

Skills

to Pay the Bills



Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success



Communication

Communication skills are important to everyone - they are how we give and receive information and convey our ideas and opinions with those around us.

Communication comes in many forms:

- verbal (sounds, language, and tone of voice)
- aural (listening and hearing)
- non-verbal (facial expressions, body language, and posture)
- written (journals, emails, blogs, and text messages)
- visual (signs, symbols, and pictures)

Communication skills are ranked **FIRST** among a job candidate's "must have" skills and qualities, according to a 2010 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

It is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating TO others and learning how to interpret the information received FROM others. Knowing our audience and understanding how they need to receive information is equally important as knowing ourselves.

To an employer, good communication skills are essential. In fact, employers consistently rank good communication skills at the top of the list for potential employees.

During an interview, for example, employers are impressed by a job candidate who answers questions with more than one-word answers (such as yeah...nah...dunno), demonstrates that he or she is listening, and shares information and ideas (by asking questions for clarification and/or follow-up). The interview can be an indication to employers of how the candidate or employee will interact with supervisors, co-workers, and customers or resolve conflicts when they arise. Remember, non-verbal communication is also critical in an interview. Employers expect good eye contact, good posture, and "active" listening.

One of the challenges in the workplace is learning the specific communication styles of others and how and when to share your ideas or concerns. Though some supervisors may specifically ask for your opinion, others may assume if there is something important they need to know, you will bring it to their attention - or if there is something you are unsure about, you will ask. Knowing how to listen carefully and when to ask for help is important. If an employee and a supervisor learn to communicate well (in whatever method that works), there is a greater likelihood of job retention and promotion.

Journaling Activity

Think about a time when a parent, teacher, or friend criticized you. What happened? How did this make you feel? How did you handle it? Are you proud of the way you handled it? What might you do differently if something like this happens in the future? Did this experience change the way you offer feedback to others

Activity 1. What's Your Point?

ROLE PLAY #1

Scenario: Jade has her first job mowing lawns. She works for her best friend's brother who owns a landscaping company. She's had the job for about three weeks and really feels like she's getting into the groove. In fact, it's the perfect job for her: she loves being outside and appreciates the fact that she can work on her own and even listen to her MP3 player! Jade arrives early at Mr. Z.'s house (her first customer of the day) and gets ready to begin mowing.

Mr. Z.: You're finally here!

Jade: Hi, Mr. Z. Yes, I'm here to mow your lawn.

Mr. Z.: Well, you didn't do a very good job last week.

Jade: I wasn't the person who mowed your lawn, but I'd like to hear why you were unhappy with the job.

Mr. Z.: It was just a mess!

Jade: Can you please be more specific? What exactly didn't you like? In what way was it a mess?

Mr. Z.: Well, it looked just awful.

Jade: Mr. Z., I really want to make sure that whatever upset you last time doesn't happen again. If you will tell me exactly what you want done differently in the future, it will really help me to be sure your lawn is mowed just the way you like it.

Mr. Z.: Well, the cut grass was left on the lawn, and the edges weren't straight.

Jade: Okay, let me be sure I understand. Besides mowing, you want us to be sure to rake up, remove the cut grass, and be more careful to straighten the edging.

Mr. Z.: Yes, that is exactly what I expect!

Jade: Thanks, Mr. Z. I'll be sure to do those things today, and I will let the boss know that's what you'd like done from now on.

Mr. Z.: Thank you very much.

What's Your Point?

ROLE PLAY #2

Scenario: Will works in a large dental office and winds up rushing to get to work every day after school. His job tasks include filing, making photocopies, stuffing envelopes, and answering the telephone. Ms. T, the office manager, has asked to speak with Will about his time sheet.

Ms. T.: Hello, Will. I would like to talk with you.

Will: Yes, Ms. T.?

Ms. T.: Will, I've been watching your time this week, and I'm quite concerned.

Will: Ms. T., I see that you're not happy, but will you please be more specific?

Ms. T.: You're not getting here on time.

Will: I know I've been arriving to work late, and I am sorry.

Ms. T.: Well, look at your time today. You were supposed to be here at 3:15 this afternoon and it's now 3:30 and you just walked in. We need to be able to depend on you to be here at the time you're scheduled to work.

Will: I understand that you expect me to be here on time. I'm getting here as quickly as I can after school. Would it be possible to change my start time to 3:30? I can put in the extra 15 minutes at the end of the workday instead.

Ms. T.: Well, I suppose we can try that. Are you absolutely sure that you can make it here every day by 3:30?

Will: I'm sorry that I've been getting here late and upsetting you. I really do think that I can be here every day by 3:30, but if for some reason I can't make it here by that time, I will be sure to call to let you know.

Ms. T.: That would be very helpful. Thank you, Will.



Activity

1. Did Will handle this situation well? Why or why not?
2. Have you been in a similar situation? How did you handle it?
3. What could Will have done to prevent this conversation?

Flipping the Switch

We should use different communication styles in different situations. For example, the way we talk with our families is not the way we speak at work.

- FRIENDS
- FAMILY
- PROFESSIONAL (INTERVIEWER, EMPLOYER, TEACHER, ETC.)

Be sure to explore BOTH verbal language (what we say and how we say it, i.e., tone of voice) and non-verbal language (facial expressions, behavior, body language, etc.)

SITUATION 1: Saying hello or goodbye

Friends: _____

Family: _____

Professional: _____

SITUATION 2: Asking for help

Friends: _____

Family: _____

Professional: _____

SITUATION 3: Emailing or texting

Friends: _____

Family: _____

Professional: _____

SITUATION 4: Showing excitement

Friends: _____

Family: _____

Professional: _____

SITUATION 5: (Create your own)

Friends: _____

Family: _____

Professional: _____

Journaling Activity

Many people dream of being successful, but their actions can sometimes hold them back. What are some ways you can be sure that your actions help you to achieve your goals in life?

Extension Activity

Consider the following seven types of non-verbal signals and cues we often use to communicate our interest in and to others. Create a list of Do's and Don'ts for avoiding common body language mistakes on the job.



1. **Facial expressions:** The human face is extremely expressive, able to convey countless emotions without saying a word. And unlike some forms of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.
2. **Body movements and posture:** Consider how your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand up, or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a lot of information to the world. This type of non-verbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and subtle movements.
3. **Gestures:** We wave, point, plead, and often use our hands when we are arguing or speaking in an animated way. However, the meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so it's important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation.
4. **Eye contact:** Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of non-verbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for assessing another person's response.
5. **Touch:** We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following: a firm handshake, a timid tap on the shoulder, a warm bear hug, a reassuring pat on the back, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on your arm.
6. **Space:** Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, situation, and closeness of the relationship. You can use physical space to communicate many different non-verbal messages, including signals of intimacy, aggression, dominance, or affection.
7. **Voice:** We communicate with our voices, even when we are not using words. Non-verbal speech sounds such as tone, pitch, volume, inflection, rhythm, and rate are important communication elements. When we speak, other people "read" our voices in addition to listening to our words. These non-verbal speech

Journaling Activity

Think of a time when you could have been a better communicator or a better listener. Describe the situation. What happened? What is more important - communicating in a way that is easy for you or communicating in a way so that others can understand you? Is there a difference? Explain.



Extension Activity

Think about the different TV shows you watch. Discuss the differences in the way people communicate (or don't communicate) with each other - and how miscommunication has caused problems and conflict for the show's characters. Select a conflict from a recent TV episode and describe how the problem was solved/ portrayed in that scene.



Consider: What was the conflict? What strategies did the characters use to solve the problem? Were they effective strategies for solving the problem solving peacefully? If not, what strategies might the characters have used instead? Discuss the effect young people think the media has on how people handle their problems?

Quiz

1. Read everything before you do anything.
2. Write your name in the upper top left-hand corner of this page.
3. Circle the word “name” in sentence two.
4. Draw five small squares in the upper right-hand corner.
5. Put an X in each square you have just drawn.
6. Put a circle around each square.
7. Sign your name under the title of this page.
8. After the title, write, “yes, yes, yes.”
9. Underline sentences number seven and eight.
10. Put an X in the lower left-hand corner of this page.
11. Draw a triangle around the X you have just made.
12. Stand up and (loudly) call out your first name.
13. On the back of this page multiply 5 times 4.
14. Draw a circle around the word “top” in sentence four.
15. On the reverse side of this paper add the numbers 25 and 100.
16. Count out in your normal speaking voice from one to 10.
17. If you are the first person to get this far, say, “ME, ME, ME!”
18. Using your pencil, punch three small holes at the bottom of this paper.
19. If you think you have carefully followed these directions, stand up, turn around and whisper, “I have carefully followed the directions.”
20. Now that you have finished reading the directions carefully, do only sentences one and two. Sit quietly until everyone else is finished.

Enthusiasm and Attitude

What is the difference between “You’re hired!” and “Thank you for your interest, but...”? In a word: enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can mean the difference in not just getting a job, but succeeding in a job and even advancing in your career. A positive and enthusiastic attitude is a critical component of workplace success.

Having a positive attitude in the workplace can help with potential promotions. Employers promote employees who not only produce, but also motivate others in the workplace.

When employers look at prospective candidates, beyond skills, experience, and training, they look for those who demonstrate enthusiasm - those they believe will complete assigned tasks in an upbeat and cooperative manner. All other things being equal, a candidate who can demonstrate a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle the job will have an advantage over one who displays an attitude viewed by the employer as negative or disinterested. In fact, many employers would rather provide job skills training to an enthusiastic but inexperienced worker than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less-than-positive attitude. Managers sometimes worry that this type of person will not get along with supervisors and co-workers, treat customers disrespectfully, and not put much effort into his or her work. On the other hand, employees who are viewed as enthusiastic are known to provide good customer service, resolve interpersonal conflict effectively, and work productively with others.

