

Esther Wang | Career Coach | Beacon Career

1. What drew you to the world of career coaching (counseling, advising)?

In 2010, I embarked on a journey into the field of career counseling, and by 2017, I had also delved into coaching. As of now, I work with both types of clients.

So, why did I decide to enter the field of career counseling? The answer lies in my own experience. In 2009, after five years of working in Beijing, I found myself at a crossroads, uncertain about the direction of my career. It was then that I discovered a company offering career consulting services to individuals. At that time, the concept of career planning was relatively unknown in China, but it was quickly gaining traction. I became a paying client of this service, and after the sessions, I gained valuable insights into my interests, values, and the types of jobs that aligned with my aspirations. I realized that career consulting was a great fit for me, so I decided to undergo training with this company. In 2010, I began working as a part-time career consultant for them.

As for coaching, it entered my life due to a transformative experience. In 2012, one of my colleagues in the career counseling field started learning coaching and needed clients to practice on. I eagerly volunteered to be her client. I had always been curious and open to various ways of supporting people. At that time, I felt a strong urge to resolve an important aspect of my life but didn't quite know what it was. During one coaching session, I had a profound revelation – I saw a woman standing in a desert. In that moment, I realized that I wanted to go to Africa. Subsequently, I discovered an 18-month volunteering program, which included one year in the U.S. and six months in Malawi. In 2013, I left my job and joined this program in Michigan.

Upon completing the volunteering program, I relocated to Shanghai to establish my private practice. In 2017, I pursued coaching training, and I am now a holder of the PCC credential from ICF (International Coach Federation).

Both career counseling and coaching have been incredibly supportive and beneficial for my personal growth and development. It was this positive experience, my innate curiosity, and my genuine desire to assist others that brought me to where I am today.

2. What is your favorite part of the job?

My favorite aspect of my work is the process of helping clients discover themselves, explore their potential, and ultimately become the best version of themselves.

Throughout this journey, I consistently witness the incredible potential and inner resources within each individual. It's truly inspiring to see them realize that they have the power to become whomever they aspire to be and to shape the roles they wish to play in their lives.

Additionally, this transformative process has a profound impact on my own personal growth and self-sufficiency. Of course, like any journey, there are challenges along the way. However, I welcome these difficulties as opportunities for growth. They motivate me to seek innovative solutions, whether it involves exploring new methods, venturing into different fields,

reading extensively, attending fresh training programs, or seeking guidance from fellow coaches. Overcoming these challenges not only enhances my ability to support others but also marks significant milestones in my own development.

Furthermore, these challenges have led me to delve deeper into the realms of culture and the intricate structures of the human psyche. I've expanded my exploration to encompass various fields such as mindset, energy, meditation, the relationship between illness and the subconscious, mindfulness, and the pursuit of happiness. An interesting outcome of this exploration is that it has allowed me to cultivate lasting happiness and inner peace. Many of my clients regard me as their role models.

3. How has NCCDA played a role in your career?

I became a member of NCCDA in July of last year.

Firstly, NCCDA provided me with a platform to amplify my voice. I had the privilege of delivering a presentation at the NCCDA conference in March. This experience marked both my inaugural attendance at the conference and my debut as a presenter.

Secondly, NCCDA facilitated invaluable connections within the realm of career coaching in North Carolina. Through NCCDA, I had the pleasure of getting to know professionals like Belinda [Wilkerson] and Deanna [Knighton]. Additionally, NCCDA's 'Morning Musings' sessions allowed me to connect with other coaches from Charlotte, particularly forging a strong bond with Jamie [Johnson]. It seemed like Jamie and I consistently crossed paths during these Morning Musings.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to Belinda for providing me with this interview opportunity. It has been a chance to showcase my journey, and I deeply appreciate Belinda's support.

Looking ahead, I am eager to contribute more to NCCDA in the future.

4. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing our profession today?

For career counselors our challenges are from external working environment and changing needs of our clients. High technology (AI like ChatGPT), remote working style, gig economy, skills mismatch, and so on are shifting the job market.

