

eMPL O GAME



R4

“Pre-employment programme toolkit”

Co-funded by
the European Union

Authors:**Bulgarian Inclusion Support Team, Sofia, Bulgaria****94 High School “Dimitar Strashimirov”, Sofia, Bulgaria****World Innovative Sustainable Solutions, Istanbul, Turkiye****ASOCIACIÓN MADRILEÑA DE PROFESIONALES DE LA ATENCIÓN TEMPRANA, Spain****UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE MADRID, Spain****Universidad Autónoma
de Madrid****Esenyurt Milli Egitim Mudurlugu, Istanbul, Turkiye**

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
Step one: The group and me.....	6
Step two: Labour market realities	16
Step three: The perfect job.....	29
Step four: Self-awareness.....	42
Step five: Career resources	49
Step six: Identifying jobs and the tools to do them	57
Step seven: Communication skills and students' initial presentations	61
Step eight: Looking for work is harder than working!.....	75
Step nine: Myth busters – the reality of working as disadvantaged youth (session for students with disabilities)	83
Step ten: How and when to disclose disability in the job search process (session for students with disabilities)	88
Step eleven: The perfect worker.....	91
Step twelve: The trail	97
Step thirteen: What you see is what you get – it's all in the presentation!	107
Step fourteen: It's showtime... an interview performance.....	115
Step fifteen: Mock interview feedback and final thoughts	123

Introduction

The purpose of the Pre-employment programme toolkit is to provide teachers and pedagogical counsellors, who are supporting low skilled and marginalised students (*students from minority groups, students with disabilities and learning difficulties, refugees and immigrant students*) on their employment enhancement opportunities upon completion of school. With this toolkit, the teachers and pedagogical counselors will support these students in terms of:

- determination of what knowledge, skills, and work behaviours (soft skills) they have to offer to prospective employers
- development of problem solving and communication skills that enable them to successfully compete for jobs and develop healthy relationships in the workplace
- exploration of career options in relationship to current labour market trends
- refinement and practice their job seeking skills, including how to generate on-line and paper applications, produce a CV, and interview successfully
- receiving feedback on in-demand soft skills based on observed behaviours in a simulated work environment

The programme is designed to provide teachers and pedagogical counsellors with a synopsis of each session's content to be delivered during this fifteen steps training programme.

Each overview includes the participant outcomes anticipated for each step, the rationale for including such information in a training programme for low skilled and marginalized students and a brief description of the content to be covered.

Please note that students can only achieve the outcomes identified if they actively participate and complete all the steps. This training is student-directed and facilitated by trained staff of above authors, who facilitate accomplishment of assignments themselves.

The Pre-employment programme describe a proposed career guidance and training schedule consisting of 15 steps. They are aimed to be implemented in a period of 6 months and meant for students from 10 to 12 grade in mainstreaming and vocational schools in Bulgaria and Turkiye. The sequence of sessions is important to be followed up in order to reach the best possible outcome from the intervention.

- ✓ **Step one: The group and me**
- ✓ **Step two: Labour market realities**
- ✓ **Step three: The perfect job**
- ✓ **Step four: Self-awareness**
- ✓ **Step five: Career resources**
- ✓ **Step six: Identifying jobs and the tools to do them**
- ✓ **Step seven: Communication skills and presentations**
- ✓ **Step eight: Looking for work is harder than working!**
- ✓ **Step nine: Myth busters – The reality of working with a visual impairment**
- ✓ **Step ten: How and when to disclose disability in the job search process**
- ✓ **Step eleven: The perfect worker**
- ✓ **Step twelve: The digital trail**
- ✓ **Step thirteen: What you see is what you get – it's all in the presentation!**
- ✓ **Step fourteen: It's showtime: an interview performance**
- ✓ **Step fifteen: Interview feedback and final thoughts**



Step one: The group and me

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- learn about the group parameters (rules) and commit to the process of career guidance support
 - network with teachers/pedagogical counselors and members of the group (communication skills)
 - initiate a list of strengths and attributes (self-assessment)
 - recognise the importance of self-awareness as a component of the job search process
- identify the anticipated programme outputs: a self analysis, 3 job analyses, discrepancy analysis (comparing self to jobs analysed), list of possible jobs and prospective employers, personal data sheet, curriculum vitae, points to cover in an interview, format for cover letters and thank-you notes, defined goals (short- and long-term) and action plans for goal implementation, as well as an instructor recommendation.

Rationale

This session addresses the importance of establishing and maintaining work norms, developing the soft skills needed for employment success, and initiating the self-awareness and career exploration process in preparation for matching oneself to a job. This session also encourages students to begin to think “outside the box” about themselves and the careers for which they are qualified and interested in doing, while recognizing the challenges faced by low skilled and marginalised students wishing to return to work or establish themselves in careers for the first time in their adult lives.

Content overview

This session includes:

- Introduction of students
- Instruction: How finding a job requires self/job matching
- Activities: Short discussion of group expectations and anticipated outcomes; networking activity;
- Assignment: Strengths/problems checklist.



Teacher's notes

Group activity: Introductions

The first session of the pre-employment training programme is a time for introductions, building rapport, and orienting the students to the process of structured learning. You will want to greet students as they arrive and make sure that everyone is comfortably situated, preferably at a round, oval, or rectangular table where all can fit. The table is important as the students will want to take notes and have access to their materials during the session. A round or oval table is ideal because it's usually easier to hear and see the others seated around it. Ideally, the group will be comprised of 10-12 attendees and two instructional staff; therefore, the table will need to accommodate 12-15 people and their tools and materials. For students who are blind or partially sighted, it will be important to have easy access to electrical circuits so that their note taking devices or laptops can be recharged.

Once everyone has arrived, you will want to begin by greeting the students and introducing yourself to the group. At a minimum, you will want to tell a little bit about your personal life (where you're from, if you have pets, how long you've lived in this community, what you do for fun, etc), your educational and work background (just the bare minimum – it's important not to overwhelm the students with details, include the pertinent details and no more), your vocational or personal goals (here's a chance to model having both career and life goals and help the students understand that successful people continue to set goals even if they've

achieved earlier iterations of those same goals). This introductory piece should be no more than two minutes... shorter is better.

In advance of the first session, you need to prepare an introductory statement to share with the group. It must be short and positive, including personal information, educational background and work experiences, and end with a few words about goals and aspirations. It can be helpful to share something about yourself that is humorous or is likely to elicit a smile! This self-revelation needs to be recorded, listened to, and edited before it is presented in the group as it will be the model for the other students' introductions.

Following your introduction, you will want to ask for volunteers to introduce themselves to the group. If no one volunteers, ask people to report out in some order – beginning on either side of you and working around the circle, for instance. Ask people to limit their introductions to one to two minutes.

Use a timer or a stopwatch to limit people's introductions to no more than five minutes. If students stall, ask pertinent questions such as "Where are you from?" or "What do you like to do for fun?" Open-ended queries such as "Tell us a bit about your family..." tend to encourage people to talk. You or another person will want to jot down notes as people talk, to note what they've shared. Note details about the students that may be important during the programme. (Remembering those details later will help you establish rapport). The note taker should indicate to the students that he is jotting down information that others share to help you and others remember who said what.

At the end of the introductions, you will want to explain that the process the students have just gone through – the introductions – is much like what can occur in an interview when an interviewer asks a job candidate, "Can you tell me a little about yourself?" If the group shows interest, it may be appropriate to ask for discussion about the introductions and what, in general, worked for people in their introductions. This is not a time to critique individual participant's introductions; rather it is an opportunity to discuss general options for handling that initial request for information that most job seekers will have to contend with in an interview. It will also be helpful to mention that the interviewer may not literally say, "Tell me a little bit about you;" however, there is usually a variation on this query such as "What about you do I need to know?" or "What brings you to this job interview?" You may want to ask the group

to share queries they've received where the interviewer may well have been probing for this kind of introductory information.

Finally, you may want to share that a **“rule of thumb”** for such introductions in an interview is to do the introduction in two minutes or less, as follows:

- First, share 30 seconds or less about yourself: where you're from and how you came to live in this community, a little about your family make-up (without revealing difficulties that might arise such as caring for small children or elderly relatives – you want to share information that indicates you are mature and responsible) and, if it's relevant, any voluntary or civic activities you engage in that indicate an interest or ability that is transferable to the job under discussion, etc.
- Second, share up to 60 seconds describing your educational background and work experiences: focus on the skills and knowledge that you've acquired that are job-related, underscore your successes and minimise any problem areas by starting and ending this segment with where your greatest strengths are – if your education is stellar, but your work history is not; lead and finish with information about your educational background and sandwich in the part about work.
- Third, share up to 30 seconds detailing your career/life goals and how they match up with the company's goals and objectives.

