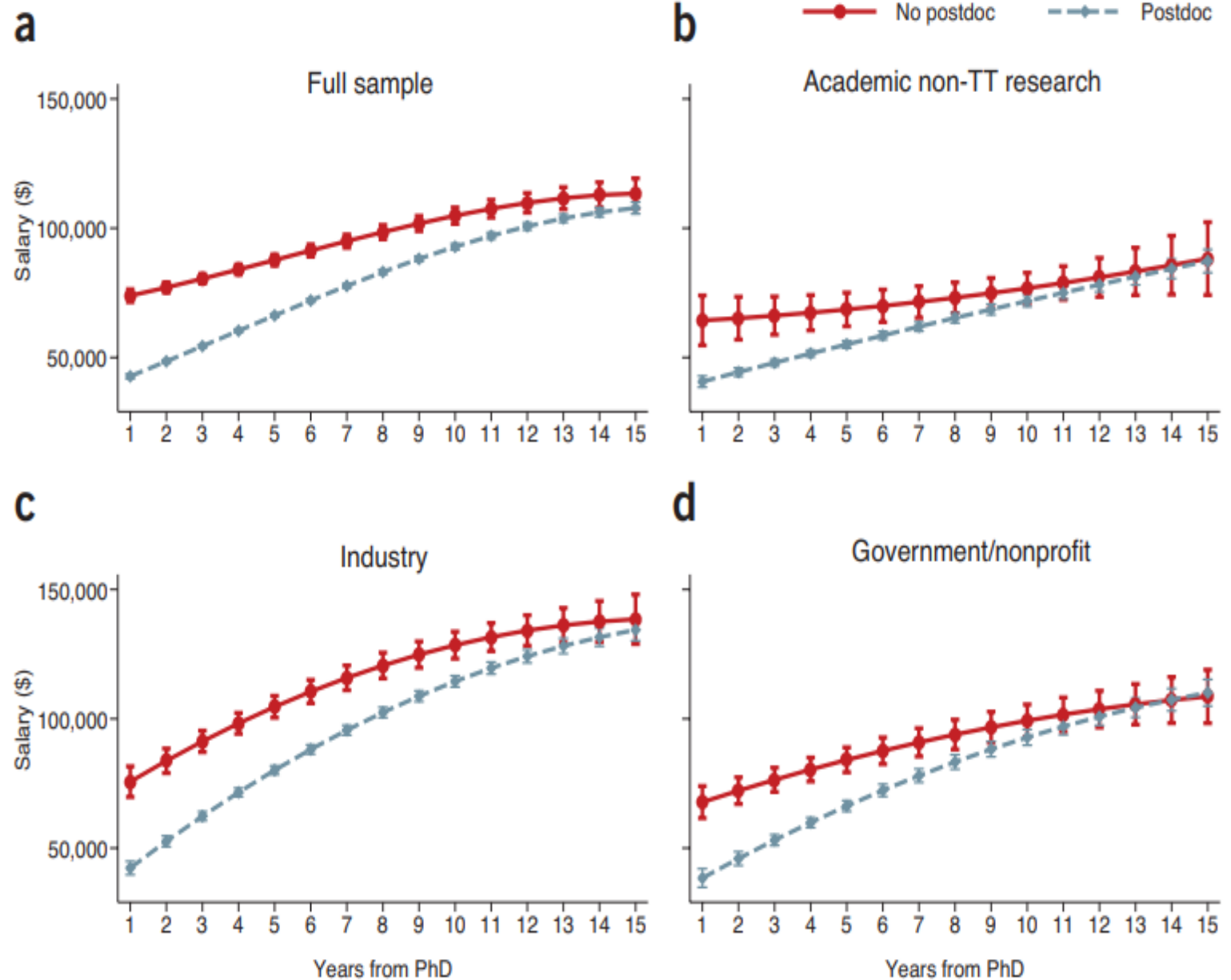
<https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt.3766>

Kahn & Ginther, 2017
-biomedical Ph.D.s/postdocs

While a postdoc is nearly required to pursue assistant professor positions, especially in STEM fields and at research-intensive universities, one's earnings will lag peers that have not completed postdocs for many years.