There are many ways in which an individual might demonstrate enthusiasm in the workplace. For example, in a job interview, he or she might smile, sit up straight, make eye contact, and discuss training and work experiences in an upbeat manner. Once hired into a position, an enthusiastic employee will typically show up on time, show interest in his or her job, and demonstrate a willingness to listen, learn, and try new things. In customer service settings, an enthusiastic employee will approach customers proactively and offer assistance or seek out tasks and projects when there is down time. This positive attitude helps employees go above and beyond to get along with co-workers and managers - even difficult ones - and respond to constructive criticism with maturity and willingness to improve. Overall, an employee with enthusiasm comes across as someone who wants to be at work and who is willing to do what it takes to get the job done.

The activities in this section seek to teach participants about the importance of enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the workplace. Participants will hear strategies for turning negative thinking into positive thinking and displaying and discussing enthusiasm during an interview and on the job.

Note to facilitators: A positive attitude is an “I can” attitude. Young people with real or perceived barriers to employment (such as those who struggle academically possibly due to a learning or other disability, have been in and out of foster homes, have dropped out of school, or are raising a baby) may not have experienced enough success to feel or demonstrate this attitude. The activities in this section offer an opportunity for you to help all youth learn how to develop a positive attitude and, almost as important, how to learn to showcase that to others, including employers. Regardless of the challenges young people have conquered, developing and displaying a positive attitude will often help them to surpass their peers in many aspects of life.



Activity

Why was the statement for Roll #6 included in this activity?

How might a positive attitude help us on a job?

Journaling Activity

Do you think our attitude (whether positive or negative) is something we are born with or that we have power to control within ourselves? Think about a time when your attitude (either positive or negative) impacted you and those around you. When is it most challenging for you to keep a positive mental attitude? What do you do to help keep yourself positive during difficult times?





Journaling Activity

Many famous people failed at things before they became famous. Did you know that?

Think of a time when you experienced a personal failure. What was the failure? How did this failure help you to become a better person, make better decisions, or succeed in a way you hadn't imagined? Do you believe that failure is important? Why or why not?

Extension Activity

If you have Internet resources, check out some of the YouTube videos on “Famous Failures.” Simply type “famous failures” into the search bar to find results. What did you discover?

Activity 7a. Success or Failure?

CAN YOU NAME....

1. ...a famous person who was defeated seven times while running for political office?
2. ...a cartoonist who was told by the editor of the Kansas City newspaper, "It's easy to see from these sketches that you have no talent."
3. ...an author whose first children's book was rejected by 23 different publishers?
4. ...a famous singer who was fired after his first performance at the Grand Ole Opry?
5. ...a famous actress who dropped out of high school and held a variety of odd jobs, including doing the hair and make-up for corpses, before finally succeeding in show business?
6. ...a famous author who lived on welfare for years in an apartment infested with mice?
7. ...a famous athlete who was cut from the varsity basketball team his sophomore year in high school?
8. ...an inventor who was thrown out of school in the early grades because his teachers thought he couldn't learn?
9. ...a famous Harvard University drop out?
10. ...an inventor of a fried chicken recipe that was rejected by more than 1000 restaurant owners?

ANSWERS:

1. **Abraham Lincoln** was defeated in eight different elections. Yet he persisted and succeeded in becoming the 16th, and one of the most respected, presidents of the United States.
2. **Walt Disney** was told he had no talent and fired from a newspaper job. He wound up doing volunteer work for a church in an old run down garage. One day he decided to sketch one of the many mice that were running through the garage. This mouse became the famous “Mickey Mouse.”
3. Twenty-three different publishers rejected **Dr. Seuss’s** first book, while the 24th accepted and sold 6 million copies of it.
4. **Elvis Presley** was fired after his first performance at the Grand Ole Opry. The manager told him, “You ain’t going nowhere, son. You ought to go back to driving a truck.” He went on to become one of the most famous American singers of the 20th century.
5. **Whoopi Goldberg** dropped out of high school, was on welfare and worked as a bricklayer, bank teller, and licensed cosmetician. After graduating from Beauty College, she took a job at a mortuary fixing the hair of and applying make-up to the corpses.
6. **J.K. Rowling**, author of the Harry Potter series, lived on welfare for years, in an apartment infested with mice, and was rejected by 12 publishers before going on to fame and fortune.
7. **Michael Jordan** was the athlete who was cut from the varsity basketball team in his sophomore year of high school. Angry and embarrassed, he began to get up early each morning to practice with the junior varsity coach. Eventually he not only made the varsity team, but also became one of the most popular athletes in the world. Michael Jordan is quoted as saying, “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”
8. **Thomas Edison** was the inventor who was kicked out of school. Following this, he was homeschooled by his mother. It took him over 700 tries before he got the filament right for the light bulb. Edison is quoted as saying: “I have not failed seven hundred times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those seven hundred ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.”
9. **Mark Zuckerberg** dropped out of Harvard University. He went onto become the youngest millionaire (at the age of 26) and is the CEO of Facebook.
10. **Harland David Sanders** (better known as Colonel Sanders) had his fried chicken recipe rejected by more than 1,000 restaurant owners before it was accepted by one. Today, people still eat it at KFCs across the world.

The people we just talked about when we talked about Successes or Failures were ALL super ball people. With every failure they experienced, they kept bouncing back.



Conclusion

With family or friends, discuss what makes people bounce back from defeat? Describe what you came up with.



Journaling Activity

Think about a time when you wanted to give up on something but didn't. What was the situation? Why did you want to give up? Why didn't you? How did you deal with it?



Extension Activity

Describe what success means to you.



Journaling Activity

You have a friend who is getting ready for a job interview. This friend is not feeling too positive lately, and you want to help her get ready for this interview. What are some things you might do to help your friend prepare?

Activity 9. Interview Role Play

With a friend or family member acting as an interviewer, read this aloud and practice responding as an interviewee.

INTERVIEWER'S SCRIPT

"Good morning, my name is [Mr. or Ms.] _____ and I will be conducting your interview this morning." *Extend your hand to shake hands with the applicant.* "Please have a seat."

"We are interviewing for the position of a restaurant host/hostess. We are looking for someone with good customer service and communication skills, someone who is dependable and gets along with others. This person will be the first person to greet guests when they come into our restaurant, so it is very important to us that the host displays a positive and welcoming attitude."

"Now, I have some questions to ask you."

"Did you bring a copy of your resume?"

"Tell me a little bit about yourself."

"What are your strengths?"

"What are your weaknesses?"

"Why do you want to work here?"

"Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had."

"Why did you leave that position?"

"Do you have any questions for me?"

Activity 9. Interview Role Play

INTERVIEWEE SCRIPT 1

Q: “Did you bring a copy of your resume?”

Yes, sir (or ma’am), I did. *[You open up a folder you brought with you to the interview (where you have copies of your resume). You hand one copy to the interviewer.]*

Q: “Tell me a little bit about yourself.”

I have lived in [your city or state] all of my life, I love being around people, and I love learning new things. Right now, I’m learning a new language because I think it is important to be able to communicate with a variety of people. I also like doing physical work and enjoy gardening and landscaping. I’m quite proud of my yard.

Q: “What are your strengths?”

I’m a really good listener. Don’t get me wrong, I’m a good talker too, but I think listening skills are even more important. I’m also a good organizer. It doesn’t make any difference if it is organizing my closet or a trip with my family; I love all the planning and organizing that goes into it.

Q: “What are your weaknesses?”

I like things to go according to my plans so when something comes up that may make my plans go off schedule it sometimes stresses me out. But what I have learned about myself is that coming up with a plan B helps a lot! So, if I plan ahead for potential problems, then I don’t stress out at all because I have a good idea of what to do next.

Q: “Why do you want to work here?”

As I said earlier, I love being around people and in this job I’d get to meet every person that walks through the door. Your restaurant has a good reputation for quality food and service and that’s the type of restaurant I’d be proud to work in. I think my qualities will fit nicely here.

Q: “Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had.”

I worked in a cafeteria serving food. Sometimes I worked in the kitchen but I really loved working as a server. I got to meet a lot of people. Some days were easier than others. I set a goal for myself to smile at everyone I served, especially those people who seemed upset or depressed. It may seem like a boring job to some people but not me.

Q: “Why did you leave that position?”

I left because I had started school and couldn’t do both school and work at the same time.

Q: “Do you have any questions for me?”

Your staff has a great reputation for customer service, so I thought perhaps I’d ask if you have a training program you put your staff through to achieve that?

Before you leave:

I also have a list of references for you. *[Hand the interviewer a sheet of paper.]* Thank you for the interview; it was a pleasure to meet you. *[Offer a professional, firm handshake - and a smile.]*

Activity 9. Interview Role Play

INTERVIEWEE SCRIPT 2

This version of the interview should be over-the-top “bad.” The candidate should be dressed inappropriately, wearing sunglasses, chewing gum, displaying poor posture, disorganized, late, etc. In fact, the interviewee doesn’t pay attention when the interviewer begins - and doesn’t realize that the interviewer offered to shake hands because he/she was too busy putting a cell phone in his/her pocket.

Q: “Did you bring a copy of your resume?”

A resume? Oh, yeah...it’s in here somewhere. *[Dig around in your pocket or bag until you find a crumpled resume. Smooth out the paper and hand it to the interviewer.]*

Q: “Tell me a little bit about yourself.”

Well, I’ve been taking a little time off lately - traveling around the United States. I’m trying to get one tattoo from every state. I’ve already got a pretty good start, see? *[Show the interviewer your bare arm.]*

Q: “What are your strengths?”

I can talk to anybody...and about any subject! There’s never a dull moment when I’m in a room.

Q: “What are your weaknesses?”