After completing the introductions, you will want to have an open discussion with the students about the group process and the need for rules to define what is considered acceptable behaviour within the group. For example, working in a group necessitates that everyone attend and, preferably, arrive on time so that all of the members of the group benefit from input that each member can contribute. Therefore, attendance and punctuality will likely be rules that everyone can agree are critical to the success of the group. In addition, it will be important to remind the students that the Pre-employment programme is designed to simulate a true work environment where workers are expected to be in attendance and on time every session unless there are extreme mitigating circumstances: someone is ill with a contagious disease (for example flu or COVID-19) or has a long-standing doctor's appointment that cannot be rescheduled. In those instances, the expectation is that a worker will call in and advise the employer (in this instance, you, the lead teacher) of the reason for the absence.

You also need to be prepared at the beginning of this rule discussion to explain what the consequences of rule breaking are. You and the students may want to discuss and reach consensus on verbiage here such as: Group members may have a drink during class time but eating is not allowed. Plan to eat on breaks or at lunch time. Mobile phones – for talking or texting – are not allowed. If you receive an emergency call, you must excuse yourself from group to answer it.



Talk/discussion: How finding a job requires self/job matching

Following a short break, you'll want to introduce the topic "How finding a job requires self/job matching". This talk ideally covers the following points:

- Each job seeker has attributes that he or she brings to the job and the goal for an employer is to determine who amongst the candidates available (job applicants) is the best qualified and suited for the position being offered. The goal for the job seeker is to determine whether the job on offer meets his or her wants and needs (income, prestige, advancement possibilities, etc).
- The job seeker's attributes include work skills (the ability to use a keyboard to enter data or text or accurately count money in a till, for example) and work habits (behaviours that indicate that the prospective employee is trustworthy, dependable, courteous, and so forth).
- The job seeker also presents with general skills (literacy, numeracy, travel skills, speaking skills, etc), interests (for instance, a preference for being indoors rather than outdoors when working, preference for aesthetics – music, dance, art – over athletics – running, jumping, swimming, and so on), values (health, wealth, family, religion, freedom, security, and the like), and work personality (to be discussed in greater detail later, here suffice it to say that people match up to the environments where they work either well or poorly depending on things like whether they prefer to work with people or on their own; whether they want to work with their hands or machines versus with ideas or intangibles, and so forth).
- By thoroughly analysing/exploring one's self (abilities, knowledge, skills, interests, values, work personality, and liabilities or challenges), a job seeker knows exactly what he or she has to offer a prospective employer and can articulate his or her assets in an employment interview.

- People use a host of tools and activities to explore their attributes. For example, they take tests both in-school and out-of-school; they think about and write out what they see as their strengths and weaknesses; they ask others around them for feedback concerning what they see as their best and worst attributes; and so forth.
- During this group process (the Pre-employment programme), students will have many opportunities to analyse their strengths and weaknesses and receive feedback from others to determine whether what they perceive about themselves matches what others see in their behaviours.

This is one of the key reasons for successful outcomes according to students who've taken this training previously!

- The second half of this equation (the self/job match equation), is what the employer wants and needs... it is this second component that gives the prospective job candidate insight into a job under consideration to determine if it's the "right" job.
- Successful job candidates often do research to find out about jobs they are interested in prior to applying for those jobs. They find out about the company hiring: is it a large, medium, or small company? What products or services does the company produce or market? What kinds of jobs are available and in what location? What are the job tasks for any positions of interest to the job seeker? What qualifications, credentials, or required coursework must a successful job candidate have? Does the job require a certain amount of prior experience or specific skills training?
- Exploring a job necessitates finding out as much as possible and documenting what you find out. This process is called job analysis. In this group, students will have multiple opportunities to develop job analyses and the support to do so as independently as possible. Most importantly, by working in the Pre-employment programme, students learn how to do the research and document their efforts so that they can repeat the process whenever needed and not have to rely on others to do this for them in the future.

This understanding of how to do a job analysis to determine what an employer is looking for in prospective workers is another key reason for successful outcomes identified by previous programme attendees.

- The best job outcomes... the jobs where workers report back that they are happily working, that they like their jobs and their co-workers and employers report liking them... are

the jobs where people match to the jobs: their attributes are similar to the attributes of others working for the company and the tasks they are asked to perform match their ability to do what's asked of them.

Following the talk, students are encouraged to discuss their thoughts related to the self/job match concept. You may want to ask if anyone has an example of an excellent job match that they have made or a situation anyone has found him or herself in where they felt they'd not made a good match. If someone gives an example, you will want to discuss what lessons can be learned by others in the group; as well as, what lessons the individual who shared his story learned. If no one volunteers, you may want to give examples from popular culture (television shows, movies, books, local or national politicians) to make the point that when the job/self match works, the results are impressive.

Output: Students recognise the importance of self-awareness as a component of the job search process.



Group activity: Networking

The Networking activity is a great activity to follow a lunch or afternoon break as it is interactive and stimulating for the students. When all of the students have returned to the room where the group is being held, explain to them that their task for the next ten to fifteen minutes will be to interview each other. Ask every other person (you can have students count-off, if it makes this activity easier) to turn to his or her left and greet the person sitting there. That person will be the person's partner for this activity.

The task is for the students to interview each other and find out more detailed information about each other than was shared in the morning introductions. For example, the students may want to exchange full names and whether they use any nicknames, where they're from originally or what neighbourhood they live in currently, as well as any additional information they might like to share about family, career, or what they do for fun.

You will need to time this activity and allow no more than ten to fifteen minutes (if the conversations start to wane after ten minutes, call the session to a close; if the group is busily chatting at the ten minute mark, allow it to continue to fifteen minutes). You and any additional staff in attendance are expected to participate in this activity in the same fashion as the other students...use a timer to keep up with the passage of time, if you're not able to do two things simultaneously.

When the students have completed their interviews of each other, the group comes back together and you'll want to ask each person to present on the individual whom he interviewed.

Output: Students network with members of the group, including staff (communication skills).



Group activity: Programme outputs

In the final group discussion for the day, you need to identify the anticipated programme outputs, define the products and the work that will be involved in producing these for the students, and answer any questions they may have about the work that will be expected of them to accomplish the tasks assigned. The students need to know that the expectation is that by the end of the Pre-employment programme they will have the following products in their career portfolios:

- a detailed, written self-analysis
- three completed job analyses for jobs of interest to them
- a detailed discrepancy analysis (where they will compare themselves to the jobs they've analysed)
- a written list of possible jobs and prospective employers
- new or up-to-date CV
- a detailed list of the points to cover in an interview
- a template or format for cover letters and thank you notes
- clearly defined short- and long-term career goals and action plans for goal implementation

Individual work time

During individual work time (typically an hour to an hour and a half, which can be broken into two 30-45 minute increments), the students are expected to complete assignments as independently as possible. You and any other staff or volunteers in attendance need to make yourselves available to assist as needed.



Assignment - Strengths/Problems checklist *(to be provided to students)*

Personal Information

Date:

Name:

Directions

The Strengths/Problems checklist is a tool designed for you to complete independently. The Checklist can help you figure out your strengths (competencies) and weaknesses (problems). Once you know your strengths and weaknesses, you can decide what you need to work on while you are in the Pre-Employment Programme to prepare for your career and successfully search for a job. You can use the Checklist to help you decide what goals you would like to establish with your teachers or, you can use it to set personal goals. Remember as you complete this Strengths/Problems Checklist that there are no right or wrong answers—just what is true for you.

Please read each statement carefully and answer either yes or no. Try to think of examples from your life as you respond. For example, if the statement is “I perform chores at home,” think of the things you do to help out at home such as washing the dishes or taking out the rubbish. Your teacher may ask you for examples when you share your completed Checklist. Please make sure that you respond to each statement.

There is no time limit for completing the Checklist—take as much time as you need to read and respond to the statements. You may change an answer, if you have second thoughts and feel you should have answered differently. Remember—there are no right or wrong answers! If you have questions or need help understanding an item, please ask.