That does not mean you cannot obtain valuable skills and experiences while completing a postdoc.

It can also provide you with time to think more critically about the next step in your career, network with employers in the local area, etc...



Core Competencies of Postdoctoral Training

1. Discipline-specific conceptual knowledge

- Broad based & cross-disciplinary knowledge acquisition

2. Research skill development

- Data analysis & interpretation skills
- Experimental Design

3. Communication skills

- Writing, speaking, teaching, and interpersonal communication

4. Professionalism

- Working effectively with others, interpersonal skills, compassion, integrity

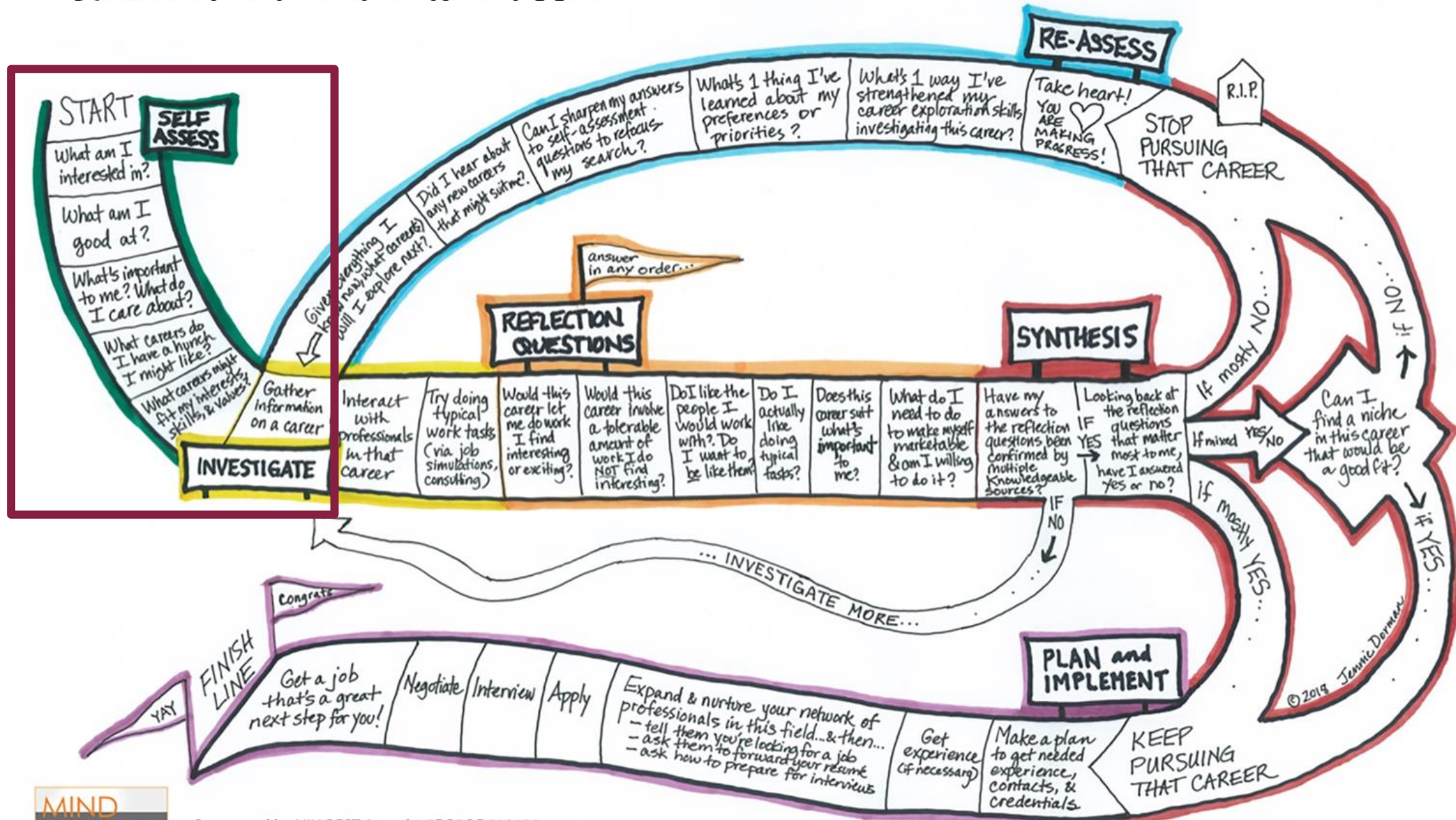
5. Leadership and management skills

- Managing projects and peoples, leading others, serving as a role model

6. Responsible conduct of research

- Open sharing of data and knowledge, instilling honesty, objectivity, and trust in scholarship and scientific research

Career Exploration Roadmap





ImaginePhD or myIDP Skills, Interests, & Values Assessments & Resources

<https://www.imaginephd.com/assessment>

<https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>

<https://bit.ly/vt-career-exp-sheet>

Capture this info on the ImaginePhD Career Exploration Worksheet

<https://bit.ly/vt-career-exp-sheet>



TOP 5 SKILLS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

TOP 5 INTERESTS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



TOP 5 VALUES

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

**Your values and interests are your “compass”
when it comes to career decisions**

Does a postdoc align w/ your interests, values & provide skill development?

- **Will pursuing a postdoc....**

- Allow you to build a new, in-demand skillset?
 - Provide you the ability to display “independence” as a research and make you more competitive for faculty jobs?
 - Give you the opportunity to develop teaching skills ([IRACA postdocs](#))?
 - Provide an ability for you to move to a new location with many job opportunities in fields you are interested in that allows for more effective networking?
