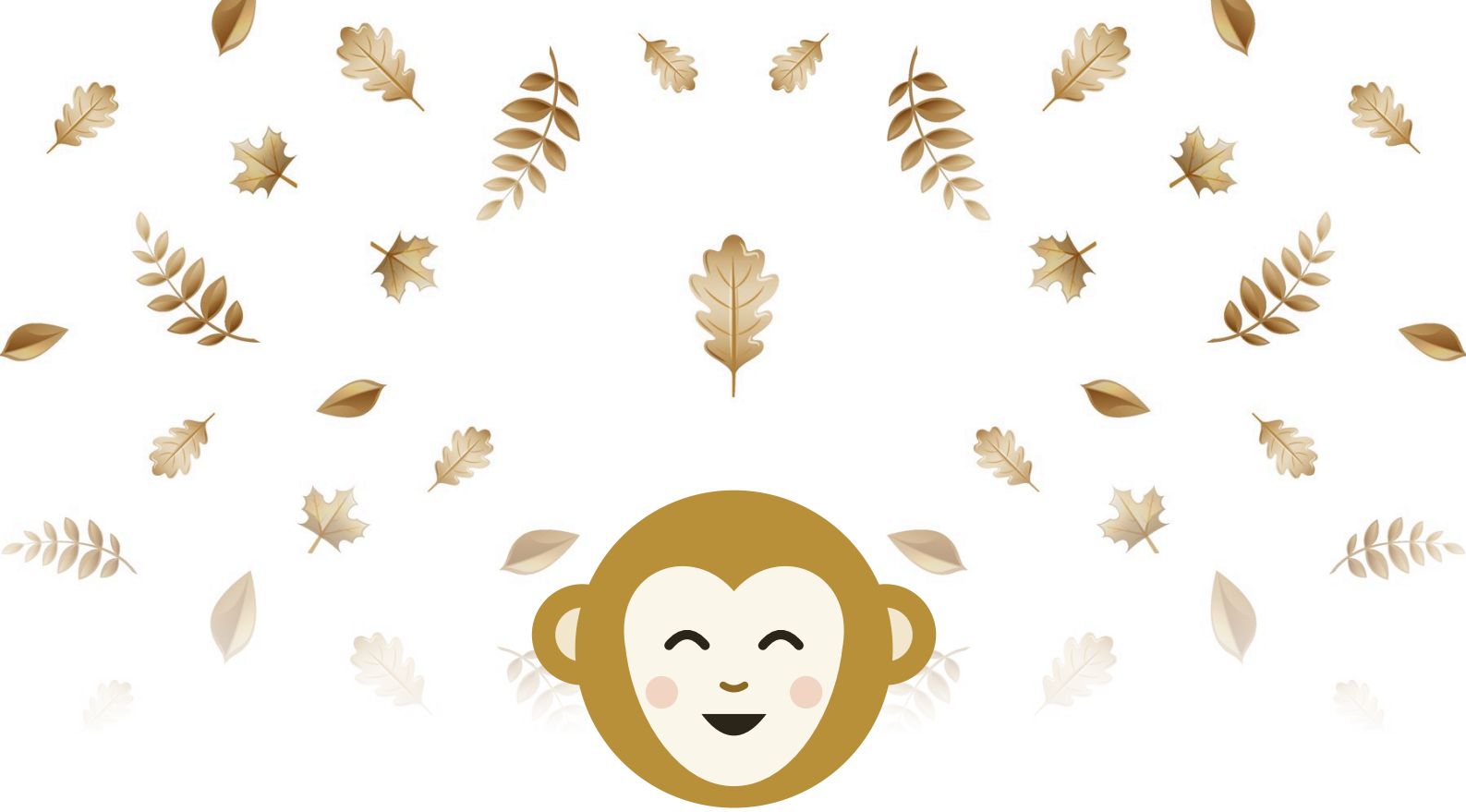


A NEW LEAF GUIDE

Tame Those Mind Monkeys

A cheerful guide to the little voices that say you can't, and how to answer them kindly.

Everyone has them, especially in the middle of a job search. You can't send them away for good, but you can stop letting them drive. Print this, grab a pen and a cup of tea, and get to know your troop.



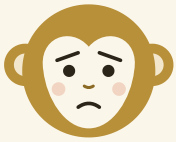
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MEET THE TROOP

Six Monkeys You Might Recognise

A mind monkey is a thought that chatters louder than the facts. Buddhist teachers have long called restless thinking the monkey mind. Give each one a name and it loses a little of its power, because now you can see it for what it is: a feeling, not a forecast.



The Doubter

SAYS

"You're not good enough for that job."

SAY BACK

I don't need to be perfect. I need to be good at what this role needs, and I have the evidence that I am.



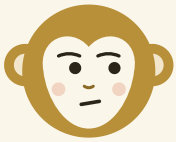
The Clock-Watcher

SAYS

"You've been out too long. They've all moved on."

SAY BACK

Time away changed what I can offer. It didn't erase it, and I kept learning all along.



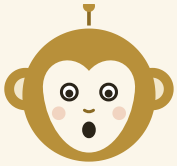
The Comparer

SAYS

"Everyone else is so much further ahead."

SAY BACK

Their path isn't mine. My chapters gave me things theirs never could.



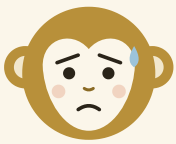
The Robot Monkey

SAYS

"AI will do your job anyway, so why bother?"

SAY BACK

Tools change the work. Judgement, care and experience are still mine, and I can learn the tools.



The Apologiser

SAYS

"You'll have to explain the gap. They'll think less of you."

SAY BACK

It isn't a gap, it's a chapter, and I know exactly what I did with it.



The Not-Yet

SAYS

"Wait until you feel ready."

SAY BACK

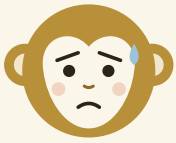
Ready is a feeling that turns up after I start, so I'm starting.

Spot one in your New Leaf? When you type something like "probably not a real job" into your story, New Leaf quietly leaves it out and tells you a mind monkey was spotted. That's your cue to turn the page.

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When the Honest Reason Feels Risky

Here is the tightrope nobody warns you about. Recruiters say never explain a gap with your partner's career, and never explain it negatively, as though there simply wasn't any work. They also say never volunteer your family situation, because it shouldn't count and bias sometimes counts it anyway. So what is left to say when the honest reason is a posting, a pregnancy, your children or a tough job market?



The Over-Explainer

SAYS

"Tell them everything, or they'll think you're hiding something."

SAY BACK

Privacy isn't secrecy. I can be completely honest and still choose what I share, because what matters is the work I did.

Decide Before the Day

Choose how much you are comfortable sharing while you are calm, not in the interview chair. This is **Wise Mind** at work: it hears the worry and still makes the sensible choice.

One Honest Line, Then the Work

You owe nobody a reason. Something like "I took two years away from paid work, and in that time I led…" is true, calm and complete. Then move straight on to what you did.

Check the Fear

"They'll think I'm not committed" is an opinion, not a fact. Use **Fact or Opinion** to sort the two, then answer the real question underneath, which is whether you are ready now.

If They Ask Anyway

Use **STOPP**. Take a breath, step back and steer kindly: "I'm fully committed to this role. Shall I tell you how I'd approach the first six months?" You never have to answer questions about family.

MY ONE HONEST LINE

WHAT I DID WITH THAT TIME

None of this is your fault. A posting, a family or a hard market is a circumstance, not a flaw in you. The Decider Skills page explains these skills in full, and *Ready for the Room* shows lines that walk this tightrope well.

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YOUR TURN

Catch It, Check It, Change It

Three small steps. Write them down the first few times, whether you type into the lines, use GoodNotes and an Apple Pencil or print the page. Soon you'll do them in your head before the monkey has finished its sentence.

1 Catch It



What is the monkey saying, word for word? Which monkey is it?

2 Check It



Is it a fact or a feeling? What evidence do you have against it? What would you say to a friend who said this about herself?

3 Change It



Write a truer thought: kind, specific and backed by something real. Not “I'm amazing” but “I ran a group of sixty families for two years, so I can run a project.”

Stuck on step two? The vibe coach in New Leaf is very good at this. Tell it what the monkey is saying, and it will help you find the evidence the monkey forgot to mention.

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Six Quick Tools for Noisy Days

Catch it, check it, change it works best when you feel steady enough to think. On noisier days, start here. Each of these takes a minute or two, needs nothing but you and gets easier with practice.

Name the Feeling

Say it plainly, out loud or on paper: “I’m feeling anxious” or “this is dread”. Psychologists call this affect labelling, and research shows that putting a feeling into words turns its volume down.

WHEN TO USE IT

When a feeling arrives before you know why.

The Long Sigh

Breathe in through your nose, then take a second small sip of air on top, and let it all go in one long, slow breath out. Repeat for a minute or two. A slow out-breath tells your body it is safe to settle.

WHEN TO USE IT

In the car park or the minute before a video call.

“I’m Having the Thought That…”

Put these words in front of the monkey’s line: “I’m having the thought that I’ve been out too long.” The thought is still there, but now you are watching it rather than living inside it.

WHEN TO USE IT

When one thought keeps looping.

A Moment of Kindness

Three short lines, with a hand on your heart if that feels right: “This is hard. Lots of people job hunting feel this way. May I be kind to myself today.” Speak to yourself as you would to a friend.

WHEN TO USE IT

On rejection days.

Five, Four, Three, Two, One

Name five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can touch, two you can smell and one you can taste. It brings a racing mind back into the room you are actually in.

WHEN TO USE IT

When the monkeys are racing ahead to every worst case.

A Worry Window

Give the monkeys fifteen minutes a day, at the same time, to chatter on paper. If they pipe up outside the window, tell them kindly: “Not now. Later.”

WHEN TO USE IT

When worry starts leaking into the whole day.

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WITH THANKS TO THE DECIDER

Eight Skills We Borrow From The Decider Skills

The Decider Skills, created by Michelle Ayres and Carol Vivyan, are thirty-two practical skills drawn from cognitive behavioural therapy and dialectical behaviour therapy. They are used by NHS services and schools across the UK. These eight are especially good company in a job search.

STOPP

Before you react, pause. Take a breath, step back and look at what is really happening, then choose the response that fits who you want to be. It is a lifesaver before you reply to a disappointing email.

Fact or Opinion

Ask of every monkey line: could this be proved in court, or is it a view? “They’ve all moved on” is an opinion. “I led a team of twelve” is a fact. Keep the facts and let the opinions pass.

Name the Emotion

Name what you feel and notice the urge that comes with it, such as hiding, giving up or over-preparing. Once you can see the urge, you can decide whether to follow it.

It Will Pass

Feelings rise, peak and fall, like a wave. However strong this one is, it will change. Remind yourself of a hard day that you got through, because you did.

Wise Mind

Your emotional mind says “I can’t”. Your reasonable mind lists the facts. Wise mind sits where the two overlap: it hears the feeling and still takes the sensible next step.

Opposite Action

When a feeling’s urge isn’t helping you, do the opposite. If fear says “don’t apply”, send one application today. If shame says “hide”, message one person in your network.

Sieve or Sponge

A sponge soaks up every critical comment and every silence from a recruiter. A sieve lets the unhelpful ones drain away and keeps what is useful. Choose to be the sieve.

Values

Write down what matters most to you in work, such as making a difference, learning or providing for your family. Then take one small step towards it today, even on a day when the monkeys are loud.

“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.”

As the old saying goes. Pick one skill and try it this week.

Want all thirty-two? We love the book *The Decider Skills for Self Help* by Michelle Ayres and Carol Vivyan. The free Decider Skills app is on the App Store and Google Play, and there is more at thedecider.org.uk. The Decider is a registered trade mark of The Decider Limited; the skills are described here in our own words.