Please type YES or NO after each statement. If the answer is yes then give examples as described above

I perform chores at home:

I perform chores in other venues (volunteer placement, clubs, societies, church etc):

I participate in community activities (litter collecting, fundraising for organisations, etc):

I participate in community or membership organisations (local councils, sports clubs etc):

I volunteer:

I like people:

Other people like me:

I like home-based activities such as watching television, listening to the radio, or reading:

I like to go out with friends:

I like to go out by myself:

I participate in fitness activities or sports:

I like to watch athletic events:

I like community-based activities such as going to clubs, cinemas, or shopping:

I like to play computer or video games:

I like to walk or hike:

I have hobbies and spend time on them:

I get a lot of exercise:

I feel comfortable eating out:

It is difficult for me to go out and have a good time:

I provide favours for others, for example, helping a neighbour or relative with housework:

I return favours that have been done for me, for example, helping to pay for petrol when a friend drives me to an appointment:

I use gestures when I communicate (nodding, hand motions, etc):

I am a good listener:

I am a good speaker:

I am comfortable asking for help:

I am comfortable speaking with someone I've just met:

I recognise when I have a problem:

I try to solve my problems myself:

I ask for help with a problem when I need it:

I consider several solutions to my problems:

- I understand the possible consequences of my choices:
- I take steps to solve a problem:
- I evaluate the outcome of my solutions:
- Other people try to solve my problems for me:
- I feel comfortable asking others not to interfere when I am trying to solve a problem:
- I can comfortably describe my disability to others:
- I can describe the support and adaptations that I need to others:
- I ask for support when needed:
- I handle my own affairs (making doctor's appointments, scheduling training or meetings, etc):
- I know what resources are available to assist me in meeting my future goals:
- I understand my legal rights and responsibilities:

References

- Bolles RN, 2010. What color is your parachute? Berkley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counseling for people with disabilities. 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step two: Labour market realities

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised people with the necessary information and tools to:

- acquaint themselves with local labour market resources
- implement a problem solving strategy for career exploration

Rationale

Marginalised job seekers learn a great deal about the local labour market through incidental or opportune learning: reading print (newspapers, magazines, posters, television) and casually observing businesses' physical surroundings, the work being performed on site, by whom, and with what tools; as well as promotional materials (advertising on billboards, trains and buses, or in windows, for example).

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: Introduction to career counselling theories and the labour market: what's hot and what's not!
- Activities: Discussion of local labour market resources
- Personal data sheet
- Worksheet "Who am I"
- Worksheet "Skills quest"



Teacher notes

Following roll call, the first item of business at the start of each training session is to set aside time for a quick review of the previous session's work. It is at this time that you will want to probe to find out if students have understood the purpose in doing the previously assigned activities and whether they have any questions or comments about the content covered in earlier talks or discussions. The critical items to cover in a review of the first session's activities follow in a listing of suggested questions to pose to the group:

- What were the most effective strategies that people used in their introductory comments to help others get to know them? Did it help to have a short list of topics to discuss... where you

were from, information about family and/or pets, what you do for fun? Did the morning introductions help you in the afternoon networking activity? How?

- If you were an employer/interviewer, are there things you'd want to know about yourself as a prospective job candidate that you think ought to be routinely included in an introductory presentation?
- What were the most important tips that you captured from the "Tell me a little bit about you" activity?

Following this review of the content covered in the previous session, you will want to ask students to hand in their completed assignment, the Strengths/problems checklist.



Talk/discussion: The labour market – what's hot, what's not!

Once the review of previously covered content has been completed, you will be ready for the first discussion of the day: "The labour market – what's hot, what's not!" This talk/discussion is designed to stimulate students' thinking about the current state of the labour market, particularly what they may have heard about the national labour market, and to correct any misperceptions they may have of the economy and job availability in their home communities, the nation, and the rest of the world.

For low skilled and marginalised job seekers, the greatest difficulties in accessing information about the labour market are:

- the heavy reliance of government and private information providers on dense or busy, difficult to navigate internet sites and printed materials that describe the make-up of the labour market (what jobs are available in the present economy, which are growing, which are diminishing, training and qualifications required, salaries and benefits offered, etc), career path explanations, and job descriptions.
- inadequate instruction in the mainstream school careers education programme, where it is often assumed that the lessons provided to all students about careers and job seeking skills are adequate for students with special needs, learning difficulties and disabilities (who often lack the experiential learning and observational ability necessary as background information or to build basic concepts to make this area of instruction meaningful).

Begin with general information about the labour market and job trends and gradually present content that is more specific to the locale in which students reside and to the students' interests and abilities. If you do not feel comfortable with the range of information sources available, you may choose to invite in someone to co-teach this area or have a guest speaker, who covers the content in-depth and then you can facilitate a discussion following the presentation. The overall idea with regard to exploration of labour market content is to provide the information in a pyramid-like fashion – the base of the pyramid is the general information about the national labour market: what jobs are available; which occupational areas are growing and which are diminishing; and where can people find out more about the overall trends in the labour market (numbers of jobs, wages, qualifications, etc). Next up on the pyramid would be general information about labour trends, such as common skills that are considered valuable in today's market (knowledge of other languages and cultures, computer skills, etc). The next tier up on the pyramid is general information about the labour market in the local area (city, village, shire, and region). Next up on the pyramid of information is content about jobs specific to low skilled and marginalised students job seekers and, finally, jobs of specific interest to the students.



Assignment

Students need to begin compiling the information that they will need to complete their Personal data sheets. For example, students may want to write out the names of schools or colleges they've attended, what courses they completed and when, what certificates or degrees they received, where the school or college is located; what companies they've worked for, what their job title was, who their immediate supervisor was, what their job duties were, what their inclusive dates of employment were; and other relevant information that might be requested on an application.



Practical tools

Personal data sheet

Demographic information:

Name (first, middle, last...any nickname parenthetical)

Address (street, city, postal code)

Telephone numbers (include land lines and mobile)

E-mail address (underscored)

Date of birth (if under 18 years of age)

Educational experience:

School(s)

Location

Grades

Practical or apprenticeship experiences

Special Skills:

(computers - word processing, database management, Internet research skills; office/work equipment and tools; licenses or certificates; foreign languages, etc.)

Other Related Experience:

(volunteer work, membership of teams or clubs etc, etc.)

Worksheet “Who am I?”

For self-confidence, it is necessary that students with special needs knows him/herself and recognise his/her potential, as well as having an idea of what improvements s/he could make.

By the end of this worksheet s/he will have a comprehensive list of his/her personal attributes in a concise summary.

Please ask the student to answer the questions honestly and in full.

1. What do you enjoy doing the most?
2. Why do you enjoy doing it?
3. What do you physically or mentally have to do to participate in this activity? (e.g. attend meetings, research on the Internet, etc.)
4. What skills have you attained through participating in these activities?
5. How could these skills be used when doing other things?
6. Now write a list of the skills that you have just recognised as having, bearing in mind how they could be transferred to a work situation.

Congratulations!

Now you have a list of skills that you can acknowledge as your strengths. You can use this list when creating your CV, completing application forms or even to promote the skills you possess in an interview! These transferable skills are very important when you can transfer them from one situation into another that is work-based.

**Teacher tip:**

You can repeat this exercise with all aspects related to his/her life situations. The idea is to surprise him/her how many transferable skills s/he hold! Probably s/he may not have thought that these skills are valuable to an employer, but they are indeed! They become highly useful to an employer when /she is adapting them for use in the workplace. For example, if s/he does not have office-based work experience, s/he may find that s/he still has attained the related skills in other areas of his/her life, i.e. through filing away utility bills, making enquiries by telephone, writing complaint letters, etc.

Worksheet “Skill’s quest”

We are providing you with these skills self-assessment questionnaire. It aims to evaluate the following three important characteristics which are very important in terms of successful inclusion on the labour market of the low skilled/marginalised student.

Competency – the ability to fulfil a given task

Skill – a learned capacity or a talent to achieve certain expected results

Quality – inherent to the person character features

You can use the following list to assess the qualities, skills and competencies that student possess or needs to develop.

The list contains 72 items, which you can evaluate using the following grades:

- 1 – No, it is not typical for him/her
- 2 – S/he has some potential, but s/he needs to develop it
- 3 – Yes, it is quite typical for him/her.

	Ask your students to answer to one of the three options:		
	1	2	3
Skill, competency or quality:	<i>No, it is not typical for me.</i>	<i>I have some potential but need to develop it.</i>	<i>Yes, it is quite typical for me.</i>
1. I can organize my time.			
2. I can allocate money.			
3. I can use devices such as cash points, security systems, services such as paying by Internet, using laundry etc.			
4. I can manage human resources.			
5. I can perform two or more parallel activities.			
6. I can set my priorities.			
7. I can plan effectively the achievement of my goals.			
8. I have friends that are quite different regarding character, age or profession.			
9. I have just as many friends as I need.			
10. I can freely talk to people I don't know well.			
11. I can work in a multicultural environment.			
12. I am a good listener.			
13. I am used to working and studying with numerous people.			
14. I can select the appropriate			

	Ask your students to answer to one of the three options:		
	1	2	3
Skill, competency or quality:	<i>No, it is not typical for me.</i>	<i>I have some potential but need to develop it.</i>	<i>Yes, it is quite typical for me.</i>
for my needs technology (computers, office technology and so on).			
15. I can select the appropriate for a specific task technology.			
16. I am interested in technology.			
17. I maintain and cope with technology.			
18. I can identify the different alternatives in a given situation.			
19. I can find different solutions in a given situation.			
20. I have the ability to adapt my personal qualities to new situations.			
21. I can overcome difficulties/ challenges.			
22. I can identify the appropriate resources/ support.			
23. I have a creative thinking.			
24. I have good and helpful memory.			
25. I have the ability to learn.			
26. I have the ability to reasoning the solutions (The ability to			

	Ask your students to answer to one of the three options:		
	1	2	3
Skill, competency or quality:	<i>No, it is not typical for me.</i>	<i>I have some potential but need to develop it.</i>	<i>Yes, it is quite typical for me.</i>
evaluate a given event from different points of view, considering its different aspects and the consequences, deriving from it)			
27. I am an adaptive person.			
28. I have a flexible behaviour in the different situations.			
29. I can take individual responsibility.			
30. I a self-respected person.			
31. I show independency in my activities and behaviour.			
32. I am an honest and trustworthy person.			
33. I can be persistent.			
34. I use and evaluate information.			
35. I can look for and find appropriate information.			
36. I use computers to process information.			
37. Quite often I participate in discussions with colleagues and friends.			
38. I give and receive information on the phone.			

	Ask your students to answer to one of the three options:		
	1	2	3
Skill, competency or quality:	<i>No, it is not typical for me.</i>	<i>I have some potential but need to develop it.</i>	<i>Yes, it is quite typical for me.</i>
39. I can express my opinion.			
40. I participate as a member of a team.			
41. I participate in communities (a union of people in the, established in the name of a concrete goal or because of common interests such as different unions of people with disabilities or a professional union like artists unions for example).			
42. I am a part of an organization (public, private or informal group of people).			
43. I can take personal responsibility in team tasks.			
44. I can be supportive and/ or cooperate with colleagues.			
45. I can work with MS Word.			
46. I can use computer/ video links			
47. I work with MS Excel.			
48. I use different computer programmes.			
49. I can send fax messages.			
50. I can format documents.			

	Ask your students to answer to one of the three options:		
	1	2	3
Skill, competency or quality:	<i>No, it is not typical for me.</i>	<i>I have some potential but need to develop it.</i>	<i>Yes, it is quite typical for me.</i>
51. I can use computer aided drawing.			
52. Drawbacks make my decisions firmer.			
53. I never postpone what needs to be done immediately.			
54. When I work together with other people I have better results than theirs.			
55. It is difficult for me to give up a task even if it is difficult for me.			
56. If I lack some knowledge for a given task I am ready to work hard to acquire them.			
57. I am more inclined to perform the tasks than to run their execution.			
58. I feel better when I carry out tasks, given to me by someone else.			
59. It is important for me to get the approval of the authority.			
60. I like to be in charge of the performance of the tasks.			
61. I can talk people into my point of view.			

	Ask your students to answer to one of the three options:		
	1	2	3
Skill, competency or quality:	<i>No, it is not typical for me.</i>	<i>I have some potential but need to develop it.</i>	<i>Yes, it is quite typical for me.</i>
62. I can initiate the organization of work (sport, entertaining) groups.			
63. I can take responsibility.			
64. I'd rather talk and the others listen to me than vice versa.			
65. I can formulate my statements well.			
66. When a certain problem is being discussed, I like to take the floor.			
67. I am not bothered when I have to speak in public.			
68. I like to be in the centre of attention.			
69. I can keep my balance even if I am actually worried.			
70. I am could speak a foreign language.			
71. I know two foreign languages.			
72. I learn foreign languages quite easily.			

Analysis of the skills:

You can use the following classification to define: his/her strong skills, the ones you find necessary to develop and the qualities (items 23- 33) s/he possess, that would be useful as in professional so in personal aspects.

- 1-7 Organizational skills
- 8- 13 Communicative skills
- 14- 17 working with equipment
- 18- 22 Problem solving
- 23- 33 Personal qualities
- 34- 36 Data processing
- 37- 44 Teamwork
- 45- 52 Computer literacy
- 53- 57 Motivation
- 58- 60 Prefers to perform rather than lead
- 61- 65 Leadership
- 66- 70 Presentation skills
- 71- 72 Foreign languages

References

- Bolles RN, 2010. What color is your parachute? Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Carkhuff RR, 1969. Helping and human relations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Carkhuff RR, 2009. The art of helping. 9th ed. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.
- Carkhuff RR and Berenson BG, 1967. Beyond counselling and therapy. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counselling for people with disabilities. 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step three: The perfect job

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised people with the necessary information and tools to:

- understand how to evaluate the parameters that make a job more or less ideal for an individual
- learn about goal setting and how daily detail goals (to do lists), achievement, and personality goals differ from one another
- understand the importance of making all goals SMART – Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

Rationale

This session is founded on the idea that low skilled and marginalised students are often told by family members, teachers, and counsellors what jobs are available that they think are suitable,

based on what they think can or cannot be done without good sight. Students in our Pre-employment programme needs to have the opportunity to think about what's important to them: what they think would make a job perfect. In order to progress from exploration and planning to implementation (from economically inactive to considering prospective jobs and applying for jobs), it is critical for job seekers to understand the nature of decision making and goal setting.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: The Perfect Job and How to Develop Goals (types of goals and importance of SMART goal setting).
- Activities: values clarification activities; complete perfect job worksheet and problem solving worksheet.



Teacher's notes

Talk/discussion: The perfect job

In this discussion, you want the low skilled and marginalised students to contribute ideas that they consider as critical for “making a job perfect” for each of them. You’ll want to capture their ideas on a white board or a large piece of white paper (flipchart) that you can affix to the wall (remember to verbalise what’s being written up on the board for the students unable to see what you are writing. Start the discussion with an open-ended question such as, “What considerations make a job ‘perfect’ in your estimation?” Or, “Describe the attributes of a ‘perfect’ job.” If students don’t voluntarily begin the discussion, call on them in some order (left to right or right to left) so that you don’t overlook anyone.

Capture all of the ideas that students generate, making sure that the following points come up or add them as your contribution:

- job duties (the routine tasks that the worker is required to do)
- salary (the amount of money people tends to make in a field)
- schedule (the days of the week and hours a typical worker in an ideal or perfect job works)

- environment (where the job occurs – indoors or outdoors; in a large, medium, or small company; working with machines, people, or things)
- location (where such jobs are available... where one currently resides or elsewhere... in or out of the country; large, medium, or small towns; where there is public transportation)
- benefits (What do you need other than money: retirement, vacation, sick leave, health benefits, other?)
- people (Who and how many people do you want to work around?)
- if you are interested in self-employment, what makes it appealing? (You may want to do some additional probing on this topic, asking for example, Do you plan to work alone or hire helpers? What attributes would you look for in hiring others? What product or service do you envision yourself providing? And, noting that if self-employment is right or perfect, the participant will be able to respond to all of the same points listed here in the perfect job activity.)
- appearance (How do you want to dress at work?)
- supervision (What characteristics would your ideal boss have?)
- stability (How long do you want to stay at this job?)
- pace of work (Do you prefer a steady pace or can you handle faster paced, more stressful work?)

Once you and the students have run out of points to list for the perfect job, have them review what has been written and ask themselves:

- How “real” is what you are wishing for in this perfect job?
- Are there any inconsistencies in what you are trying to capture?
- Does this “perfect job” exist in the labour market?
- What are the most important items listed?
- If you had to “give up” any of the items listed, what would you choose to give up?
What is non-negotiable?



Talk/discussion: Problem solving model

The “Problem solving model”, which is based on the work of Robert Carkhuff (2009), a cognitive behaviourist and counsellor, is important for students to learn about and use during the course. They will use the problem solving model in their analysis and resolution of issues that are inhibiting their ability to work. You will want to introduce the model to the students and then open the session up for a discussion of the model. The key points to cover in the introduction of the model follow:

Stage one: Exploration

What the students need to know is that whenever they are feeling out-of-sorts, irritated, anxious, or otherwise uncomfortable, they likely have a problem (something that is bothering them). The most efficient way to resolve a problem (and feel better) is to first explore what it is that is bothersome; in other words, try to identify the problem by asking, “What’s bothering me or making me feel badly?” It can help to talk about what’s bothering you, but if you choose to do so you’ll need to find a good listener: someone who will simply listen and occasionally repeat back what he or she hears you saying. You do not want someone who will try to tell you what he or she thinks is wrong or how to “fix” your problem because the whole point of exploring is for the individual with the problem to identify the problem.



