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Career Theories in Practice: Boosting your Capability, Credibility and Confidence

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I remember learning about career development theories when I trained to be a careers adviser – Holland's trait and factor theory, Super and his Life Stages, and a range of other useful approaches. The theories were all interesting and they made sense, but for me, that was as far as it went: I liked them, but I didn't know what to do with them. So I put them to one side, and focused on honing my career practice in a different way.

I don't think I'm alone. In the last couple of decades (yes... I did my training a long time ago) I think we have got much better at teaching theories. But still, I think there aren't many of us who would describe our practice as theory-driven: we might know about the theories, but we don't really know how to apply them in our practice.

But theories are supposed to be used – that's their whole point. And research has shown that theory-driven practice boosts our professional confidence, enhances our credibility and makes us more effective practitioners. More engagement with theories is likely to be beneficial to us, our clients and our profession. Theory-driven practice is definitely a good idea, but how can we make it work in practice?

If my experience resonates with you, and if you would like to engage more with theories, we have something that might help. On the CDI's website, free to all members, is a new online, pre-recorded CPD course that I've been working on, on using career development theories in practice.

The course is designed for you. We know you are busy, and have a lot of competing demands on your time and that you only have a limited space for CPD, so we've made the course very practical and very accessible.

It's designed in bite-sized chunks so that you can fit it in around your other commitments, and the content is provided through video clips, audio podcasts and written notes so that you can digest it all just the way you want to. We've got quizzes, stretch challenges, further readings and interviews with practitioners, and you can just dip in and out, looking at the bits that are going to be useful for you, as and when you want.

There are 18 career theories up there at the moment. Some are the old ones – the familiar favourites (such as Holland's RIASEC model and Law's Community Interaction Theory); there are also some new ones- possibly even things that have been developed in the years since you trained (Career Inaction Theory, Career Self-Determination Theory); and there are some borrowed theories – taken from psychology or sociology and applied to a careers context (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Seligmans's PERMA model). It's all very practical with lots of suggestions about what you can actually do with this new knowledge, and interviews with practitioners describing how they use the theories with their clients.

We hope it will be useful for you whoever you are - whether you are a newly qualified practitioner looking for some ideas, or an experienced colleague looking for a refresher. Please have a look and let us know what you think! It's live now and you can find it here: