

# Supporting achievers to unblock sustainable career success: Theory, strategy and practice

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This is a ground-breaking handbook for practitioners and professionals engaged in helping others to unlock and sustain their careers. Its author, Carolyn Parry, considers the rise of neoliberalism, meritocracy and parental pressure and how these have influenced the growth of an 'achievement culture', and the specific challenges (which she describes as 'career thieves') that this growth brings to sustaining career success. She addresses the complex inter-relationships between purpose and fulfilment, happiness and achievement in a clear, accessible and practical manner. Drawing on her in-depth knowledge and considerable experience, she skilfully grounds the theoretical and neurological underpinning in real-life case studies and powerful coaching activities, thereby enabling practitioners to sustain their own careers, and enhance and develop their professional practice.

The book addresses seven 'career thieves' that are increasingly prevalent in the world today and can all too easily undermine sustainable success: perfectionism, comparison, approval-seeking, overwhelm, depletion, disconnection and burnout. Following an explanatory introduction and scene setting, each chapter is structured around a case study and addresses a different 'thief', with the final chapter outlining strategic ideas or 'seven guardians' that seek to ensure achievers receive the support they need to maintain clarity, energy, and purpose over the long term.

The book's structure means that the reader can read it from cover to cover or dip into specific chapters depending on the needs of their client. The exploration and application of

models and practical activities adopted in each chapter also provide a support framework that practitioners can draw on to inform and develop their own professional practice. Personally, I would have liked a more traditional style of referencing that enabled me to explore the supporting studies, especially the underpinning neuroscience. However, I appreciate that this could stilt the flow of the narrative and the appendix of key theory summaries is sufficient to enable the reader to investigate further should they wish to.

Notable strengths of the book are the ways in which the case study approach illustrates how hidden fears can be explored with sensitivity and compassion; how earlier experiences seen as failures can be reframed as signposts and patterns of behaviour can be seen not as flaws but as misplaced strengths – ‘qualities that needed better boundaries, not abandonment’; how the need of approval can be transformed from being a driver to being an outcome of authentic action; how unhelpful internal dialogues can shift and unlock new narratives; and how it is possible to restore the balance between self-sacrifice and self-neglect.

If you work in career development or executive coaching then I can strongly recommend this book is as a worthwhile investment. It provides an understanding of those conundrums when our clients are seen as good at their job yet feel lost, unfulfilled or exhausted, and trapped in the pursuit of success. It offers a practical guide to helping clients restore their sense of agency, gently challenge internalised beliefs, reduce cognitive load, address career misalignment and (re)build realistic, authentic and sustainable careers.

