

# How and Why Practitioners Use Career Development Theories in Practice

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# What is a theory?

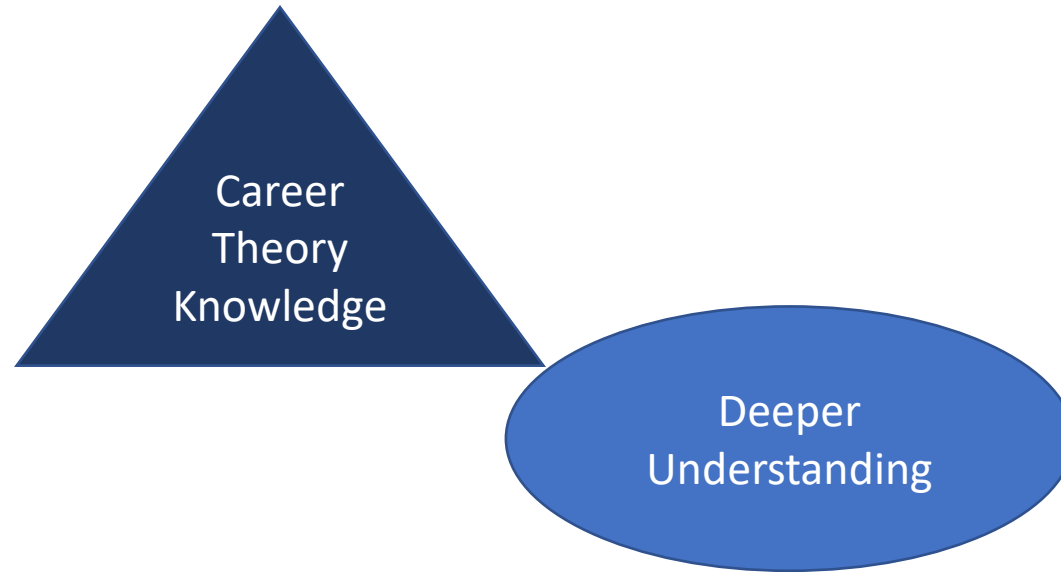
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- Developing theories is the way we make sense of the world
- Theories explain, predict and delight (Weick, 1989)
- They aim to simplify complexity and highlight relationships
- The more complex the field, the more we need theories