 - Allow you the flexibility and autonomy to spend more time exploring your career options?
-
- Please remember, though, that you should ensure you are being a good colleague as a postdoc. This is a professional role and so don't slack on your responsibilities and commitments. Open communication is critical as you begin to consider leaving a postdoc position.

Informational Interviews & Career Exploration

[University of Pennsylvania Info Interview Guide](#)

[ImaginePhD Info Interview Guide](#)

By talking with people “ahead” of you in careers of potential interest, you get a window into a potential future for you. This includes individuals currently in postdoc positions.

Informational interviews allow you to, in a way, have a conversation with a future version of you.

- You can ask questions that matter to you about a career path and focus on your key values and interests.
 - Good work-life balance?
 - High level of autonomy?
 - Work from home?
 - Ability to grow and advance at the organization?
- [Leverage LinkedIn Alumni Tool](#) to identify potential contacts

Learn more about:
[career exploration](#), [informational interviews](#)



Resources from the NPA

NPA resources include:

- A Postdoc's Guide to the Postdoc Timeline
- A Postdoc's Guide to Career Development
- Guide to Using an Individual Development Plan
- A Postdoc's Guide to Mentorship
- [myPostdoc Webinar Archives](#) (on a range of career topics)
- And More!

Access FREE membership in the NPA

through your [Organizational Membership!](#)

nationalpostdoc.org/page/ResourceLibrary



Additional Resources

Guide to Postdocs

(from former VT TBMH Ph.D. student, Ubadah Sabbagh)

Individual Development Plans

Link to drive with example IDP templates (blank and completed) and other resources:

<https://bit.ly/VT-postdoc-IDP-resources>

<https://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development/individual-development-plan/>

<https://career.ucsf.edu/IDP>

Academic Career Readiness Assessment

<https://career.ucsf.edu/phds/academic/acra>



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