Teacher Tip

To help someone in the first stage of the Problem-solving model explore, the trainer must actively listen to the individual. It’s fine to paraphrase what you hear the student saying. For example, “What I hear you saying is ____.” Or “Do I understand that you are saying ____?” It is also fine to respond with encouragement to continue such as “yes,” “um, hum,” or “uh, huh.”

Stage two: Understanding

In the second stage of the model, the individual who has identified his or her problem needs to fully understand the problem and how it has come to be a problem. This entails the student

asking the following questions: “What have I done to contribute to this problem?” “What have others done to contribute to this problem?” “How does the environment or social mores contribute to this problem?” and “What has kept me from solving this problem to date? (What is reinforcing this behaviour?)” Once these questions have been answered, the individual should be able to define what it would be like if the problem didn’t exist – the individual should be able to define the solution or outcome goal. When the goal (or solution) has been identified, the individual then brainstorms with others for ways to achieve the goal and develops an action plan based on those ideas.



Teacher Tip

When a student is in the understanding stage of the model, your role is to help the student answer the questions that help frame the problem and set the stage for identifying the solution or goal that the student would like to achieve. Once the student has a goal identified, the trainer can participate in the brainstorming of ideas to achieve the goal and help with writing up the action plan. The trainer will want to encourage the student to pick the easiest things from the brainstormed list to do first, working up to the harder items from the list over time. Other important things to encourage the student to do with the action plan: identify a start date as well as an anticipated date to accomplish the plan, what reward the student will allow himself or herself when the plan is accomplished, and who the student will share the plan with for external support and encouragement.

Stage three: Action

The final stage of the Problem solving model involves the individual moving into action and implementing the plan that he or she developed. Ideally, the individual will have shared a start date with the training staff and significant others. When the plan is implemented, staff should see evidence of activity on the participant’s part... he or she should be doing what was planned for in terms of behaviours.

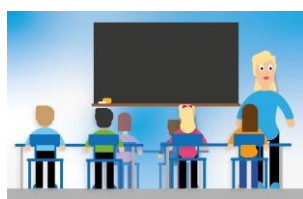


Teacher Tip

Be prepared to give positive feedback when you observe a student working on his or her action plan... no news is not good news when someone is following through with a plan to resolve a problem, and no one notices! You must acknowledge movement forward with an action plan!

Likewise, you must also be prepared to gently or empathetically confront a student who does not move into action... the individual needs to know that you have seen that he is not doing what he said he would do! Let him know that you are aware with “I” statements such as “I’m confused, I thought you were going to (do what?)” “I’m frustrated because you indicated that you were going to (do what?). What’s happened?”

Output: Students have a basic understanding of the Problem solving model.



Talk/discussion: How people keep their problems a problem

Most people are fairly adept at keeping their problems a problem...they do so without exerting much effort and virtually no thought. The key to helping people solve problems is often a case of helping them recognise which of three strategies or behaviours they are using or demonstrating are most likely to use to keep their problems a problem. The three strategies are: rationalisation, blaming, and denial.

Each strategy is described in further detail below.

Rationalisation

The first strategy used by people to keep their problems a problem is rationalisation. They rationalise that the thing that is bothering them is simply something that won’t go away or can’t be resolved due to some intrinsic shortfall, challenge, or physical/sensory/emotional limitation or an external constraint that is intractable. These rationalisations sound like, “I’m the wrong

size: too fat, too skinny, too tall, too short; the wrong gender; the wrong ethnicity; or it's because I'm with disability, not pretty or handsome enough, etc."

Blaming

The second strategy used by people to keep their problems a problem is blaming. They blame others for their problems, which places control for resolving any problems in other people's courts and makes them responsible for correcting an issue or finding a way out of a jam rather than the person voicing the discomfort (the person with the problem). Blaming sounds a great deal like rationalising with the exception that there is usually a specific person identified as "the guilty party." Blaming sounds like, "The reason I'm poor with maths is that my grade three teacher didn't spend enough time on maths skill building; or It's my mother's fault that I'm late because she had to stop for petrol and that caused us a delay that resulted in me missing my appointment time, The reason I didn't get the job is that the manager doesn't like blind people, etc."

Denial

The third strategy used by people to keep their problems a problem is denial – where they simply ignore or deny that they have any problems. Denial sounds like, "I'm not really upset, I only mentioned the lack of funds so that you would be aware of my constraints in job seeking; or I don't know why you keep harping on the sighted world's worries about my looks, I'm not worried what they think!"

What students need to understand is that if they hear themselves making excuses (rationalising) or blaming others for making them feel badly or not cooperating that they might want to stop and think about what they can do about the situation. Likewise, if they are feeling out-of-sorts, unhappy, irritated, or otherwise discombobulated, it's important to consider what it is that's bothering them. Ignoring such feelings is an indication that they are in denial concerning a problem.

If they decide that there's nothing that can be done about a specific problem, they have no choice left but to walk away from the situation and find an alternative activity to do or person to befriend. If the solution is something that they truly want/need, they need to put energy to bear and find a way to work toward the goal of resolving the problem. Applying the problem solving model can facilitate in this process. Students need to understand that they have no direct control over others' feelings and behaviours, but they can assume full control of their own

behaviour and change in meaningful ways... sometimes the changes in their behaviours will elicit change in others' behaviours.

Your role as teacher is to call to the students' attention any of the aforementioned strategies that keep a problem a problem. If you hear someone rationalising, you need to say that's what you hear and ask the person, "What can you do about this problem?" Likewise, if you hear someone blaming another person for a problem, ask, "What can you do about this issue? So-and-so isn't here and isn't voicing concern—you are here and seem upset, which makes me think the issue is bothersome to you. What are you able to do to resolve this issue?"

If you believe that someone is ignoring a problem or in denial that he has a problem, you need to say something like, "You seem a bit out-of-sorts about (whatever the person indicates is troublesome or you've noticed is interfering with his forward progress), is this an issue or concern of yours? You seem unhappy or frustrated or angry, is there a problem?" The idea is to get the person with the problem to acknowledge it... to say, "Of course, whatever-he's-complaining-about or the-barrier-you've-identified, is a problem!" Once he voices the concern, you can help him work it out using the problem solving model to explore the concern, understand the problem and possible solution, and establish an action plan for its resolution.

All of this said – it's also important to share with students that there are different levels of problems and different kinds of goals that one sets based on what the problem requires. At this juncture, you'll want to engage the group in a discussion of the different types of goals and goal setting parameters. Notes related to goal setting follow the group problem solving activity described below.



Group activity: Problem solving

Students need to spend 5 to 10 minutes working on what they perceive to be the greatest concern or problem they are facing and write out what the problem is, their understanding of the problem, and what an ideal solution might be. Then, you'll want to ask them to pair off and work with one another on possible steps to achieving a solution to the problem (brainstorming with one another) – allow approximately 10 to 15 minutes per participant. You'll also want to

remind the students of the rules of brainstorming: that no suggestion is ignored (they can write down other people's ideas or record them) and they don't stop to analyse whether the ideas shared are doable... they just gather ideas. The analysis of ideas comes later in the process. You and any other staff will want to circulate and add your ideas to the brainstorming sessions between the pairs.

In our programme, we will focus on setting achievement goals related to securing employment and in order to do this we will craft what are referred to as SMART goals...goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. The SMART acronym is borrowed from business and was first introduced into the literature by a management consultant, George Doran, in 1981.

Key points related to establishing **SMART goals** are detailed below.

- **Specific** – this attribute relates to the need to clearly define goals by stating what the person setting the goal will do (using action words such as organise, investigate, plan, manage, etc), why it's important to work on the goal and what the outcome will be (what will be achieved), and how the person is going to do what needs to be done.
- **Measurable** – this attribute refers to the specific steps (objectives) that need to be accomplished to achieve the outcome desired; each objective should be clearly defined and quantified.
- **Achievable** – this attribute identifies the need for goals to be important to the person setting them and within their knowledge, abilities, values, and fiscal capacity to undertake.
- **Realistic** – this attribute describes the need for goals to be do-able by the person who sets them; if a goal is impossible (for example, a goal of becoming a professional basketball player is impossible for someone who is over the age of 50, short, and out-of-shape), it cannot be achieved.
- **Time-bound** – this attribute references the need for goals to be accomplished by a specific point in time; in other words, people need to work toward achieving goals on a schedule!



Practical tools

Worksheet “The perfect job”

Name:

Date:

In each of the areas below, write the information that would make a job “perfect” for you.

Job Duties (What would you do?)

Salary (How much money do you need to make?)

Schedule (When do you want to work?)

Environment (Do you want to work indoors/outdoors, in a large/medium/small company, with machines, people, or things? Are you interested in self-employment?)