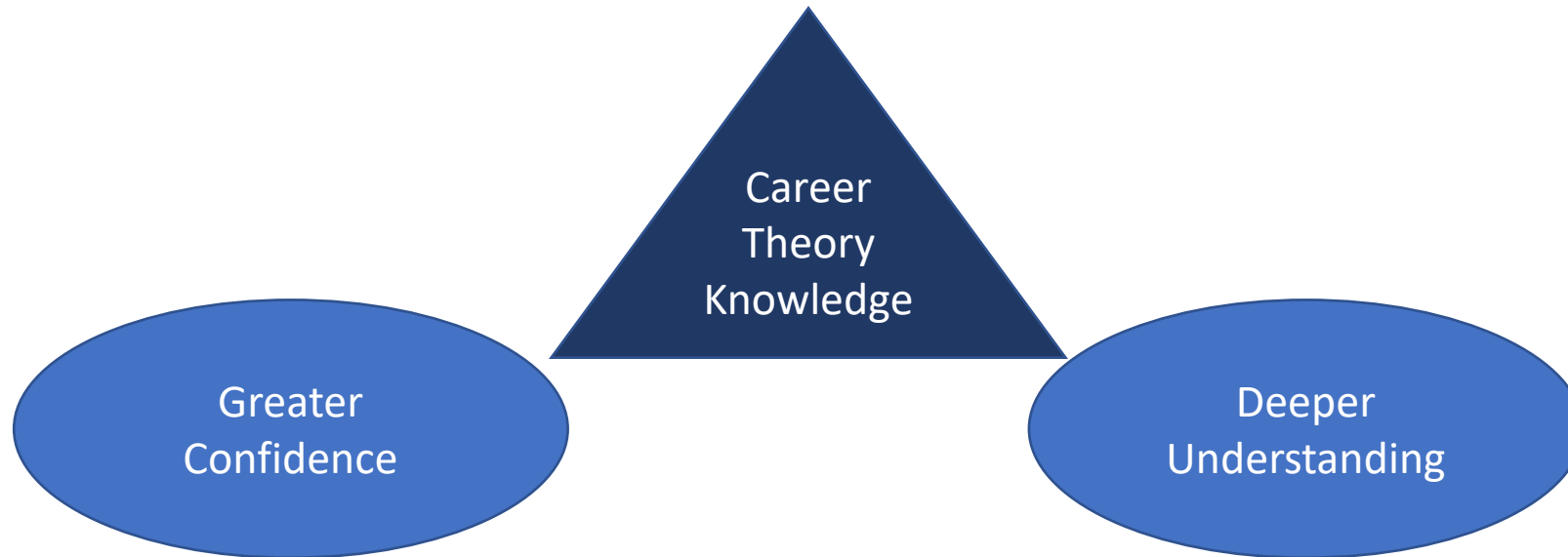
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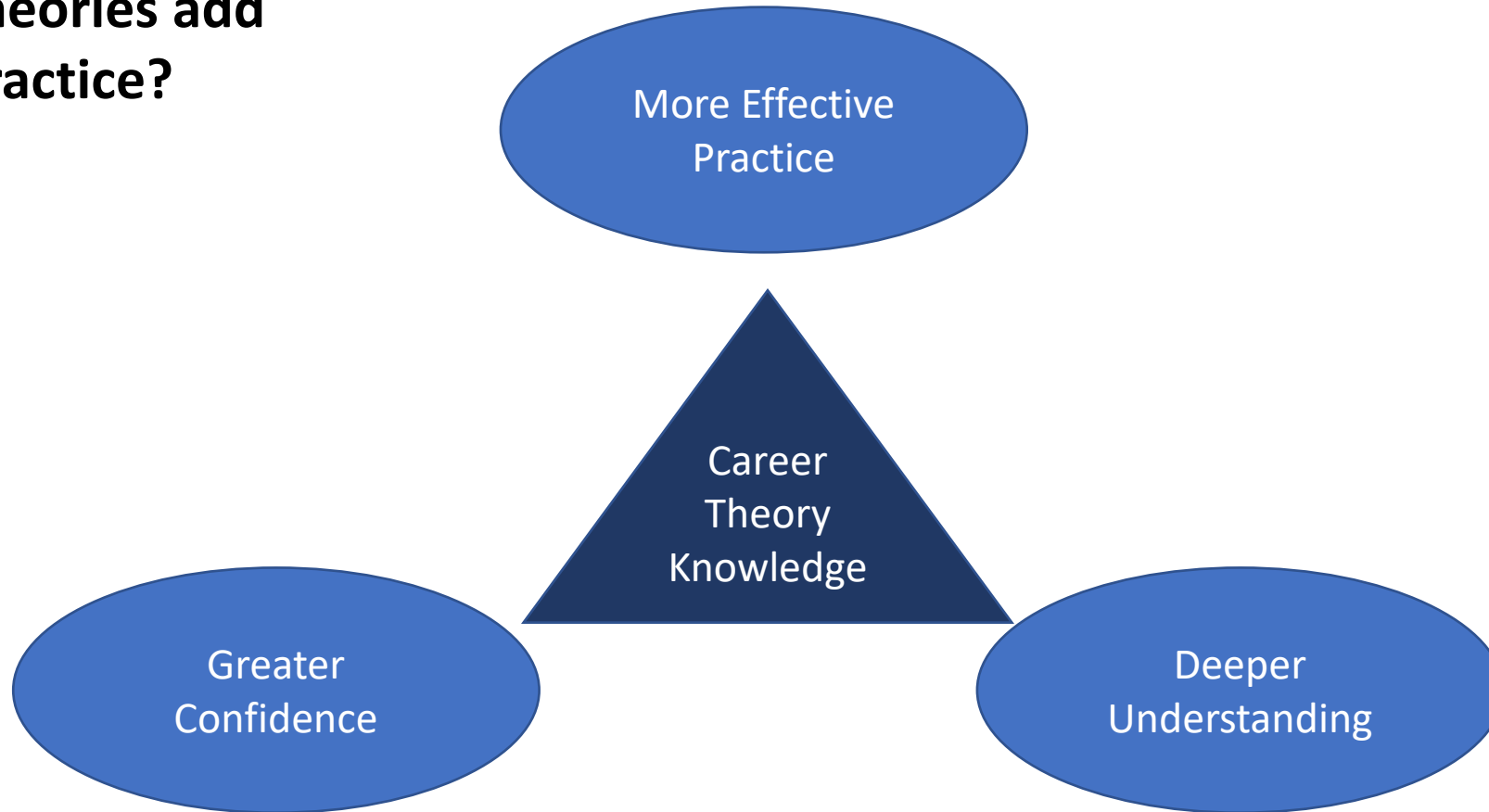
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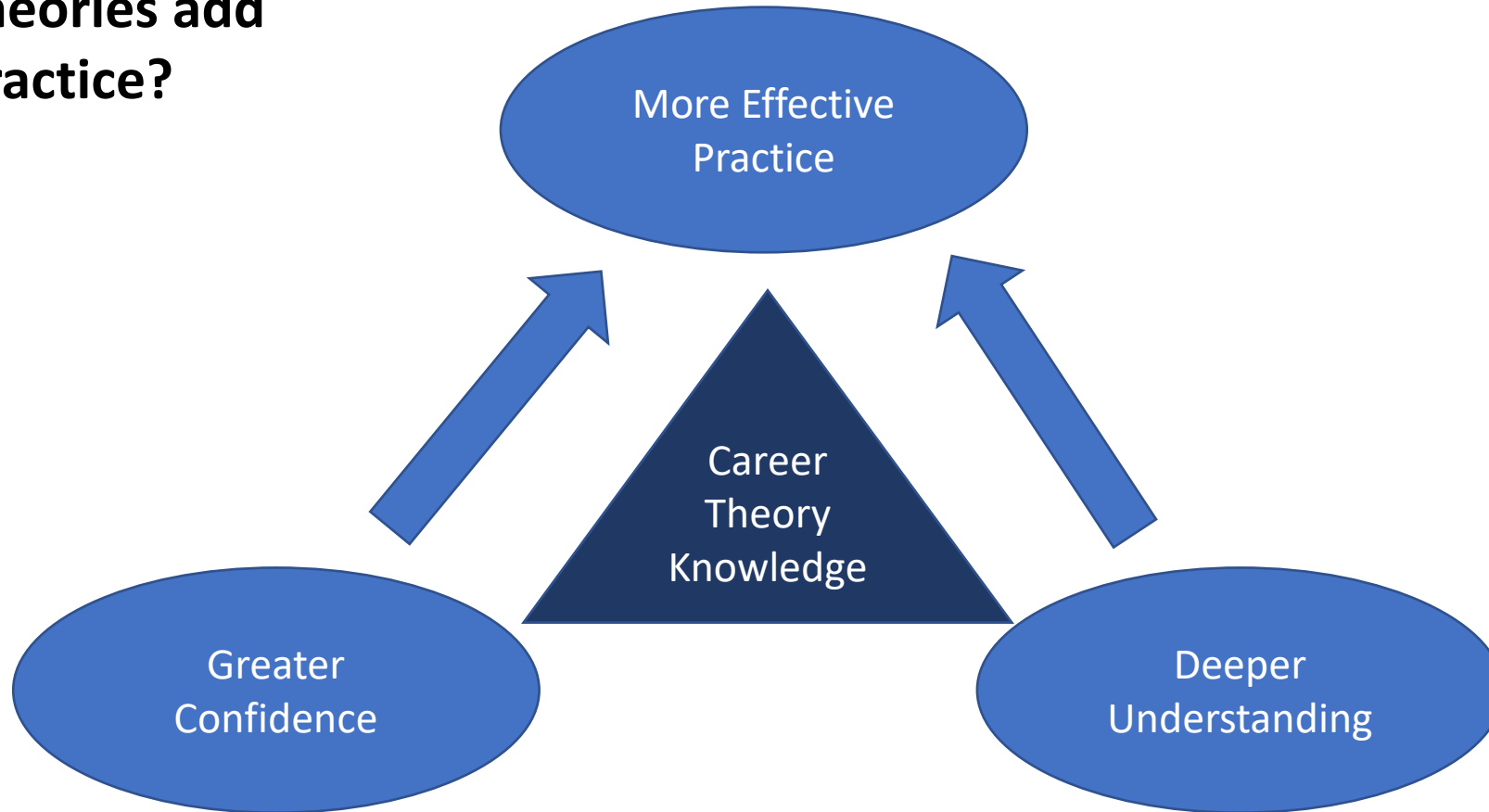
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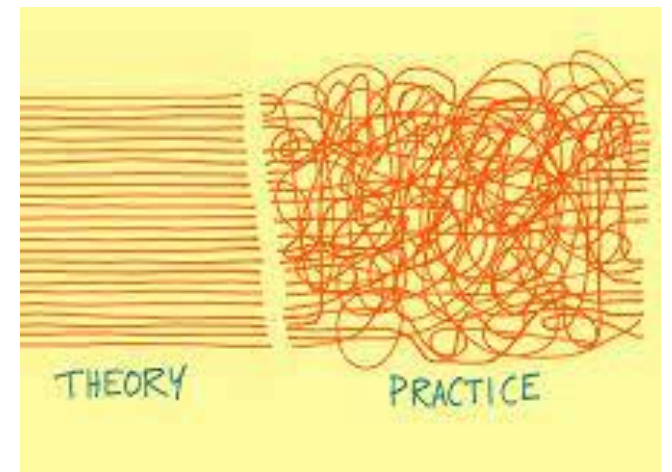
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# Challenges of using theories in practice

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- How to find out about new theories
  - Initial training is generally good but there could be more CPD
- The language used
- Working out how to use them
  - Training focuses on the theories themselves, not how to use them in practice





**Which are your favourite career development theories?**

**What do you like about them?**



# Favourite Theories

## Top 5 Traditional Theories

Planned Happenstance

Community Interaction

Trait and Factor

Life Stages

Opportunity Structures

## Top 5 Less Well-Known Theories

Career Construction Theory

Identity Theory

Transtheoretical Model of Change

Positive Psychology

Career Adaptabilities

# Using theories in your career practice

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1. To understand and empathise
2. To direct the conversation
3. To normalise and validate
4. To plan activities



# 1. To understand and empathise

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- The theories allow you to build up a 'working hypothesis'
- They allow you to see your clients' situation more quickly
- They help you to be more non-judgmental



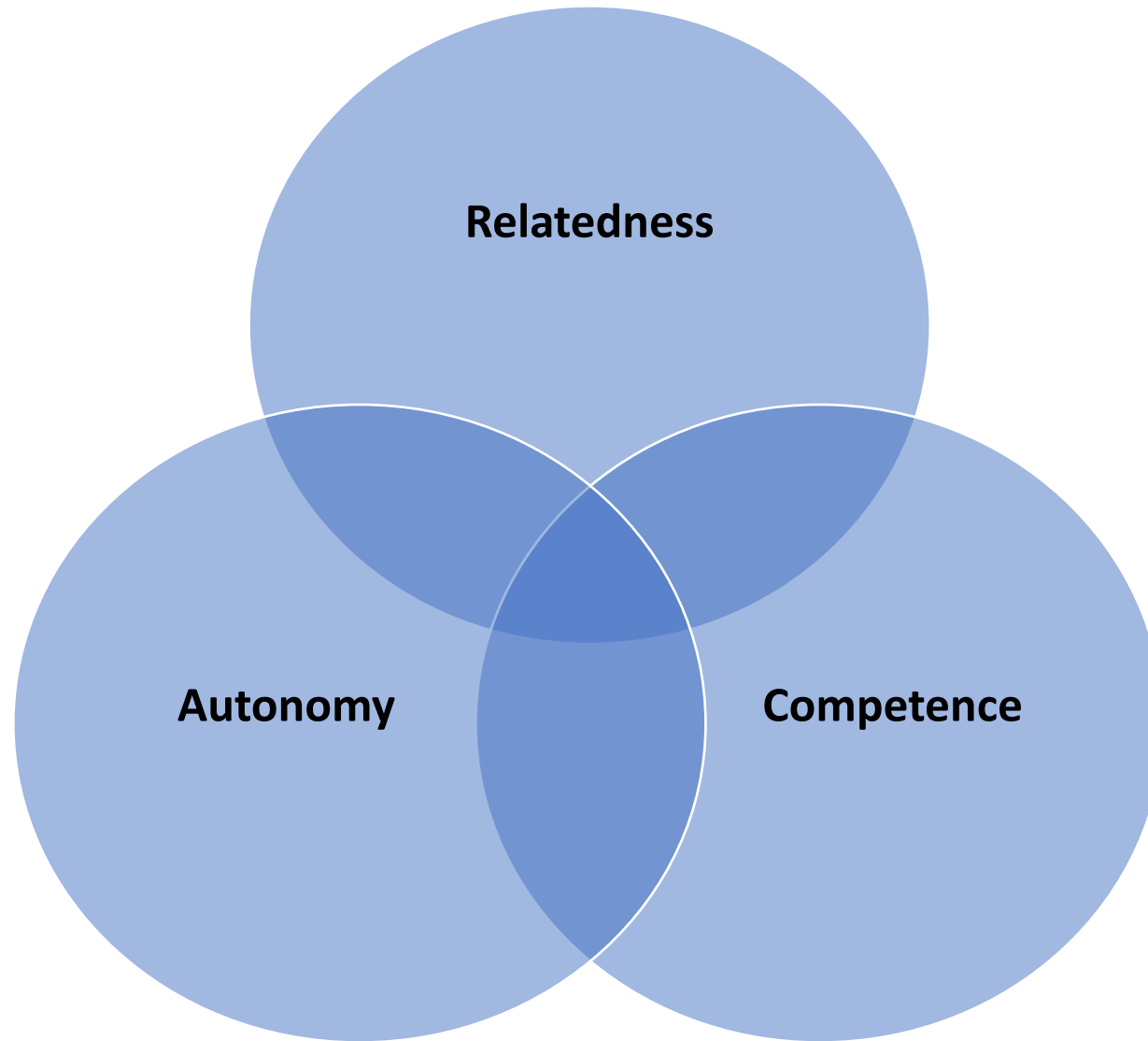


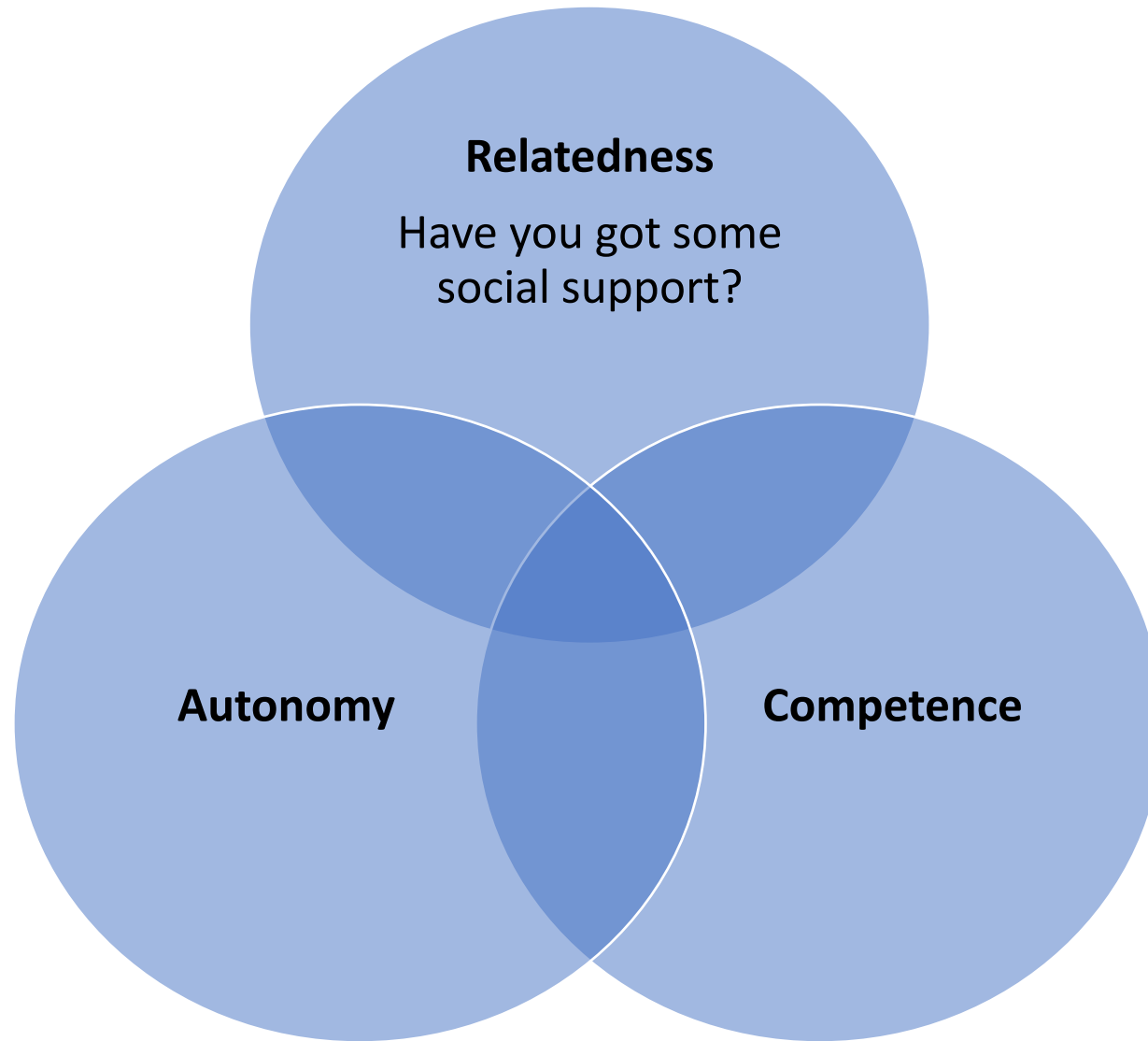
**Helping to understand and empathise with our clients:**

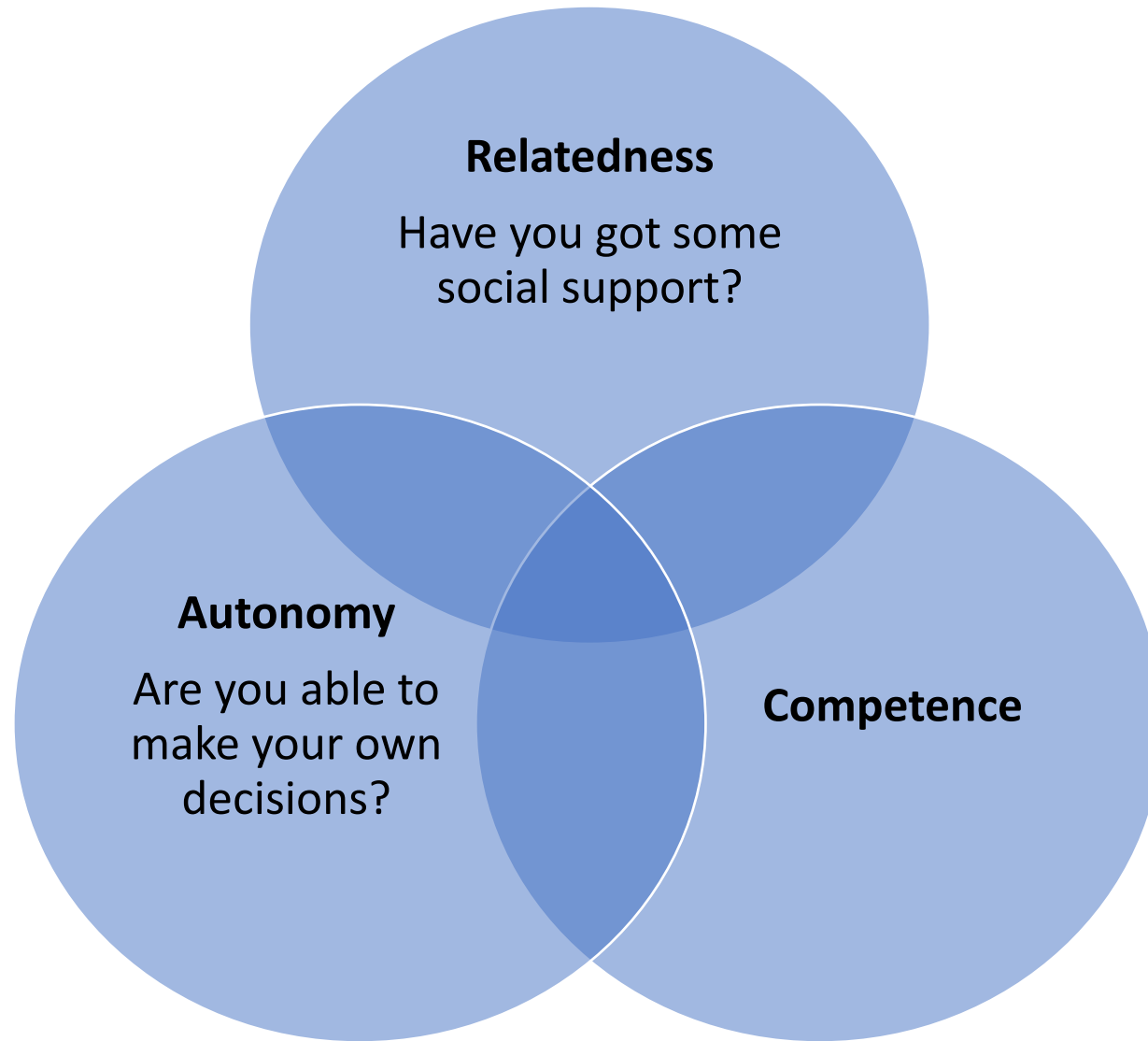
## **Self-Determination Theory**

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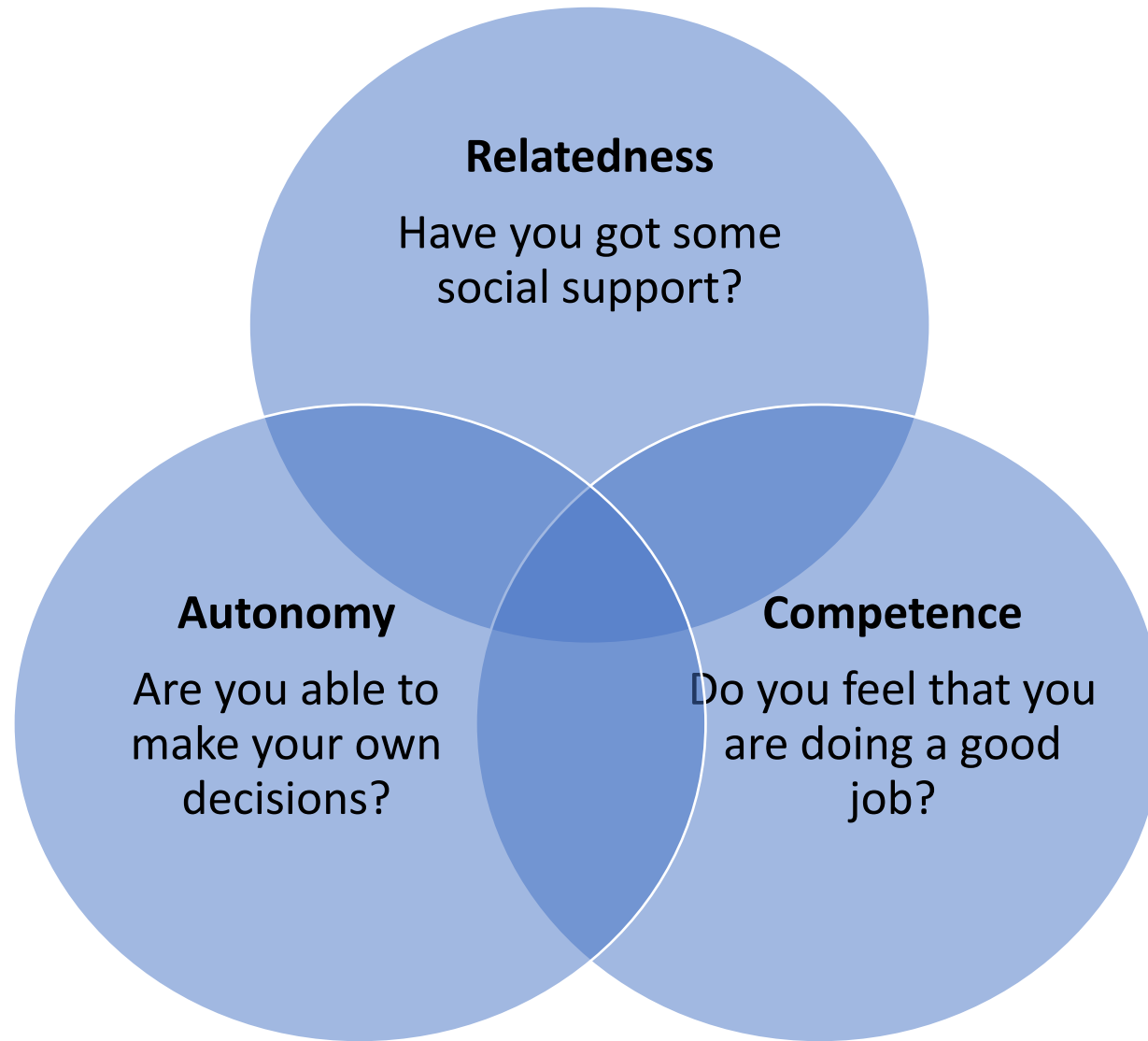
Ryan & Deci, 1985











# 2. To guide the conversation

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- The theories suggest useful questions or exercises





**Helping to guide the conversation:**

## **Career Inaction Theory**

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De Vos & Verbruggen, 2021

# Inertia-enhancing mechanisms

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## **Fear and anxiety**

Career choices almost always have an uncertain outcome

## **Short term-ism**

Career choices generally entail giving up something safe and familiar

## **Cognitive overload**

Career choices are extraordinarily complex



# What can help?

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## **Fear and anxiety**

Role models

## **Short term-ism**

A crystal clear desired future

## **Cognitive overload**

Step by step approach



# 3. To normalise and validate

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- Sharing your theories explicitly with your clients can make them realise that they aren't alone,
- that their choices or experiences are valid,
- and that they haven't failed