Evolving client expectations - clients today have higher expectations. They are more concerned about their overall well-being and mental health (career-related stress and burnout have become more prevalent.) Many individuals have reflected on their lives and careers during the pandemic, seeking more meaningful work and the purpose of the life. This requires career counselors to provide holistic support.

In my experience, I've noticed that clients are often more anxious than before. During sessions, some clients express their emotions through tears, while others report physical discomfort. This

underscores the importance of helping clients manage their emotions and connect with their bodies as part of the counseling process.

Addressing these challenges necessitates that career counselors continually update their skills and engage in continuous learning. Our role extends beyond assisting clients in making career choices; we are also responsible for supporting their overall well-being and personal growth.

5. When you aren't working, what do you like to do?

Traveling: I've had the privilege of exploring nearly 20 countries spanning five continents, as well as more than 25 states in the U.S. Traveling allows me to immerse myself in different cultures, savor diverse cuisines, meet fascinating individuals, and experience various lifestyles.

Reading: My reading preferences are quite diverse. I have a deep appreciation for literature, followed by an interest in social sciences, philosophy, history, psychology, self-improvement books, and professional literature. During my time in the United States, I often found solace in reading children's books, which can be incredibly touching.

Watching Nature Documentaries: I'm an avid viewer of nature documentaries, with a particular fondness for BBC's programs. The African segments, in particular, captivate me. Witnessing herds of animals migrating across vast grasslands showcases the remarkable power of life. These nature programs provide me with a tremendous sense of energy and wonder.

Self-Development Practice: Every day, I dedicate over an hour to various self-development practices, including mantra recitation, meditation, emotional balance exercises, and maintaining a gratitude diary.

Gardening: Caring for my indoor plants and tending to my vegetable and flower garden is both a hobby and a source of relaxation.

Animal Shelter Volunteering: I volunteer at an animal shelter, where I enjoy walking dogs and socializing with cats, contributing to their well-being.

Refugee Volunteer Work: As a volunteer, I actively support a female refugee's group in the Knitting Together Group. From these women, I learned the art of crochet, and I've even crocheted a dress for myself.

These activities not only enrich my life but also reflect my passion for personal growth and contributing to the community.

6. What five terms would you use to describe yourself?

Curiosity: I'm naturally curious about the world around me. I love exploring different cultures, trying new foods, and meeting diverse people. Whether it's diving into books from various corners of the world, my curiosity keeps me excited about learning and experiencing new things.

Bravery: I've made some bold life choices that reflect my adventurous spirit. After college, I moved to Beijing alone for work. I quit my job to attend volunteering program. and traveled solo to numerous countries. Starting my own business in Shanghai and later moving to the U.S. were also significant leaps.

To be myself and live the lifestyle which I dreamed is the bravest thing in my life.

Critical thinking: I possess a strong sense of independence and critical thinking. I prefer to dig deep into understanding the 'why' behind things and avoid blindly following authority. Research and hands-on experience are my preferred methods of learning.

Spiritual: I have a profound connection with all living beings, nature, earth, the universe, and my higher self. My quest for meaning and purpose has spanned over 40 years. I am dedicated to personal growth and regularly practice meditation, mantra, and mindfulness to nurture my inner well-being.

My deep connection with plants, stemming from my father's traditional Chinese medicine practice, has led me to cultivate nearly 50 indoor plants, which bring me a sense of peace and harmony.

People Reader: Given my extensive experience working with and studying people, I have developed a strong ability to read and understand individuals. This skill greatly benefits my counseling and coaching career. I can quickly recognize and identify faces. For example, when I encounter a new face in my life or on TV, it often feels strangely familiar. I quickly search my brain and can identify similar faces in no time.

7. If you could be any fictional character, who would it be and why?

Maleficent from Disney film 'Maleficent'



She is powerful with big wings, she has pure love, and she is aggressive. She can be evil and doesn't need to be a good woman always. Now I am 43; I don't want to be always good. Sometimes I can show my "bad sides". I feel much freer and stronger.