Hmmm, I can’t think of anything. Oh yeah, I have a weakness for Rocky Road ice cream. I bet I could eat an entire gallon in one sitting. I also like to sleep late. Really, I’m much more of a night owl than an early bird. Sure the early bird gets the worm, but who wants worms anyway?

Q: “Why do you want to work here?”

I figured I’d be able to get free meals if I worked for a restaurant. Plus, I’m living at home with my mom and she wants me to pay rent...why, I don’t know.

Q: “Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had.”

Uh, the last job I had was at a sporting goods store. That was a while ago, though - and it didn't last too long.

Q: “Why did you leave that position?”

Well, me and the manager didn't always see eye to eye. Sometimes customers were pretty rude when we didn't have the sports equipment they wanted and my manager expected me to be nice to these people when they clearly didn't deserve it. Let's just say I left by mutual agreement.

Q: “Do you have any questions for me?”

Do your employees get free meals?

Journaling Activity

1. For each of the interviews you just read about, how did it go? Name some things you think went well, and describe some things you think should have been done differently.
2. Describe how it makes you feel talking about yourself in a positive way. Is it easy, difficult, awkward, etc.? Since this is important when it comes time getting a job, what might you do to improve your ability to do this? If this is already easy for you, how can you be sure you don't come across as "full of yourself" or conceited?

Teamwork

Teamwork is an essential part of workplace success. Like a basketball team working together to set up the perfect shot, every team member has a specific role to play in accomplishing tasks on the job. Although it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by many people's planning, coordination, and cooperation to get that player the ball. Employers look for people who not only know how to work well with others, but who understand that not every player on the team can or will be the one who gets the ball. When everyone in the workplace works together to accomplish goals, everyone achieves more.

Teamwork involves building relationships and working with other people using a number of important skills and habits:

- Working cooperatively
- Contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and effort
- Communication (both giving and receiving)
- Sense of responsibility
- Healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences
- Ability to participate in group decision-making

The ability to work as part of a team is one of the most important skills in today's job market. Employers are looking for workers who can contribute their own ideas, but also want people who can work with others to create and develop projects and plans.

When employees work together to accomplish a goal, everyone benefits. Employers might expect to "see" this in action in different ways. For example, team members in the workplace plan ahead and work cooperatively to assign tasks, assess progress, and deliver on time. They have professional discussions during which differing approaches and opinions might be shared and assessed in a respectful manner. Even when certain employees end up with tasks that were not their first choices, jobs get done with limited complaints because it is in the spirit of teamwork and with the overall goal in mind. A leader or manager may often serve as the teamwork facilitator. In this case, team members participate respectfully in discussion, carry out assigned tasks, and defer to the leader in the best interest of the goal. Consensus is wonderful, but not always possible, and an assigned leader will often support and facilitate the decision-making necessary for quality teamwork to exist.



Journaling Activity

A friend comes to you seeking advice. He got into trouble at work for not being a team player. He really likes his job and isn't quite sure what to do. What suggestions would you give to your friend to help him improve? How might he respond to his boss?



Extension Activity

Create your own personal quotes about teamwork...why it is important...what can be accomplished...etc. The quote should be one that encourages peers to gain a better understanding and perspective on the importance of teamwork AND why it is often a core value shared by many different cultures, populations, and groups.

Activity 11. Teamwork Quotes

“Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” - Vince Lombardi (football coach)

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”
- Henry Ford (pioneer of the assembly-line production method)

“There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.” - George Shinn (former owner of Charlotte, now New Orleans, Hornets basketball team)

“It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit.”
- Robert Yates (politician in the 1700s)

“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.” - Author Unknown

“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.” - Mia Hamm (retired American soccer player)

“Respect your fellow human being, treat them fairly, disagree with them honestly, enjoy their friendship, explore your thoughts about one another candidly, work together for a common goal and help one another achieve it.”
- Bill Bradley (American hall of fame basketball player, Rhodes scholar and former three-term Democratic U.S. Senator from New Jersey)

“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.”
- Michael Jordan (former American basketball player, businessman and majority owner of the Charlotte Bobcats)

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
- Helen Keller (American author, political activist, lecturer, and the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.)

“The strength of the team is each individual member...the strength of each member is the team.”
- Phil Jackson (widely considered one of the greatest coaches in the history of the NBA)

“Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.” - Mattie Stepanek (advocate on behalf of peace, people with disabilities, and children with life-threatening conditions who died one month before his 14th birthday)

“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.” - Oprah Winfrey (American television host, actress, producer, and philanthropist)

“Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story.” - Casey Stengel (baseball hall of famer)



Directions

Reflect on some of the quotes discussed on the last page. Consider what you've learned so far.

Journaling Activity

What do you think makes a good team player? What makes someone a good employee?
What makes someone a good boss?

Activity 12. Elements of Teamwork – An Inventory of Skills

Part of being a good team member is learning how to understand your personal strengths (what you have to offer) AND where you might need to draw assistance from others. Listed on this sheet are 10 of the characteristics that make a productive team member. Rate your level of confidence in each skill (HONESTLY) - and then devise a plan for how you can improve some of the areas you think might need a “jump start.”

SKILL #1: RELIABLE

This means: You can be counted on to get the job done.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

This means: You express your thoughts and ideas clearly and directly, with respect for others.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #3: ACTIVE LISTENER

This means: You listen to and respect different points of view. Others can offer you constructive feedback - and you don't get upset or defensive.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #4: PARTICIPATES

This means: You are prepared - and get involved in team activities. You are regular contributor.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #5: SHARES OPENLY AND WILLINGLY

This means: You are willing to share information, experience, and knowledge with the group.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #6: COOPERATIVE

This means: You work with other members of the team to accomplish the job - no matter what.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #7: FLEXIBLE

This means: You adapt easily when the team changes direction or you're asked to try something new.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #8: COMMITTED

This means: You are responsible and dedicated. You always give your best effort!

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #9: PROBLEM SOLVER

This means: You focus on solutions. You are good about not going out of your way to find fault in others.

Rating: ___Not so confident ___Sort of Confident ___Really confident

SKILL #10: RESPECTFUL

This means: You treat other team members with courtesy and consideration - all of the time.

Rating: ___Not so confident ___Sort of Confident ___Really confident

Consider your answers:

Did you have mostly “not so confident” checked off?

If so, you are still developing your confidence as a team player. These skills often take some time to develop - so don't worry. It might be helpful to reach out to someone you know and trust to help you focus on developing a plan for working on some of the skills in which you would like to be more confident. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help when you need it is another great skill of a productive team player.

Did you have mostly “sort of confident” checked off?

If so, you are pretty confident in your teamwork skills - but could probably use a little extra support or development in a few areas. Invite someone close to you (someone you know and trust), to work with you on the areas you would like to improve. Most people would be really happy to help you! Learning the strategies to become a good team member takes time, energy, and dedication.

Did you have mostly “really confident” checked off?

If so, you are truly confident in your ability to be a good team player. That's great! Figure out an area or two where you would like to continue to see improvement (since we should always be striving to be the best we can be) and develop a plan for how to further grow those skills. Also try to offer support to someone you know who might be struggling with building his or her own level of teamwork confidence.

Now consider your teamwork skills confidence levels:

I am most proud of my ability to:

I want to improve my ability to:

I will reach out to some of these people for guidance:

Use the following questions for additional discussion:

1. How did your team work together? What specifically worked well? What difficulties did you experience?
2. Besides the team leader, what role did each person play in the group? How was each person helpful to the end goal?
3. Was it a plus or a minus that the team leader was not able to physically participate in the activity? How did the team leader feel about his or her level of participation?
4. What would you do differently if given a second chance at this activity?



Journaling Activity

You are the leader of a team at work. What type of leader would you like to be - one that gets involved and works with the team or one that tells the team what to do? Explain your choice.



Extension Activity

Interview friends and family and ask two simple questions:

1. What is the best part of working on a team?
2. What is the most difficult part of working on a team?

Write your favorite responses down.

Activity 14. Which Shape are You?

There are some people who believe there are five basic personality types, and each type tends to prefer a different shape. Knowing whether you, your co-workers and friends are squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, or squiggles just might help you build better careers, teams, and friendships. Here is what each shape might say about you - and how you can recognize other people for their shapes.

If you are a SQUARE: You are an organized, logical, and hardworking person who likes structure and rules. But sometimes you have trouble making decisions because you always want more information. You feel most comfortable in a stable environment with clear directions on what to do. You tend to like things that are regular and orderly. You will work on a task until it is finished, no matter what.

How to spot a square: They appear to move “straight,” use precise or specific gestures, love routine, and are very concerned with detail. They are also very neat in their appearance and their personal workspace. They do a lot of planning and are always prompt.

If you are a RECTANGLE: You are a courageous (brave), exciting, and inquisitive explorer who always searches for ways to grow and change. You enjoy trying things you’ve never done before and love asking questions that have never been asked. You like structure, and will often be the person to be sure things are done the proper way, taking all rules and regulations into consideration. When you are given a task you will start organizing it to be sure it can be done in the most systematic way.

How to spot a rectangle: These people often have “fleeting eyes and flushed faces.” They also tend to giggle and they like variety. For example, they’ll come into work early or late – but not on time. And those who have offices tend to be disorganized with a mishmash of furniture.

If you are a TRIANGLE: You are a born leader who’s competitive, confident, and can make decisions. You also like recognition. You are goal oriented and enjoy planning something out and then doing it (you are motivated by the accomplishment). You will tend to look at big long-term issues, but might forget the details. When given a task you set a goal and work on a plan for it. American business has traditionally been run by triangles and, although usually men, more women are taking those roles today.

How to spot a triangle: They have powerful voices, love to tell jokes, and they play as hard as they work. They also tend to be stylish dressers.

If you are a CIRCLE: You are social and communicative. There are no hard edges about you. You handle things by talking about them and smoothing things out with everybody. Communication is your first priority. When given a task, you will want to talk about it. You are a “people person,” with lots of sympathy and consideration for others. You listen and communicate well and are very perceptive about other people’s feelings. You like harmony and hate making unpopular decisions.

How to spot a circle: They are friendly, nurturing, persuasive, and generous. They tend to be relaxed and smile a lot. They're talkative, but have a mellow voice. They also have a full laugh and like to touch others on the shoulder and arm.

If you are a SQUIGGLE: You are “off-the-wall” and creative. You like doing new and different things most of the time and get bored with regularity. When given a task, you will come up with bright ideas about to do it. But you don't think in a deliberate pattern from A to B to C. Instead, you tend to jump around in your mind, going from A to M to X.

How to spot a squiggle: They can be “flashy,” dramatic, and extremely creative - and they don't like highly structured environments. Both men and women squiggles tend to be funny and very expressive. They also have great intuition. Most performers and writers are squiggles.



Journaling Activity

Think about a time when you were part of a group/team and things worked really well, and a time when things didn't work out so well. What were the situations and what made the differences?



Extension Activity

Go to California Career Zone at www.cacareerzone.com and click "Explore." Do the "Interest Profiler" and then "Skills Profiler."

Describe your results. Did they surprise you? Why or why not?

Activity 15A. Teamwork on the Job

SCENARIO:

Shawn works in a library. She and three other co-workers have been tasked to work together on a project. Shawn turns in the completed product, but she completed it without input or help from the others. Shawn said it was really tough to find time to meet together. She did text the others (asking about working together), but got no responses. Her supervisor, Nathaniel, knows that she is a promising young librarian who wants to advance to a leadership position. Nathaniel also believes that Shawn has the potential to be a good leader, but feels she is impatient when it comes to working with others.

DISCUSSION:

- What did Shawn do well?
- What could she have done differently?
- How might she handle herself in the future?
- How should Nathaniel handle this situation?
- Consider the fact that he probably wants to help Shawn to improve and not necessarily punish her.

Activity 15a. Teamwork on the Job

Narrator: Five characters will role play a situation to determine whose job it is to restock the condiments at the coffee bar.

Characters:	Jarrold	Steffy
	Pam	John
	Manager	Narrator

Jarrold: It wasn't my job! It was Steffy's job! The policy around here is that the new employee restocks cream and sugar station. She's the newest employee. It's her job!

Steffy: I don't get to work until 10:00. By the time I get here, the station should already be stocked. Otherwise, customers won't have the stuff they need for their coffee.

Pam: You're just trying to get out of doing your job.

Steffy: No! Jarrold gets here at 7:00. He should already have it done by the time I get here.

Jarrold: You're the newest employee.

Steffy: What's your problem?

Jarrold: What's your problem?

Steffy: I do my job.

John: But you're the newest employee. It's your job to restock.

Narrator: Voices are getting louder.

Steffy: But Jarrold gets here earlier. I am only trying to think about our customers.

Pam: Are you just trying to get out of your job?

Jarrold: You're impossible.

Steffy: No, you are!

Manager: Okay, okay! What's the problem? Steffy, continue restocking the condiment station. Jarrold, go ring up the customers.

Narrator: Both are taking a break from each other to calm down. Later in the day, the manager speaks to Jarrod and Steffy.

Manager: Steffy, Jarrod is right. The new person stocks the cream and sugar station.

Steffy: So you mean Jarrod shouldn't have to do this anymore?

Jarrod: Told you!

Manager: Jarrod! On the other hand, that rule was made when everyone came to work at the same time. However, since Steffy doesn't come into work until later in the day, the customers have a right to have a fully stocked station.

Jarrod: So Steffy doesn't have to do this job either?

Steffy: No, I get it! Whoever comes in earliest should restock the station from the night before.

Jarrod: Okay, so I don't have to restock the station all day? Just replenish from the night before. Steffy should then do it when she comes in - and then throughout her shift?

Manager: Exactly! Also, I would like you two to start treating each other with a little respect. It's good to have a sense of humor. What happened to yours? Every customer and employee that comes in here deserves to be treated with courtesy. Okay? And, by the way, the customer is always right and always comes first.

Narrator: (Next day) Their voices are calm and respectful.

Steffy: Jarrod, I am here now. I'll finish those. Why don't you go take a break?

Jarrod: Okay, thanks! I think I will. Hey look, there's a whole new kind of sugar that just came in. The boxes are in the back. I thought you might want to know.

Steffy: Thanks, Jarrod.

Adapted from Problem Solving Video, Workplace Videos 2000, Glencoe McGraw

Networking

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” This common expression is the basis for understanding the importance of networking as a strategy for career development and exploration. Everyone has a network, even if you don’t realize it, and when it comes to job searching, this network may be just as important as your skills and experience. A personal network is that group of people with whom you interact every day - family, friends, parents of friends, friends of friends, neighbors, teachers, bosses, and co-workers. With these people, information and experiences are exchanged for both social and potential professional reasons. Networking occurs every time you participate in a school or social event, volunteer in the community, visit with members of your religious group, talk with neighbors, strike up a conversation with someone at the store, or connect with friends online.

When it comes to finding a job, you’ve got to network! According to Cornell University’s Career Center, 80% of available jobs are not advertised. These jobs are often referred to as the “hidden job market.”

When networking for the purpose of career development, this means talking with friends, family members, and acquaintances about your goals, your interests, and your dreams. Most people actually learn about job openings through friends, relatives, or others who are part of their personal network, and because each person in your network has a network of his or her own, your potential contacts can grow exponentially. This is important because more often than not, hiring managers would rather talk to a potential candidate who has been recommended by someone they know or already employ. Even if a position is not currently available, networking can lead to informational interviews that can help you not only learn about possible career paths, but also be great exposure for you to be thought of as a potential candidate when a job opens up. An informational interview is not the same as a job interview by any means, but it is probably the most effective form of networking there is. In fact, according to *Quintessential Careers*, one out of every 12 informational interviews results in a job offer. This is a remarkable number considering the fact that research indicates that only one in every 200 resumes (some studies put the number even higher) results in a job offer.

Though networking is an important skill, and one that can certainly be taught, it rarely is. Therefore the activities in this section focus on the process of networking and its relevance and importance to career development. Participants will learn about taking initiative and overcoming fear (which is quite common), informational interviewing, as well as potential guidelines to consider when using social networks, texting, and email for networking purposes.

A note for facilitators: Developing networking skills is important for all youth, but particularly for those with limited work experiences, which is unfortunately often the case for youth with disabilities. By creating opportunities whereby young people can research, talk to, and network with those working in careers of interest, the more likely they will be able to make informed choices regarding their future. For youth who are hesitant to network or take the steps necessary to arrange informational interviews (for any reason), consider using pairs of two for many of the activities in this section. Teaming is one strategy that may help participants feel as if they have the support they need while trying out new skills and learning how to become a strategic and “seasoned” networker.



Journaling Activity

There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what just happened. A networker is someone who makes things happen. Think about a possible career goal you have. What is it? What can you do to develop your networking skills to get more information about this career?



Extension Activity

Discuss with your family and friends the concept of the informational interview.

Informational interviewing is a networking activity important to the career development and career exploration process. An informational interview is an interview with a person who is doing the kind of work in which you are interested. It is an excellent technique to use when you want to: explore different career options; learn more about certain occupations; and/or begin to network with people who can help you in your job search. Although it is an effective job search tool, it's very important to remember that the **primary purpose of an informational interview is to obtain information, not a job.**



Answer the following questions, pretending someone is asking them in an interview. Answer them the way you'd answer in a job interview.

- How did you decide on this field of work?
- How did you get into this field of work?
- What do you like best about your work?
- What do you like the least?
- What is a typical day or week like for someone in your occupation?
- What kind of skills, education, and/or training would I need to get into this area?
- What personal qualities are necessary for someone in this occupation?
- What is a typical entry-level salary? (Do NOT ask how much the person you are interviewing earns!)
- Do you know someone else doing this kind of work that I could talk to for my research?

Follow-up the interview with a thank you note. In it, suggest mentioning the specific information that you found to be particularly interesting or helpful. Let the person know that you appreciate him/her letting you ask questions and that the information provided will be valuable to you.

The Three Ps

ADAPTED FROM: *Make Things Happen: The Key to Networking for Teens (Used with Permission)*

PREPARE: Do what you need to do to get ready. For example:

- To prepare for a telephone call, write a script and practice it. Know why you are calling (have notes). Prepare yourself on how to leave a message if the person doesn't pick up or isn't available.
- To prepare for a face-to-face meeting, do a lot of the same as you would for a phone call. If you're meeting with someone to get information about the work they do or a particular company, visit the company's website (if they have one) to learn more about it ahead of time.

PRACTICE: Practice what you want to say over and over and over. The more you hear yourself say what you want to say, the easier it will be - and the more confident you will feel.

- Ever think about smiling when you're on the telephone? Believe it or not, people can hear that confidence in your voice. People can determine friendliness from the tone of your voice. Along the same lines, fear can be heard over the phone, too. Concentrate on speaking clearly, be calm, and breathe!
- Prepare for one-to-one meetings by practicing with a friend, parent, or someone you know and trust. Ask them to role play with you - they could pretend to be the person you are going to meet with and you could practice asking the questions you have prepared.

PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER: Part of feeling confident at a networking meeting is feeling good about yourself. If you feel good about your appearance, you tend to give your confidence a big boost!

- Good grooming isn't just for dogs. Don't forget about those day-to-day essentials like showering, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, and using deodorant (this sounds silly, but many adults need to be reminded of this, too!) Don't wear too much perfume or cologne as sometimes people are allergic - and wearing too much will make them remember you because of your smell, not for your skills or your ideas.
- Dress the way you think the other person will be dressing. If you were networking with your uncle at a family BBQ, shorts and flip-flops might be just fine. But if you're meeting with someone in a professional setting, try to find out what the dress code is and see if you can come close to dressing the same (or even one step above). For example, if you're meeting someone in an office, and people usually wear ties, then you should wear a tie, too. If you're going to meet the head of a landscaping company and people usually wear jeans and t-shirts, go one step above and wear khakis and a button down shirt, if you have them.
- Don't forget other important things like a pen and a pad of paper. Your contact might say something really great and you'll want to write it down. It's always a good idea to take a resume with you, even if you're not meeting with someone for a job. It's a good way to leave someone with a reminder of your skills, talents, and experiences. After all, who knows what might happen? Also, ask the person to suggest additional people you could contact to learn more.

Activity 17. You Expect me to do WHAT? TALK to People?

SCENARIO:

Pradeep had a friend (Bob) who had a friend (Ray) who started his own company when he was 20 years old. Pradeep is a young entrepreneur who also wants to start his own business one day and wanted to talk to Ray to learn all he could (what to do and what not to do). Pradeep was reluctant to reach out to Ray because he thought Ray was too busy or would think his questions were stupid. Plus, he was worried that Ray might tell Bob that his questions were dumb - and Pradeep didn't want his friend to laugh at him.

Eventually, Pradeep decided that the benefits of networking outweighed the potential harm. After all, he knew Ray had built a very successful business from scratch - and Pradeep figured he really had nothing to lose. Pradeep also figured that if he really wanted to start his own company, he would have to learn how to network in the traditional sense, e.g. with people (and overcome his fear of talking to people he didn't know well). He thought, "Better to do it now (and learn) than to try it later and possibly ruin opportunities for my business."

So Pradeep called Ray, who agreed to a meeting. Before the meeting, Pradeep did some basic research to get a better idea of what it takes to start a new business (he looked up average start up costs, how to secure a loan, etc.). He also wanted to know about marketing, web design, and product development, so he researched Ray's company to get a better idea of Ray's business strategy. He had his notes written down to be sure to stick to specific issues. Ray was really receptive - especially because Pradeep was prepared and didn't waste his time. In fact, Ray was flattered that Pradeep contacted him.

Part of overcoming his networking fear was just getting the courage to call Ray. The other part of overcoming his fear was doing his homework and being prepared.

The Three Ps

Part 1: What did Pradeep do?

Prepare: _____

Practice: _____

Pull Yourself Together!: _____

Part 2: What are some strategies you could use?

Prepare: _____

Practice: _____

Pull Yourself Together!: _____

Each group will be asked to discuss and list no fewer than five reasons why they believe using social media (including Facebook and texting) will not only improve the growth and development of youth today, but help them to develop higher level communication skills than those of their parents and/or grandparents.

Each group should elect a recorder and a reporter and will be given seven minutes to brainstorm their ideas. Report outs should follow.



Conclusion

Think about the following: A recent study by an executive search firm found that 77 percent of recruiters run searches of candidates on the Web to screen them; 35 percent of these same recruiters say they've eliminated a candidate based on the information they uncovered. What does this mean for young jobseekers with regard to online profiles? Discuss as a group some of the postings that young people preparing for careers should be careful to avoid. Examples include: complaining about a former employer, showing pictures of hard partying, descriptions of sexual exploits, abusive or aggressive language, etc.



Journaling Activity

Think about your own personal texting and social media habits. How do you think the use of these technologies can support and help you feel more comfortable in face-to-face communications? Explain.



Extension Activity

According to CareerBuilder.com, there are three things you can do to protect your online image - and your job opportunities:

1. **Be careful.** Nothing is private. Don't post anything on your site or your "friends'" sites you wouldn't want a prospective employer to see. Derogatory comments, revealing or risqué photos, foul language, and lewd jokes all will be viewed as a reflection of your character.
2. **Be discreet.** If your network offers the option, consider setting your profile to "private," so that it is viewable only by friends of your choosing. And since you can't control what other people say on your site, you may want to use the "block comments" feature. Remember, everything on the Internet is archived, and there is no eraser!
3. **Be prepared.** Check your profile regularly to see what comments have been posted. Use a search engine to look for online records of yourself to see what is out there about you. If you find information you feel could be detrimental to your candidacy or career, see about getting it removed - and in the meantime make sure you have an answer ready to counter or explain "digital dirt."

Ask participants to use these strategies to create a DO and DO NOT “cheat sheet” for people their parents’ age who are getting ready to look for a job. Help them to understand, in their terms, why they should be careful about their online postings.



Journaling Activity

You own a business and have decided you need an email policy for your employees. What are the three most important factors you would like your employees to understand about using their business email accounts?



Extension Activity

Do you have an email account? If not, create one. If you do, is your email address something you think is appropriate to use on a job search? Why or why not? What are some email addresses that might not be appropriate?



Activity 19a. Translating Text

I dun knO Y adults R makin such a big deal out of d amount of tym tEnz spNd txtN! It's a gr8 way 2 kEp n tuch w yor fRnds & knO wot ppl R doin & whr dey R.

dEr Employer,

I wud llk 2 apply 4 d dA tym customer srvic positN I saw advRtized on FB. I hav atachd my resume & hOp U wiL agrE dat my skilZ & intRStz R diRctIE relAtd 2 d positN U hav avail. I wud aPrec8 d opRtunET 2 MEt w U n prsn 2 discuS Y I wud mAk an XLNT employE 4 yor co.

ty

Activity 19b. Professional Email Etiquette

WHEN EMAILING PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Email Etiquette: Include a subject line that “helps” the reader

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Include a greeting (Dear...) and a closing (Sincerely,)

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Use business language, spell check, and avoid abbreviations

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Use business punctuation and formatting

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Avoid using ALL CAPS

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Do not use jokes, witty remarks, or sarcasm

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Avoid gossiping or complaining

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Keep the communication short and to the point

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Do not use emoticons (for introductory emails)

Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Reread before hitting “send”

Possible Reasons:

Activity 19a. Translating Text

ANSWERS

I dun knO Y adults R makin such a big deal out of d amount of tym tEnz spNd txtN! It's a gr8 way 2 kEp n tuch w yor fRnds & knO wot ppl R doin & whr dey R.

I don't know why adults are making such a big deal out of the amount of time teens spend texting! It's a great way to keep in touch with your friends and know what people are doing and where they are.

dEr Employer,

I wud llk 2 apply 4 d dA tym customer srvc positN I saw advRtizd on FB. I hav atachd my resume & hOp U wiL agrE dat my skiLz & intrStz R diRctlE relAtd 2 d positN U hav avail. I wud aPrec8 d opRtunET 2 MEt w U n prsn 2 discuS Y I wud mAk an XLNT employE 4 yor co. ty

Dear Employer,

I would like to apply for the daytime customer service position I saw advertised on Facebook. I have attached my resume and hope you will agree that my skills and interests are directly related to the position you have available. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss why I would make an excellent employee for your company.

Thank you.

Activity 19b. Professional Email Etiquette

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Email Etiquette: Include a subject line that “helps” the reader

Possible Reasons: A meaningful subject line helps to clarify what your message is about - and also might help the reader to prioritize reading your email.

Email Etiquette: Include a greeting (Dear...) and a closing (Sincerely,)

Possible Reasons: Email should mimic a written letter. Always begin with Dear.... - and end with Sincerely. Sincerely is often the best “professional” choice for a closing.

Email Etiquette: Use business language, spell check, and avoid abbreviations.

Possible Reasons: Emails are considered professional or business correspondence. You want to be sure everything is spelled correctly and can be easily understood.

Email Etiquette: Use business punctuation and formatting

Possible Reasons: Same as above.

Email Etiquette: Avoid using ALL CAPS

Possible Reasons: ALL CAPS USUALLY MEANS YOU ARE SCREAMING. NO ONE LIKES TO BE YELLED AT, EVEN IN AN EMAIL.

Email Etiquette: Do not use jokes, witty remarks, or sarcasm

Possible Reasons: Jokes and witty remarks may be inappropriate and often do not translate well in email (since the reader decides the “tone”).

Email Etiquette: Avoid gossiping or complaining

Possible Reasons: Emails can be forwarded to others quickly. You never know who will see/hear what you wrote.

Email Etiquette: Keep the communication short and to the point

Possible Reasons: Anything long or complex should be addressed in person or over the telephone.

Email Etiquette: Do not use emoticons (for introductory emails)

Possible Reasons: Business emails should not use emoticons because they are not considered “professional” - plus not everyone knows what they mean. If you know the person, you can use them sparingly (if you want to shed light on how you are feeling).

Email Etiquette: Reread before hitting “send”

Possible Reasons: Once you hit “send,” there is no turning back!



Journaling Activity

Think about your career dreams. Now, who might you list in your third degree? Who might you want to meet or get to know? Do not limit yourself. You might think some of these people will be impossible to meet - but if you are patient, persistent, and up for a challenge, you just never know. The only thing you DO know is if you don't try, you'll never find out.



Here are some sample questions to ask during an informational interview:



- What do you do at this company?
- What is the best part of your job?
- What type of education or training is necessary to do this type of job?
- What other types of jobs are there at this company?
- Can you tell me more about this company?
- How do you apply for a job at this company?
- Can you look at my resume and give me some feedback on it?

Activity 20. Degrees of Separation

Picture or draw a dart board with three concentric circles (a middle bull's eye/target with a larger circle around it, and then another larger circle around it).

The middle circle - or the bull's eye - is your FIRST DEGREE CONTACTS. These are the people closest to you - those people in your life who you love and can depend on. You see these people often and have good relationships with them. Examples of people in your first degree might include: parents and siblings, best friends, relatives (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), coaches, a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc.

Name	Relationship to you
	Example: uncle, brother, mother

The next circle is your SECOND DEGREE CONTACTS. The people in this circle are those you “kinda-sorta” know - but you might only feel comfortable interacting with them occasionally. These people are aware of you, and you are aware of them, but you don't have a close relationship. Some of these people might be those you say “hi” to in school or at the gym, the barista at the local coffee shop, the neighbor who waves to you while walking the dog. **EXAMPLES** of people in your second degree might include: co-workers (if you have a job), teachers or counselors, your friends' parents, neighbors, etc.

Name	Relationship to you
	Example: friend's parent, neighbor

The outermost circle is your THIRD DEGREE CONTACTS. These are people who you **WANT** to meet or know. These are people who could potentially help you with your career dreams. This could be anyone. Don't underestimate yourself!

Name	Relationship to you
	Example: local politician, chef at a local restaurant, etc.

Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

Everyone experiences problems from time to time. Some of our problems are big and complicated, while others may be more easily solved. There is no shortage of challenges and issues that can arise on the job. Whether in an office or on a construction site, experiencing difficulties with the tasks at hand or with co-workers, the workplace presents ongoing challenges on a daily basis. Whether these problems are large or small, they need to be dealt with constructively and fairly. Having the necessary skills to identify solutions to problems is one of the skills that employers look for in employees.

Problem solving and critical thinking refers to the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems. This doesn't mean you need to have an immediate answer, it means you have to be able to think on your feet, assess problems and find solutions. The ability to develop a well thought out solution within a reasonable time frame, however, is a skill that employers value greatly.

Employers say they need a workforce fully equipped with skills beyond the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic to grow their businesses. These skills include critical thinking and problem solving, according to a 2010 Critical Skills Survey by the American Management Association and others.

Employers want employees who can work through problems on their own or as an effective member of a team. Ideal employees can think critically and creatively, share thoughts and opinions, use good judgment, and make decisions. As a new employee, you may question why an organization follows certain steps to complete a task. It may seem to you that one of the steps could be eliminated saving time, effort, and money. But you may be hesitant to voice your opinion. Don't be; employers are usually appreciative when new employees are able to offer insight and fresh perspective into better and more efficient ways of doing things. It is important to remember, however, that as someone new to the organization, you may not always have the full picture, and thus there may be factors you are unaware of that dictate that things be done in a particular way. Another important thing to remember is that when you are tasked with solving a problem, you don't always need to answer immediately.

The activities in this section focus on learning how to solve problems in a variety of ways in the workplace. Participants will hear about how to properly tell the difference among criticism, praise, and feedback and reacting appropriately. The section will also review strategies for making ethical decisions, solving problems on a team with others, and learning how to take into account others' perceptions when assessing actions or statements in the workplace.

***A note to facilitators:** Building self-determination skills, such as goal setting, decision-making, self-advocacy, and problem solving should be included in career planning for all youth. Youth with disabilities and/or other (perceived) barriers to employment and/or disconnected youth will tend to have a resiliency not always experienced by their same aged peers - and not always easily seen or understood by themselves or by adults. You are encouraged to use the activities in this section to help young people explore how the obstacles they (or those they know) may face in life can pose an opportunity for developing and demonstrating maturity, responsibility, and wisdom. Providing young people with safe opportunities to explore how their personal resiliency can be used to develop enhanced problem solving and conflict resolutions skills is an opportunity many adults may shy away from, but one that may ultimately be a gift.*

7. You've improved a lot this week.
8. I found it difficult to evaluate this resume because it was messy.
9. I liked it much better when we got to choose the projects instead of being assigned to one.

Journaling Activity

How does it make you feel when others criticize the work you do? Are you able to respond to feedback differently? Think about a time when you criticized someone else. What happened? How did that situation ultimately make you feel?



A list of work ethics for an employee might include:

- To show up on time
- To tend to company business for the whole time while at work
- To treat the company's resources, equipment, and products with care
- To give respect to the company; that means honesty and integrity

Four-Step Process for Making Ethical Decisions at Work:

1. Define the problem (or ethical situation).
2. List the facts that appear to be most significant to the decision (and consider who is affected).
3. List two or three possible solutions (and how these solutions could impact each person).
4. Decide on a plan of action.

Journaling Activity



When it comes to decision-making, there are some people who like to make decisions by themselves, while others would like to talk things through with someone else. Which type of person are you? Give an example or two. What are some of the pros and cons associated with each type of decision-maker?



Extension Activity

Give some real-life examples of ethical decisions, and unethical decisions you've seen people make.



Activity 22. Workplace Ethics: Case Studies

For each of the following case studies, assume you are employed by a large computer company, with approximately 1,000 employees. The company is located in your town. Read each case study and follow the four steps for making ethical decisions. You will be discussing your decision-making process (and your ultimate decision) with the group.

Case 1: LaKeisha is an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department. Her good friend Michael is applying for a job with the company and has agreed to be a reference for him. Michael asks for advice on preparing for the interview. LaKeisha has the actual interview questions asked of all applicants and considers making him a copy of the list so he can prepare.

Case 2: Emily works in the Quality Control Department. Once a year, her supervisor gives away the company's used computers to the local elementary school. The company does not keep records of these computer donations. Emily really needs a computer. Her supervisor asks her to deliver 12 computers to the school.

Case 3: Marvin is an assistant in the Building Services Department. He has just received a new work computer and is excited to try it out. His supervisor has a strict policy about computer usage (for business purposes only), but Marvin wants to learn the email software. He figures one good way to do this is to send emails to his friends and relatives until he gets the hang of it. He has finished all of his work for the day and has 30 minutes left until his shift is over. His supervisor left early.

Case 4: Jennie was recently hired to work as a receptionist for the front lobby. As receptionist, she is responsible for making copies for the people in her office. Her son, Jason, comes in and needs some copies for a school project. He brought his own paper and needs 300 copies for his class. If he doesn't bring the copies with him, he will fail the project. The company copier does not require a security key, nor do they keep track of copies made by departments.

Case 5: Nonye works in the Customer Service Support Department and spends a lot of his day responding to email. One day he got a message from an email address he didn't recognize. It said, "I'd like to get to know you better, outside of work." Nonye had no idea who sent it, so he deleted it. A few days later, he received another message from the same source. Nonye ignored the message again, thinking they would stop. He mentioned these emails to one of his co-workers, who responded, "You're lucky to have a fan." The messages continue to come every few days and he's feeling pretty weirded out.

Activity 22. Continued – Steps to Solving Ethical Dilemmas

Identify the problem or ethical issue:

What are the facts?

What are some possible solutions?

What are you going to do?

Also consider....how will you know if your decision was the right one?

23. Problem Solving on a Team

JUST THE FACTS: Working together to solve problems is not always easy. The purpose of this activity is to explore how effective teams might address problems that occur among its members.



Journaling Activity

Think about a time when you were on a team and one member of the team wasn't contributing. How was the situation handled? What might you have done differently? If you are a team leader, what can you do to help all team members contribute?



Activity 23. Problem Solving on a Team

It's hard work to keep a team working well together. What would you say to or do about a team member in the following situations?

1. Is always late.

2. Whispers to others or starts side conversations during discussions.

3. Gets upset when his/her recommendations are not followed.

4. Hogs the conversation/discussion.

5. Leaves before the job/work is done.

6. Constantly tells jokes and gets people off track.

7. Refuses to work with another "certain" team member.

8. Won't share in the leadership role.

9. Falls asleep.

10. Just sits there.

Is there any difference in the events as they were described? What is the critical factor in the different ways each person reacted? PERCEPTION! Bob believed the coach's actions were totally unfair - and John believed the coach was generally fair. Why might each person perceive the situation differently?

How might different people react to these situations? What might their reactions be based on? If a friend found him or herself in one of these situations, what advice would you offer?

Conclusion



Consider some of the strategies you might use when faced with a situation similar to the ones in this activity. Is there always a right or wrong way to respond? Are there certain things you should always try to do? If so, what are they?

Journaling Activity



Think about how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you. Do you think both are the same? Explain. What are some things you can do to change others' perception of you?

Extension Activity



Use Google Images (or a similar search engine) to locate different posters or illustrations of perception vs. reality. Print them out if you have a printer, and describe them if you don't, and offer reasoning as to why perceptions and realities might not always be the same.

Activity 24 – Perception Vs. Reality

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. Your boss is talking to another employee as you walk into work. You have reason to believe they are talking about you. This makes you feel uncomfortable and upset.
2. A close friend gets to go on a senior trip, all expenses paid. You are jealous that this friend does not have to pay a dime - his or her parents are paying for everything. You consider not going because you have to pay for part of your trip and do not think it is fair.
3. At work, you developed a new way to organize the filing system that makes it easier for the office staff to find documents. You think your supervisor is going to take all the credit.
4. You are a nurse. The patient you are working with is ungrateful and rude, is always finding fault in everything you do, and is making your life miserable.

A - (Action)

I promised the man that I would work with him to figure out what happened and what could be done. I compared the payroll records logbook with the computer payroll database. I discovered a data error, which explained the incorrect amount. I explained what happened and was able to put in a request to give the man a check for his missing balance.

R - (Result)

The employee thanked me and even asked to speak with my supervisor about how helpful I was.

Offer participants the opportunity to work with one or a few peers. Encourage them to practice answering these questions and learning from each other. The more these types of questions are practiced, the easier they will be in an actual work or college interview.

**Conclusion**

What was the easiest part of this activity? What was the most difficult part of this activity? How might you practice the STAR technique? Do you think it would be worth practicing? Why or why not?

**Journaling Activity**

Part of learning how to answer behavioral questions using the STAR method is recognizing your own skills and the areas where you have improved. Do you feel comfortable talking about your skills? If yes, how did you reach this level of comfort? If no, how can you learn to develop this level of comfort?



Activity 25. Tell me About a Time When...

Use the STAR strategy below to guide you in answering the sample interview questions, “Tell me about a time when you...”

Situation (or Task): Describe the situation that you were in or the task that needed to be accomplished. Be specific and give enough detail so that the interviewer understands. The situation could be from a previous job, a volunteer experience, school, or another relevant environment.

Action you took: Describe the action you took. Be sure to keep the focus on you! Even if you’re discussing a group project or effort, talk about what YOU did - not the efforts of the entire team. Don’t say what you might do or what you might have done. Say what you DID.

Results you achieved: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU:

- ☐ ...did not agree with a teacher or supervisor? How did you handle the situation?
- ☐ ...were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- ☐ ...were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- ☐ ...used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- ☐ ...set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- ☐ ...had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- ☐ ...had too many things to do and were required to prioritize your tasks.
- ☐ ...were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- ☐ ...tried to accomplish something and failed.
- ☐ ...had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- ☐ ...you motivated others.

Professionalism

Throughout our working lives, most of us will have many different jobs, each requiring a different level or set of skills. No matter the industry - from customer service to an office job to construction and the trades - all of these jobs have one thing in common: in order to succeed and move ahead, you need to demonstrate professionalism. Professionalism does not mean wearing a suit or carrying a briefcase; rather, it means conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately and always finding a way to be productive.

As today's labor market becomes more and more competitive, jobseekers will need to continually find ways to stand out from the crowd. There are few things an employer values more than employees who carry out their duties in a professional manner. Professionalism isn't one thing; it's a combination of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. Professional workers take responsibility for their own

Employers want new workers to be responsible, ethical, and team oriented, and to possess strong communication, interpersonal, and problem solving skills. Wrap these skills up all together and you've got professionalism.

behavior and work effectively with others. High quality work standards, honesty, and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.

Regardless of the job or industry, professionalism is easy to spot. On a construction site or in a trade, a professional worker will work hard and manage time effectively, including arriving and returning on time from breaks. A professional worker in a customer service setting will speak clearly and politely to customers and colleagues and have neat and clean appearance. In an office setting, an employee with professionalism will work productively with others and strive for a high standard and constant improvement. Professionalism may look slightly different in various settings, but the core elements are always the same - and give young employees an edge as they begin their careers.

The activities in this section focus on each of the five individual soft skills presented in this publication (communication, enthusiasm/attitude, teamwork, networking, and problem solving/critical thinking), but in a broader framework. This is because professionalism, in and of itself, is not one skill but the blending and integration of a variety of skills. When professionalism is demonstrated, it tends to be thought of as the entire package.

26. Professionalism in Today's Workforce

JUST THE FACTS: The face of the workplace is constantly evolving as one generation begins to retire and another moves up to take its place. In 2010, an office may have a mix of baby boomers (and older), Gen X-ers, and Gen Y-ers (Millennials) all working together. In addition to generational differences, differences in education, upbringing, social norms, and values may create cultural gaps that may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts at times. In reality, a variety of perspectives in the workplace can actually benefit and strengthen an organization. The purpose of this activity is to consider how to bridge generational, cultural, and other diversity gaps in order to build a new standard for professionalism in the workplace.



Directions

Today's workforce is made up of people from many different generations. In fact, some workplaces include people ranging in age from 16 to 70 (or older) all working together. How can these different generations of workers all get along when so often their values, ideas, and experiences are so different?

- What do you think the older generation thinks of the younger generation? [Examples may include: lazy, lack of loyalty and respect, need for constant feedback, unrealistic (expect to get to the top right away)]
- What does your generation think of the older generations? [Examples may include: inflexible, slow, set in their ways, technologically incompetent]
- Do you think these ideas are always true? Sometimes true? Never true? Why do you think each group may have these ideas about the other group?

Consider the word "stereotype." According to the online Urban Dictionary, a stereotype is used to categorize a group of people. When we stereotype groups of people, we depict all people within that group as having the same characteristics.

What causes these stereotypes? How can our society rid itself from grouping people by stereotypes?



Journaling Activity

Think about a time when someone made a biased judgment about you or acted unfairly toward you because of your age, skin color, clothes you were wearing, gender, the way you speak, where you live, how much money your family has, or some other reason. Why do you think those assumptions were made about you? How did that experience make you feel? How do you think you should have been treated in that situation?



Activity 26. The Cultural Divide

Today's workforce is very diverse. People of different ages and backgrounds are working alongside one another more so today than ever before. The purpose of this activity is to consider how we perceive others and how others may perceive us, as well as whether or not these perceptions paint an accurate picture of who we are. Consider the following situations:

Sandra is 19 years old and has her first job as an administrative assistant. She wears very low cut shirts, short skirts, heels, and lots of perfume.

What might Sandra's attire lead others to believe about her? What might the reality be?

Tony is 24 years old. He has tattoo sleeves on both of his arms, as well as a name tattooed on his neck. Tony would like to be a waiter at a very fancy restaurant. He has first interview today.

What might a job interviewer think of Tony? What might the reality be?

Terrence is 18 years old and just graduated high school (where he had a 4.0 average). Terrence has an interview today for a summer internship. Terrence is a wheelchair user.

Do you think there is a chance that the interviewer might not ask Terrence the same interview questions he or she would ask of someone who isn't in a wheelchair? Why or why not?

Marissa is in 10th grade. She comes from a family of mechanics. Her dad and three brothers are mechanics, and her grandfather owns a garage. Marissa has secretly wanted to work on cars but has been afraid to tell her family. She now wants to approach her grandfather for a summer job. Why do you think Marissa has kept her career dream a secret? How might she ask her grandfather for a summer job?

Ruthie is 62 years old and is looking for a job. She loves one of the local clothing stores and applied online for a job as a sales clerk. She has an interview today and is afraid the store manager will be much younger than her. Ruthie considers canceling the interview.

Why do you think Ruthie is worried about her interview? What would you tell Ruthie?

Sam is 20 years old, a sophomore in college and is looking for an engineering internship. Sam has Asperger syndrome (a form of autism), and while he has an A average in his engineering courses, he recognizes the fact that he has trouble interacting socially and is worried about his interviews. Why do you think Sam is worried about his interviews? What advice would you give Sam?

27. Professional Work Attitudes

JUST THE FACTS: As an employee, your attitude at work contributes to your work environment and how you get along with your co-workers and supervisors. A positive attitude can improve morale and increase productivity for all.



Directions

Imagine it is your first day on a new job. What would you do to make a good impression on your co-workers and supervisors [make a list for all to see]. Why might it be important to make a good impression on your first day?

Journaling Activity

Imagine you are a supervisor on the job. What type of supervisor would you be? How would you deal with an employee who had a bad attitude? What are some of the skills you would like to develop so, one day, you can be a GREAT supervisor?



Activity 27. Examining Work Attitudes

1. Justin is a stock clerk at the local grocery store. Justin does only what he is told to do, no more and no less.

Question: *Does Justin have a good attitude toward work? Why or why not?*

2. One day, one of Justin's co-workers knocked over a product display. Boxes were scattered all over the floor. At the time, Justin was working close by. He ignored the scattered boxes and left his workstation to tell others what had happened.

Question: *If you were the co-worker who knocked over the display, what would you have said to Justin?*

3. Later the same day, Justin was stocking shelves. The item he was stocking belonged in another part of the store. A co-worker trying to help Justin told him he was making a mistake. Justin insisted he was right and started an argument.

Question: *Was it right for Justin to argue with his co-worker? What could Justin have done differently?*

4. Before Justin went home that night, he overheard a personal conversation between two co-workers and the supervisor. The next morning, Justin told everyone what he had heard. The entire grocery store was soon talking about what Justin told them.

Question: *Was Justin correct in discussing what he had overheard? Explain.*

5. When Justin's supervisor found out what had happened, she called Justin into her office for a conference.

Question: *What do you think was said to Justin?*

Question: *If you were one of Justin's co-workers, what advice would you give to him?*

Question: *If you were Justin's supervisor, what could you do to help him become a better employee?*

Activity 28. Teamwork – An Essential Element of Professionalism

Here are some quick tips to being a good employee...and a good team player. Determine which of your skills are “on target” and which might need some improvement by choosing “Always,” “Sometimes,” or “Never.”

1. I get to work on time. If I am going to be late, I call and let my boss know.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
2. I rarely miss work. If I am going to miss work, I let my boss know ahead of time (or call if I am sick).
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
3. I work as hard as I can.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
4. I pay close attention to my work.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
5. I do my work as I am told. If I am unable to do something or have questions, I ask my supervisor or co-workers.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
6. I am friendly on the job.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
7. I try to solve problems that come up.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
8. I follow safety and company rules.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
9. I use materials and equipment properly.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]
10. I behave professionally.
[Always • Sometimes • Never]

NOW, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Based on the descriptions above, I am most proud of my ability to:

One area I'd like to improve is:

Some strategies I might use as I work to improve this skill is?

Journaling Activity

What would be the benefits of working at a job with your best friend? What would be the drawbacks? Would you want to work at a job with your best friend? Why or why not?



Activity 29. Avoiding the Clique

SCENARIO #1:

LaToya, Rosa, and Day were great friends. All three received their lifeguard certification together and were very excited to be working at the same community pool during the summer. The pool's supervisor knew the three girls were all close friends - and that this would be their first paid job. He wanted to be sure they recognized how fortunate they were to be able to work alongside their friends, but also needed to stress the importance of not letting their close friendship get in the way of doing their jobs.

If you were the supervisor, what specific instructions would you give to the girls?