Location (Where do you want to work?)

Benefits (What do you need other than money: retirement, vacation, sick leave, health benefits, other?)

People (Who and how many people do you want to work around?)

Appearance (How do you want to dress at work?)

Supervision (What characteristics would your ideal boss have?)

Stability (How long do you want to stay on this job?)

Pace of work (Do you prefer a steady pace or can you handle faster paced, more stressful work?)

Now, look back at what you have written. How “real” is what you are wishing for in this perfect job? Are there any inconsistencies in what you are trying to capture? Does this “perfect job” exist in the labour market?

Worksheet “Problem solving model”

Name:

Date:

Stage one: Exploration

When you feel out-of-sorts or uncomfortable, it is often an indicator that something is bothering you – a problem that needs attention. Ask yourself, “What’s bothering me? What is it that’s making me feel this way? What’s wrong?” It is important in this stage of exploration to identify and define the problem. What is it that’s bothering you and causing you discomfort? It can help to write out what you think the problem is and try to define it in behavioural terms. For example, I’m feeling uncomfortable because I have to ask my mother for money to pay the rent and she’s going to heckle me about not getting a job and taking care of myself at my age. I don’t want to ask her for help, but I can’t think of any other way to pay my rent and it’s due.

Identify something that’s bothering you or a problem that you’d like to resolve:

Stage two: Understanding

Once you have determined what the problem is (in the example above the problem is that the person can’t pay his rent and doesn’t feel good about asking for help to do so), you must try to analyse the problem so that you can come to fully understand what it is that’s bothering you. It

is when you fully understand a problem that you can turn it around into a goal statement and answer the question, “What would it be like if you didn’t have this problem?”

To fully understand your defined problem, answer the following questions:

What do I do to contribute to the problem?

What do others do to contribute to the problem?

What does the environment (or society) do to contribute to the problem?

What (reinforcement) has kept me from solving this problem?

Having defined your problem and all of its intricacies or facets, you can restate it as a goal and begin to brainstorm (think creatively) about how to achieve the goal you’ve set or resolve one or more of the contributing factors that keep the problem a problem. In the example from above, the man with the rent problem may see that he contributes to the problem by not earning enough money to live where he is currently. Others (like his mother) may be contributing by “bailing him out” or paying his rent for him but they will eventually tire of supporting him or run out of resources to do so. Society may contribute by having lower expectations of people with disabilities and discouraging him from working or trying to find work. And, he may find that the reinforcement in this situation is that he gets lots of attention, albeit fairly negative, from his mother and others who have to “rescue” him. Hopefully, he’ll decide that getting a job would help solve this problem and set seeking employment as a goal!

Flip your problem into a goal statement. Then, brainstorm with others and write out the ideas you and others can come up with to achieve your goal (or resolve your problem).

Stage three: Action

Once you have determined what your options are for resolving a problem (or achieving a goal), it is important to begin the hard work of getting it accomplished. You must develop a plan to achieve what you want (to resolve the problem or one of the contributing factors to the problem). List the ideas you generated in the previous step and rank order them—from easiest

to hardest. Then, add dates: when you will initiate your effort, when you will accomplish each step on your plan, and when you anticipate that you will achieve your goal. Then, as the saying goes, “Just Do It!” If your plan doesn’t work out, review steps one and two of this model. If your plan does work out, congratulations!

Write out your goal with target due dates for each step below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

References

- Doran GT, 1981. There’s a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management’s goals and objectives. Management Review, 70(11), 35-36.
- Means BL and Roessler RT, 1976. Personal achievement skills. Fayetteville: Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.



Step four: Self-awareness

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- understand the importance of self-awareness in relation to job seeking and career retention
 - consider what attributes they have of importance to employers and others
- evaluate others' perceptions of them and how they can use that insight in preparation for their job searches and to facilitate career retention.

Rationale

Often low skilled and marginalised job seekers have difficulty understanding how their personal attributes, talents, and behaviours compare to the norm because they are unable to see, or clearly see, how other people behave at a distance and cannot easily read facial expressions or body language to judge the reactions of other people to them.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: What self-awareness is (use Johari's Window and the lifeline activity to help describe the self-awareness process).
- Activities: Discuss the importance of setting meaningful goals based on feedback from others and self-analysis. Describe how goal setting can create desire, energy, and focus.
- Test "Do you believe in yourself?"
- Test "Success motivation"



Teacher's notes

Group activity: Values clarification

To complete work on their self-awareness profiles, students need to understand and prioritise their values. There are a number of activities that you can use to help individuals clarify their values, and a few of them are presented below. You will want to engage students in at least one of these activities. Do the simplest activity and, if you have time and participant inclination, do one or two of the more challenging activities.



Simplest activity...

Have students discuss what values are – the things that one believes in – and have them list some of the words that they think of when people talk about values: health, wealth, fame, fortune, freedom, security, friendship, independence, etc. Ask how they know what others' values are – what they say and do, most critical is what others do. Ask for examples from the group: What have you heard people say that made you realise what their values were? What have you seen people do that made you realise what their values were? How do you express your beliefs or values?



Practical tools

Test “Do you believe in yourself?”

Sometimes we can meet people with aggressive behaviour. There are also people, which are humble, hesitant and shy - people who show with each their actions that they underestimate themselves and they don't believe in their qualities. If you want to find out to which of these categories your students belong, you may ask him/her to answer the test with “YES” or “NO”.

	YES	NO
1. Hard work is more important than the talent	(a)	(b)
2. Other people notice my problems easily	(a)	(b)
3. I don't have any special qualities	(a)	(b)
4. I am ashamed from some things	(a)	(b)
5. It is not difficult for me to impress other people	(a)	(b)
6. I get furious when other people criticize me	(a)	(b)
7. I usually do my best	(a)	(b)
8. I don't complain of bad service	(a)	(b)
9. The others don't accept me the way I do	(a)	(b)
10. I usually make big mistakes	(a)	(b)
11. I am feeling excited what my future is going to be	(a)	(b)
12. A lot of people who I meet every day annoying me	(a)	(b)
13. It is enjoyable to communicate with me	(a)	(b)
14. I don't have a relative or close friend to reveal to	(a)	(b)
15. These are the best years of my life	(a)	(b)
16. I wish I could change some things from my past	(a)	(b)
17. People remember me from our first meeting	(a)	(b)
18. I often wish to look more like others	(a)	(b)
19. I easily make new friends	(a)	(b)
20. My friends rarely rely on me for emotional support	(a)	(b)

Check which questions the student answered with “YES” or “NO”. Pay attention to those answers “YES” which are marked with “b” as well as those answers “NO” which are also marked “b”. Sum up all “b”s and read the interpretations about your recipient's self-reliance.

Interpretation of results

15 and more “b”s.

Extremely low self-reliance. The person so weakly believes in his/her strong points that s/he is often seized by a feeling of self-humiliation and that prevents him/her to his/her true potential and to undertake things which you really want to achieve.

The person tend to think that people are critical to him/her, although it is his/her lack of reliance that makes s/he feels depressed. S/he can go out of this vicious circle by paying more attention to him/herself and greater interest to the people around him/her.

10-15 “b”s - Low self-reliance

Although the person is not always unsure of him/herself, his/her self-reliance is low. When everything goes wrong s/he blames him/herself and that shows that s/he doesn't have a good judgement of the real matters. That partly explains his/her shyness. Try to stimulate your student' self-confidence by supporting him/her do not judging him/her too strictly. S/he needs to accept him/herself the way s/he is.

5-10 “b”s -Average self-reliance

The student has rather good self-reliance but nevertheless s/he still has a doubt that's why you sometimes think that people mock at him/her. And that annoys him/her as well. S/he often restrain from sharing his/her secrets and feelings with the people around his/her fears that they can misunderstand him/her or laugh. You as a SE coacher need to support your student how to avoid rejection which can crush his/her self-reliance.

0-5 “b”s - High self-reliance

High self-reliance is typical for your student. It is not difficult for him/her to show his/her strong points in front of others.

Test “Successful motivation”

We are providing the following test which will help you to assess the level of motivation towards success on the labour market of your student with special needs.

You may ask him/her to answer to each of the questions with “YES” or “NO”.