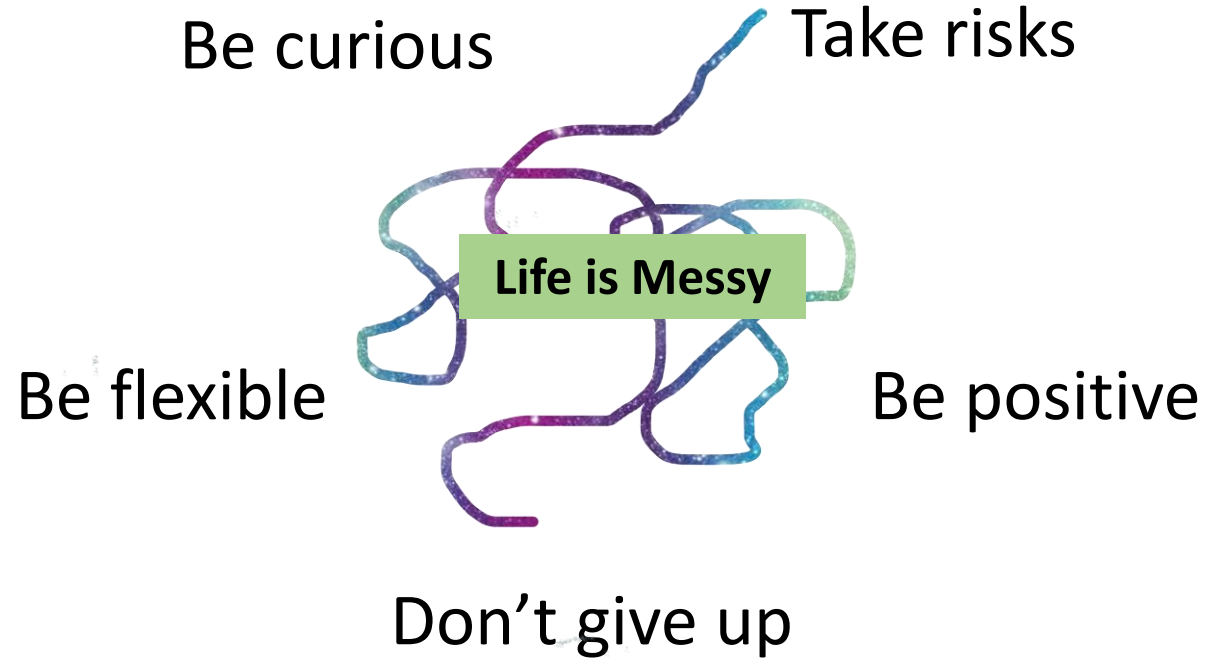
**Helping to normalise and validate:**

**Planned Happenstance**

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Mitchell et al., 1997

**You can't control life but  
you can look out for  
opportunities and make  
the most of them.**





# 4. To plan activities

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- The theories allow you to plan a career education programme or session





**Helping to plan activities:**

**Career AdaptAbilities**

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Porfeli & Savickas, 2012

# Coping with modern work: Savickas and Porfeli's model of Career AdaptAbilities

## **Career curiosity**

Being open to ideas  
and looking for  
opportunities

## **Career control**

Taking ownership of  
your career

## **Career concern**

Looking ahead and  
planning for the  
future

## **Career confidence**

Having the self-belief  
to make choices and  
pursue goals

# The Career AdaptAbilities Model

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- 1) Ask your clients to reflect on their current levels of each of the four Cs. There is a questionnaire (<http://www.vocopher.com/ms/caas/CAAS%20master.pdf>) that can help.
- 1) **Career concern:** visualisation exercises (eg possible selves) that focus on clients' future identities
- 2) **Career curiosity:** using stories to pique clients' interest in finding out more about different opportunities
- 3) **Career confidence:** offering opportunities for clients to practice and to get positive feedback on (eg) interview skills
- 4) **Career control:** boosting self-awareness and giving clients tools for dealing with anxiety

# Resources

- Arthur, N., Neault, R., & McMahon, M. (2019). *Career Theories and Models at Work: ideas for practice*. Toronto: Ceric
- MARCR Career Professionals Website: <https://marcr.net/marcr-for-career-professionals/career-theory/career-theories-and-theorists/>
- Swanson, J. & Fouad, N. (2019). *Career Theory and practice: learning through case studies*. Washington: Sage
- Yates, J. (2022). *The Career Coaching Handbook (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. Hove: Routledge

# Action Planning

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- After this session I am going to...