SCENARIO #2:

Trent, Ben, and Antonio all started working at a local home improvement store at the same time. They were in the same orientation group and liked each other immediately. Trent and Ben work in the customer service department and Antonio works in accounting. The three usually go out after work on Friday night, text each other during the day, and try to eat lunch together several times a week (when they can). Sometimes they even hang out on the weekends. While Trent, Ben, and Antonio are lucky to have found such good friends at work, some of their co-workers are not as pleased about their close friendship.

Questions for Consideration

1. What is the danger of becoming too friendly with co-workers or socializing with them too much?
2. What objections might other co-workers have to this three-person clique? Why might some of these co-workers not be pleased?
3. How can the three maintain their friendship without damaging their relationships with their co-workers?
4. Why is it important to have friends at work?



Extension Activity

Take self-reflection one-step further and think about your future career from today's point of view. Read each of the following 10 questions (see Activity 30) and take some time to think about your answers. What you answer today may not be the same as what you might answer tomorrow or next year - but the important thing is to keep asking yourself questions like these, and answering them.

10 Self-Reflection Questions to move you Toward the Career of Your Dreams

1. How do you want your life to be?
2. What are the 10 most important work values to you?
3. What would you do if time, money, and experience were not a concern?
4. What would you do or learn if you knew you couldn't fail?
5. What are you passionate and energized by?
6. What are your current skills, abilities, and talents?
7. What is stopping you from moving forwards and achieving your goals, including any self-limiting beliefs about yourself?
8. What beliefs do you need now to achieve the life of your dreams?
9. What are all of your choices?
10. What will you commit to now to move forwards?

(Extension) Activity 30. Self-Reflection Questions to Ask and Answer to Move You Toward the Career of Your Dreams

(Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Louise_A_Newson)

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR LIFE TO BE?

CONSIDERATIONS: Think about what you would like to experience on a day-to-day basis. If you were totally 100% happy with your life what would that look like? What do you want to be doing a year from now or five years from now?

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK VALUES TO YOU?

CONSIDERATIONS: Some examples are: independence, helping others, challenge, advancement, risk taking, change and variety, prestige, stability, making a difference, social status, leadership, making decisions, security, artistic creativity, self expression, adventure/excitement, public contact, mental stimulation, travel, working alone, etc.

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF TIME, MONEY, AND EXPERIENCE WERE NOT A CONCERN?

CONSIDERATIONS: After you've travelled, bought you and your family a house and car, etc., what would you do next if there were no limits?

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD YOU DO OR LEARN IF YOU KNEW YOU COULDN'T FAIL?

CONSIDERATIONS: Put fear to one side and allow your imagination to work without restrictions. Would you start a brand new career or start your own business?

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE AND ENERGIZED BY?

CONSIDERATIONS: What do you love doing? What could you talk about for hours? What would other people you know say if I asked them?

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND TALENTS?

CONSIDERATIONS: If you struggle to answer this, as many people do, ask three significant people in your life what they think are your skills and talents. You may be surprised!

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT IS STOPPING YOU FROM MOVING FORWARDS AND ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS, INCLUDING ANY SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS ABOUT YOURSELF?

CONSIDERATIONS: You need to identify anything that is holding you back. It may be a physical issue (e.g. you don't have the necessary qualifications), or it may be mental (e.g. you don't believe you can succeed). Whatever it is, identify it and deal with it (e.g. take a course to earn a qualification or credential, read a book about self-esteem, or ask a teacher or a counselor to help you).

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT BELIEFS DO YOU NEED NOW TO ACHIEVE THE LIFE OF YOUR DREAMS?

CONSIDERATIONS: In order for you to have your perfect career, what would you have to believe about yourself to make that a reality (e.g. "I have achieved many great things in my life, and I deserve to have the career of my dreams.")

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT ARE ALL OF YOUR CHOICES?

CONSIDERATIONS: Brainstorm all your possible choices. Don't start to evaluate them at this stage, just get them all onto paper.

ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT WILL YOU COMMIT TO NOW TO MOVE FORWARDS?

CONSIDERATIONS: Now evaluate all of your options and decide on a path to take. Create an action plan of all the steps you'll need to go through to achieve your goal, and if necessary get support from an adult you trust.

ANSWER:

A Word About Social Networking

The Internet has significantly changed the way our society connects with one another, does business, and socializes. Today's youth have never known a world without the Internet, which is a piece of information adults must put into context when they think about and compare, generationally, social networking to face-to-face communications. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, more than 93% of both teens (12-17) and young adults (18-29) in the United States use the Internet regularly, and more than 70% use social networking sites. Furthermore, among online teens, 62% use the Internet to get news about current events and politics, 48% use it to make purchases (books, clothing, and music), and 31% use it to get health, dieting, or physical fitness information.

Online social networking presents both opportunities and risks. What follows is a cursory breakdown of both, followed by a series of lesson plans specifically targeting online safety.

ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **Social skills.** Social networking allows people to keep up with current friends and make new ones. When used in the right way, social media can increase self-esteem and help someone feel less isolated.
- **Independence and self-expression.** Creating your own “home page” allows people to express themselves and discuss their interests. They can join groups and support fan pages, and find out about other people's interests.
- **Digital competence.** Technology is evolving faster than ever before. As teens and young adults learn to adapt to new technologies (or new applications of existing technologies), they will be better equipped to adapt to future technology.
- **Educational development.** Young adults in secondary and post-secondary education will often use social networking to discuss schoolwork and share discussions about assignments.
- **Research.** Young adults can gather information about topics that are hard to discuss with others, such as drug use and sexual health.
- **Additional advantages for youth with disabilities:** Social networking can open up a new world of communication, integration, and community participation. Young adults can express themselves, including their thoughts and feelings, more easily and without fear of the rejection or stigma they may experience in real life. Research also suggests that these young adults may be more willing to ask for help online than in face-to-face situations. Furthermore, young adults who experience difficulty with social skills can socialize anonymously, and can experiment with different personas and practice initiating and maintaining online friendships. They can also respond to others by taking advantage of having time to review and edit communications before sending it on. Ultimately, this skill may carry over into “real life” and give a sense of new courage to make and maintain friendships in everyday life.

RISKS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING:

- **Sharing one's personal information with the wrong crowd.** Young adults need to be aware that information given out online could also put them at risk of victimization. People looking to do harm could use posted information to identify them or gain their trust. They can also be deceptive by pretending to know a young person. Encourage young people to privatize their online social networking accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter).
- **Bullying.** Harassment may occur online only (cyberbullying), or it may spill over to offline bullying committed by a person who has located his victim online. Cyberbullying can cause significant emotional harm resulting in depression, anger, school avoidance, violence, and suicide.
- **The permanency of online profiles.** Once information has been shared on the Internet, it's out there — forever! Retrieving information that others have read and captured is nearly impossible. Inappropriate pictures, captions, and comments could come back to haunt youth as they start applying to colleges or looking for jobs.
- **Disclosure.** People tend to be far bolder and less discretionary with information shared online versus in person. This means there is a greater risk of giving out information including the presence of a disability that, given a second thought, we might not have wanted to disclose.
- **Additional potential risks for youth with disabilities:** Social networking may further isolate those who may already feel isolated or not included, and can ultimately lead to depression and loneliness. Also, young adults with disabilities must make important life decisions regarding disclosure of their disability (if, how, when, and to whom). Unintended disclosure is possible by posting pictures or becoming fans of disability support groups, for example. While this might not be an issue, it makes the “disclosure” discussion even more important. For more information on disability disclosure, see *The 411 on disability disclosure: A workbook for youth with disabilities* (available online at: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>) and *Cyber Disclosure for Youth with Disabilities* (available online at: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/cyber-disclosure>).

The process of empowering youth to make safe and responsible decisions online can be compared to the process by which they may have learned to safely cross the street. First they hold hands with an adult, and then they gain a little more independence and might be watched from afar. Ultimately, they become capable of making safe and responsible decisions on their own. Educating youth about social networking communities must be grounded in the providing of knowledge, skills, and values so that eventually they can be expected to independently exercise good judgment.

Cyber Resource: CyberSmart!

CyberSmart! is a free curriculum and part of Common Sense Media's education programs. Common Sense will be updating the CyberSmart! lesson plans and adding video, interactive components, and a rich complement of parent resources to create an integrated K-12 Digital Literacy and Citizenship curriculum.

YOUR ONLINE IMAGE

http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/safetysecurity/lessons/9-12/your_online_image/

Students explore the consequences of unintended audiences viewing their social network profiles. They consider four key characteristics of social networking sites and how they might affect teens as they try out new identities. Then, students collaborate to write a letter to parents demonstrating their understanding of issues related to unintended online audiences.

MAKING GOOD DECISIONS

http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/safetysecurity/lessons/9-12/making_good_decisions/

Students take a true/false quiz about the risks to teens regarding online sexual victimization by adults. They use an analysis of the results as the basis for a classroom discussion of how they can harness the power of the Internet while avoiding risky behavior that can lead to involvement in criminal sexual activity.

ACCEPTABLE SOCIAL NETWORKING

http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/safetysecurity/lessons/9-12/making_good_decisions/

Students explore a scenario in which an angry student creates a false online identity in order to seek revenge. They explore ways to resolve the situation and develop a list of tips to help other teens avoid cyberbullying situations.

CONNECTED 24/7

http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/lessons/9-12/connected_247/

Students explore how bullying behaviors on social networking sites and cell phones can affect teens around the clock. They identify positive actions that bystanders can take to alleviate a particular scenario. Then they write a letter to the editor discussing the positives and negatives of social networking sites, messaging, and cell phone technologies used by teens.

And From the Office of Disability Employment Policy:

CYBER DISCLOSURE FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/cyber-disclosure>

A supplement to The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities, this publication focuses on the advances in technology that have changed what youth need to know about disability disclosure.