Items	YES	NO
1. When you have to choose between two possibilities it is better to do it quickly than to put it off.		
2. I get angry easily when I see that there is no chance to fulfil a set task at 100%.		
3. When I work it seems that everything is set above-board.		
4. When there is a problem situation, I often make decision among the last.		
5. When I do not have activities in two consequent days, I lose my patience.		
6. There are days when my results are below the average level.		
7. I am stricter regarding myself than regarding the other people.		
8. I am friendlier than the others.		
9. When I refuse to do a difficult task, I reprove myself severely in consequence as I know I could have managed to do it successfully.		
10. In the process of making things, I need small pauses of rest.		
11. Being hard-working student is not one of my strong points.		
12. My results at school are not always of the same quality.		
13. I am more attracted by another activities different from my current subject.		
14. Reproach is more stimulating to me than praise.		
15. I know that my peers think of me as a person of actions.		
16. The obstacles make my decisions stronger.		
17. It is easy to challenge my self-esteem.		
18. When I work without inspiration it is usually obvious to the others.		
19. In doing a certain task I usually don't rely on other people.		
20. Sometimes I put off the things which I have to do at the moment.		

Items	YES	NO
21. You have to rely only on yourself.		
22. There are few things in life which are more important than money.		
23. When I have to do an important job, I always think only about that.		
24. I am less ambitious than many other people.		
25. At the end of holiday, I am usually glad that I soon will start studying again.		
26. When I am disposed for task, I do it better and more skill fully than the others.		
27. I find it easier and simpler to communicate with people who can implement activities hard.		
28. When I don't have task, I feel under weather.		
29. I happen to do responsible tasks more often than the others.		
30. When I have to make decisions, I try to do it as well as possible.		
31. My friends think that I am lazy sometimes.		
32. My successes depend to a certain degree on my friends.		
33. It is useless to oppose the wishes of the leader.		
34. I don't sometimes know what kind of job I will have to do.		
35. When there are some obstacles, I become impatient.		
36. I don't usually pay attention to my achievements.		
37. When I work with other people my work is more efficient than theirs.		
38. Most of the tasks which I start I don't complete.		
39. I envy the people who are not busy with activities.		
40. When I am convinced that I am right I can go to extreme lengths to prove it		

The student will get one mark for answering "YES" the following questions: 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 37, 41.

In addition the student will get one mark for answering “NO” to the following questions: 6, 13, 18, 20, 24, 31, 36, 38, 39.

The answers to the questions: 1, 11, 12, 19, 23, 33, 34, 35, 40 are not considered.

Calculate the sum of the points.

Interpretation of the results:

- 1 - 10 points: low motivation for success;
- 12 - 15 points: moderate motivation for success;
- 17 - 20 points: reasonably high motivation for success;
- 21 points and above: extremely high motivation for success.

The test offered gives an opportunity to determine the degree which jobseekers with special needs are orientated in succeeding. Some of them aim at achieving success at any rate, while others aim to avoid failure at first place. When the success motivation is low the set goals couldn't be achieved, and the orientation is towards avoiding failure. If there is a too strong motivation for success this could also block achieving the goals. A person focuses on the success but at the same time it has lower expectations that s/he would cope and succeed. The moderate degree of success motivation is suitable for optimal fulfilment of the tasks because it allows people to plan realistic and adequate goals, to choose moderately difficult tasks and make decisions with a moderate risk.

References

- Gold M, 1975. Vocational training. In J Wortis (Ed). Mental retardation and developmental disabilities: An annual review. Vol 7. New York: Brunnel/ Mazel.
- Luft J and Ingham H, 1955. The Johari window, a graphic model of interpersonal awareness. Proceedings of the western training laboratory in group development. Los Angeles: UCLA.
- Rath LE, Harmin M and Simon SB, 1966. Values and teaching: Working with values in the classroom. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.



Step five: Career resources

Outcomes

This session provides students with the necessary information and tools to:

- Use a wide range of career and job search resources, including informational interviewing.
- Refine their vocational and career goals.
- Broaden the scope and range of their job searches.
- Independently construct their career path using a variety of self-directed assessment tools and completed worksheets to evaluate how well their personal attributes match up to jobs.

Rationale

Low skilled and marginalised job seekers frequently indicated that they need to learn more about career and job search tools that can help them make informed career decisions. Session five presents the students with a range of career and job search tools. Leading to the discrepancy analysis, the participant completes a range of self-directed assessments (values, clarification, job analysis form, lifeline activity). Several assessments are reviewed and repeated, if necessary. The purpose of doing so will allow the students further opportunity to absorb, reflect and determine if their career choices have altered as a result of analyzing additional career resources.

Content

This session includes:

- Review career resources, the importance of job analyses, and how to capture the information needed to complete a job analysis for jobs of interest.
- Discuss informational interviewing, in relation to career exploration and working on job analyses.

- Review self-evaluation: Interests, abilities, and values; assessment tools completed to date; and feedback from others to complete self-analysis.
- Assignment: Review achievements to date and complete three to five job analyses.



Teacher notes

Talk/discussion: The job analysis process

Once low skilled and marginalised students have identified an appropriate career area, they must chart their path: what jobs are considered entry-level jobs, what jobs follow an initial job, and how someone typically captures those jobs. Successful job seekers understand the importance of doing thorough research into jobs of interest to them. One of the best ways to accomplish this task is to implement together with the students job analyses including the following information:

- **Job title** – this is what the job is typically called or named. The job title should include both the formal and informal names that are associated with the position that the job seeker is interested in securing. For example, the formal job title may be something like Facilities Manager and the informal title may be Handyman.
- **Tasks** – the duties an individual typically performs that are required to accomplish a job. Prospective workers need to know what tasks are required (essential tasks) and which are optional. They also need to know how much time in a typical work day is devoted to the required tasks and how often they must be performed (duration and frequency of work tasks).
- **Skills required** – the actual physical, cognitive, and emotional skills, abilities, or talents that enable an individual to perform the tasks required in the job.
- **Qualifications** – these are the credentials that one must present in order to apply for a job (degrees, licenses, certificates, test scores, etc).
- **Physical demands** – environmental considerations such as being required to work indoors in a brightly lit or dark room, outdoors in weather, or such requirements as standing, sitting, bending, lifting for extended periods of time...
- **Equipment used on job** – may include basic hand tools, power tools, office equipment, technology, etc.

- **Production standards for the job** – these are the benchmarks by which a person's work is measured and production standards are also known as quotas. This is the amount of output that is expected of a typical worker in this job.

How to capture the information needed to complete a job analysis for jobs of interest?

Determine with the students what jobs you want to analyse. Write down the basic information that you can capture from reading about the job in internet.

At the end of this discussion, encourage students to fill in as much information as they have for each job they are considering, using the Job analysis worksheet. They should have a minimum of two, maximum of three jobs that they will analyse. They need to understand that they are not expected to complete all the forms, only start... once they've accomplished this task, you'll want to open the following discussion of career exploration resources to help them prepare for completing their analyses later in the day.



Practical tool

Job analysis form

Date:

Name:

Reference:

Job title:

(Please type your answers after each section).

Job tasks (note duration, frequency, and whether the task is an essential function of the job):

Skills required (physical, cognitive, emotional, other):

Qualifications required:

Physical demands of job (standing, sitting, bending, lifting, etc.):

Equipment used on job:

Production standards for the job:

Notes/comments (note any known employers in your area):

Activity: "Who would you employ?"**Introduction**

In order the low skilled and marginalised students to gain some understandings of what employers are thinking and how they come to the decision of whom to employ, try doing this exercise.

You can do this:

- as an individual exercise.
- as a group activity where members of the group act out the parts of the candidate and the interviewer, and the remaining members observe and discuss what they see.

Task scenario:

„Imagine you are an employer. You have advertised for a position within your company. The successful applicant will be working closely with you as part of your team and will therefore need to fit in well with your friendly, highly motivated team. From the application forms that you received; three candidates were short listed for interview. “

Candidate A

„Anne enters the room on time dressed in an ill-fitting and un-matching grubby looking suit. She has not informed you that she has a sight problem, and therefore you were not expecting her disability and have not made any reasonable adjustments. This has meant that Anne could not access the important information about the company that you supplied to all the candidates prior to interview. Anne is escorted to the interview room huffing and puffing and is quite obviously distressed. She has her head down and fails to attempt either eye contact or a handshake. When you ask her how her journey was and apologise for making no consideration for her disability, she moves very close to you and speaks loudly about the awful journey she has had and the ill-treatment she received from station staff. Once Anne has finished complaining you guide her to a seat. Once you enter into the main interview, you discover that Anne has a Master's Degree in the subject area in which your business is concerned, and has five years' previous experience in the field. When you enquire why she left her previous employment, she replies that the employer was useless and made no effort to make adjustments for her, and she was basically "bullied out". After further conversation, Anne becomes more confident and speaks positively about her skills, experience and the varied leisure activities that she pursues. Whilst she speaks, she is looking in a completely different direction from where you are sitting. Anne has an in-depth knowledge of her sector in which

you are working, and gives excellent examples of using the software efficiently that your company works with.”