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KEEP THEM FED

Feed the Monkey Good News

Monkeys get loud when they're hungry. For one week, feed yours three pieces of evidence a day: anything you did, learned, finished or helped someone achieve. Small counts. Your brain strengthens the thoughts you repeat, which scientists call neuroplasticity, so a little evidence every day wires in a truer story far better than one big pep talk.

	ONE	TWO	THREE
MON			
TUE			
WED			
THU			
FRI			
SAT			
SUN			



The monkeys will always chatter a little. That's fine. You're the one holding the pen, and you get to decide which voice writes your next chapter.

Part of New Leaf, a free vibe coaching tool for job seekers, built with the Armed Forces community in mind and open to anyone with a squiggly career: andersonco.uk/newleaf. Created by Elle Anderson. This guide is for everyday confidence, not a substitute for professional support. If the worries feel heavy or won't lift, please talk to someone you trust or your GP.

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CUT OUT AND KEEP

Your Truer Thought Cards

Write your best truer thoughts on these cards, cut along the dotted lines and keep them where you will see them: your purse, the fridge, the back of your phone case. Read one before every application.

MY TRUER THOUGHT 

MY TRUER THOUGHT 

MY TRUER THOUGHT 

MY TRUER THOUGHT 

MY TRUER THOUGHT 

MY TRUER THOUGHT 

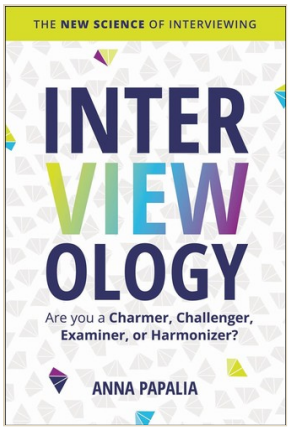
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FURTHER READING

Three Books We Love

If the monkeys have been loud lately, these three books are kind company. One will help you walk into any interview prepared, one will help you see your whole career, squiggles and all, as a strength, and one gives you a pocketful of skills for the harder days.



Interviewology

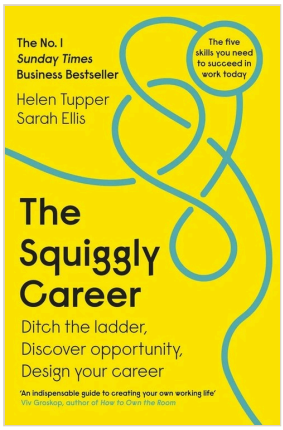
ANNA PAPALIA

A warm, practical guide to the four interview personalities, how to recognise them and how to prepare for each, written by one of the most popular career voices online. (HarperCollins, 2023)

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Find Anna at theinterviewology.com and on Instagram at @annapapalia, where her interview tips are a joy.



The Squiggly Career

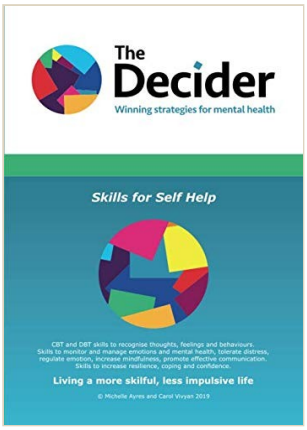
HELEN TUPPER AND SARAH ELLIS

The book that gave many of us the language for a career that does not run in a straight line, full of tools for finding your strengths and your next step. (Penguin Business, 2020)

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Find Helen and Sarah at squigglycareers.com, on Instagram at @squigglycareers and on their Squiggly Careers podcast.



The Decider Skills for Self Help

MICHELLE AYRES AND CAROL VIVYAN

A friendly, practical book of thirty-two skills drawn from CBT and DBT, for noticing your thoughts and feelings, riding out hard moments and choosing what to do next. The free app carries the skills in your pocket. (The Decider, 2019)

BUY ON AMAZON UK

BUY ON AMAZON US

Get the free Decider Skills app on the App Store or Google Play, and find more at thedecider.org.uk.

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