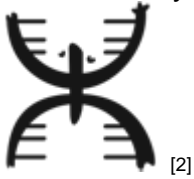
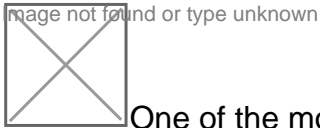


Letter to my younger self: What do you do when you don't know what to do? ^[1]

Submitted by [Antonieta L Salguero Rivera](#) ^[2] on 8 March 2018 - 6:34pm





One of the most challenging decisions to make for most young adults is choosing a career path to follow. In the United States, about one-third of students enrolled in bachelor's degree programs changed majors ([National Center for Education Statistics](#) ^[3]), but the challenge doesn't stop there as it is even more difficult to figure out what to do after obtaining that degree. Ten years ago, when I was living in Ecuador and trying to figure out what to do with my life, I would have never imagined that I was going to decide to pursue a doctorate degree in Chemical Biology. Now, here I am, and here are the three most important things I wish I knew and did sooner.

Find a group of mentors: Surround yourself with people who can help you move forward. A mentor can be a teacher, professor, or a working professional who is in a position that you aspire to occupy. Personally, I found a couple faculty mentors when I stated my undergraduate degree and we still manage to keep in touch. The most important thing is to build and keep a good relationship with them. You can do this by setting up casual meetings and keeping them updated about important milestones you accomplish in life. The main thing to remember that your mentor is there as a guide to help you make important decisions regarding the future of your career, but it is your responsibility to make the most out of the time and advice they give you.

Be a mentor/volunteer: You would be surprised of how much and how early you can start to give back. You don't need to be at the cusp of your career to be someone else's mentor. This will not only help you become a better mentee but will develop your leadership skills. Volunteering is also a great way to learn something new and the feeling of fulfillment that you will get when working towards a meaningful cause is invaluable. You can look for local organizations that recruit volunteers at your current institution or find a club that focuses on community service.

Start building skills—It is never too early: Be mindful of what you do with your free time. When we are young we take time for granted, but some little things like starting to learn a new language can make a huge difference in the job market. There are plenty of organizations to help you achieve your professional goals, and if you are thinking of graduate school the [McNair Scholars Program](#) ^[4] at your university is a great way to get there.

The information that I have shared here may not be relevant for you at this moment, but think about the young women in your life and what advice you would give to them. Sharing your own experiences with them can help shape their future.

Tags:

- [yale ciencia academy](#) ^[5]
- [mentoring](#) ^[6]
- [career advice](#) ^[7]

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