Candidate B

„John enters the room early, dressed in a stylish well-fitting suit. He is well groomed and has obviously shown care in his appearance. John contacted the HR department of your company once he received notification of the interview, to make you aware of his sight impairment. Therefore, reasonable adjustments were made to accommodate John comfortably and respectfully. John is confident when he arrives, although he has previously informed you that he has no useful vision, he attempts good eye contact and offers his hand at greeting. After asking you where the chair is, he confidently walks with the aid of his guide dog to the chair and sits down. After enquiring how John found the journey in, he replies that it was a new route to him, but he has researched the transport prior to the interview and visited the area at the weekend, so he had no problems getting to the interview today. He makes a witty joke about his guide dog being more interested in the chip shop next door, which makes you laugh and eases the tension. John speaks clearly and concisely providing detail of his one year of experience in the field in which you are working. Though he admits his experience is not great, he is keen and motivated to succeed in this field and knows that he would be an asset to your company for the many skills that he has attained in other areas of his life. John provides evidence of the three excellent A Levels (in relevant subject areas) he achieved two years ago. When you inform John that the rest of your team are university graduates, he replies that he would be more than willing to take on further study if it were required.”

Candidate C

„Paul enters the room 10 minutes late and apologises casually for his lateness, remarking jokingly about the "useless tubes". He is wearing a very expensive looking suit and is impeccably groomed. Paul did mention in his application form that he was partially sighted, but when contacting your HR team stated that he would not need any reasonable adjustments to be made. When you offer a hand to Paul, he takes it confidently and shakes your hand, in your opinion, a little too hard and for an uncomfortable length of time. He makes excellent eye contact and tells you that he could get used to working in a place like this - and the girl on reception is definitely a bonus! You laugh awkwardly, not feeling comfortable with this disrespectful comment. Paul sits down confidently and taps his fingers on the side of the chair impatiently, while you find his application form in the pile in front of you. You do not ask about his journey, as he has already mentioned the trouble he had with the tubes, so you ask if he

lives far from your office. He responds with a shrug, saying that it is a bit of a trek, but he can always sleep on the train, as he hates early mornings. Once you delve further into the interview, you discover that Paul has a first class degree in a relevant subject and has a varied employment background that well equips him for the job you are interviewing him for. As you question him further regarding his experience of working within a small team, he picks a loose thread on the arm of the chair he is sitting in and leans back with his legs spread out in front of him. He replies that he has worked in a team and always gets on with everyone - as he is good at telling others what to do. He gives excellent examples of use of written and verbal communication, and he appears to have researched your company in great depth. On leaving the interview Paul slaps you lightly on the shoulder and says he looks forward to hearing the good news."



Now you may ask student(s) to decide on:

1. Who would you choose?
2. Why did you choose this candidate?
3. Why did you not choose the other two candidates?
4. What were the good points about each candidate?
5. What were the bad points about each candidate?
6. Which characteristics presented by the candidates do you think you may have shown in the past, and which ones will you adopt and avoid in future?

Now here are the observations which the actual employer thought...

Mr Jones (the interviewer) chose Candidate B, John, for the post for the following reasons:

- Mr Jones was confident that John would make a good impression with both his staff and their recipients through his smart image, positive body language and friendly persona.
- Mr Jones was sure that John was punctual, self-sufficient and keen to take initiative, portrayed through John's contacting the company in plenty of time regarding the reasonable adjustments he required and his prior research into the area and related public transport.
- Although John did not have as much experience as Mr Jones would have liked, he demonstrated knowledge and skills attained through other means excellently. He also appeared keen and motivated to succeed.

- Although John was not a university graduate, he did have a strong academic background and said that he was more than willing to participate in further training.
- John demonstrated excellent verbal and non-verbal communication and was quite charismatic at times.
- Mr Jones liked John and thought that he would fit in well with the friendly team.

Mr Jones (the interviewer) did not choose Candidate A, Anne, for the post for the following reasons:

- Mr Jones felt that Anne was not well prepared for the interview, as she did not contact his company prior to interview, so was not able to access either the important information about the company supplied or easy-step directions to the interview, even though it was available in a range of formats.
- Mr Jones was worried that Anne's sloppy appearance would present a negative image to his recipients.
- Mr Jones was shocked and made to feel uncomfortable by Anne's abysmal body language (e.g. lack of eye contact, invasion of personal space, loud voice, etc.), and was concerned that this would once again, present a negative image for the company.
- Anne came over as aggressive and pessimistic through her lengthy complaints and her portrayal of her previous employer. As a result of this, Mr Jones was concerned that his company would not be able to fulfil Anne's requirements, and she would accuse them of being discriminatory and bullying.
- Mr Jones thought that Anne would not fit in with his team or work well with his recipients and would have a detrimental effect on the office atmosphere.

However, Mr Jones was impressed with Candidate A, Anne, for the following reasons:

- Anne had excellent academic qualifications - the strongest of all three candidates and even the rest of his team!
- Anne had a good employment background and could demonstrate a high level of competency.
- Anne was skilled in accessing the essential software used by the company.

Mr Jones (the interviewer) did not choose Candidate C, Paul, for the post for the following reasons:

- Mr Jones was disappointed by Paul's lack of punctuality, his insincere apology and lazy attitude towards early mornings.
- Mr Jones found Paul, in general, incredibly arrogant, but especially when he presumed that he would be hired on two occasions.
- Mr Jones was concerned that Paul would not fit in well with the existing team, as he made disrespectful comments about his receptionist, and admitted to dominating other members of a team and continually getting his own way.
- Mr Jones found Paul's body language disrespectful and threatening, as he tapped impatiently, vandalised his furniture and sat in an overconfident, lazy manner.

However, Mr Jones was impressed by Candidate C, Paul for the following reasons:

- Paul was impeccably presented and would present a good image for the company.
- Paul was confident and demonstrated strong verbal communication.
- Paul was highly qualified and had the strongest employment background of all the candidates.
- Paul used positive body language at times.
- Paul contacted the company prior to the interview, and made them aware of his situation.
- Paul had researched the company prior to the interview, and was able to speak accurately on related topics.

References

- Gold M, 1976. Try Another Way. Training film produced by Glenn Roberts. Indianapolis: Film Productions of Indianapolis.
- Gold M, 1980. "Did I say that?" Articles and commentary on the Try Another Way system. Champaign, IL: Research Press Company.



Step six: Identifying jobs and the tools to do them

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised people with the necessary information and tools to:

- Complete a discrepancy analysis.

Rationale

To evaluate the viability of career options, job seekers need to compare their strengths (interests, abilities, values, work personality) and limitations with jobs they've researched to determine where their qualifications match the jobs they're considering. This is accomplished through a process called discrepancy analysis. Once they have completed a discrepancy analysis, students can decide to address discrepancies (through training or practice); change their tools, techniques, or the environment (accommodations or modifications); modify the job to share elements of it with others, if appropriate; or whether they need to abandon that particular job option and consider something in a related field.

Content

This session includes:

- Activity: Discussion of the discrepancy analysis process.



Teacher notes

Talk/discussion: Discrepancy analysis process

In the discrepancy analysis process, low skilled and marginalised students can consolidate their research about themselves and write down the results. The students should also have completed a series of job analyses. Finally, they compare each job (what it offers and what it requires) to themselves (what they want and can offer). The differences between the two

lists (job analysis and self analysis) are recognised as discrepancies: talents, skills or knowledge (qualifications and personal attributes) required to perform the job tasks that the individual does not have.

Once discrepancies have been identified, students must determine if they can and are willing to resolve them. For example, a job may demand a graduate degree and a participant may welcome an opportunity for more education; in such an instance, the discrepancy is amenable to change. The beauty of this system is that it enables a participant to make decisions about jobs in an objective manner and releases the teacher from having to “pass judgment” on the viability of a job under consideration.

Using the discrepancy analysis procedure encourages students to make objective decisions about their lives and career goals. Teachers should not superimpose their values on students by falling into the trap of telling students what they can or should do with their lives or for their careers. The students will be able to be objective in their decision-making when they use the discrepancy analysis process rather than relying on what they feel they should do or others are encouraging them to do.



Trainer Tip

When students ask you for your opinion about whether a job is right or wrong for them, refer them back to the discrepancy analysis process. It's fine to give them ideas in response to their queries about how to resolve discrepancies... but remember to always give more than one suggestion or your idea may sound like “the answer” to the student and what you want is for the participant to collect ideas from you and others, as well as generating ideas for him or herself, so that there is a list of ideas to choose from and make a good decision about what to do.



Assignment

Students will need about 20-30 minutes to complete their discrepancy analyses.

**Practical tool****Discrepancy analysis form**

Date:

Name:

It is easier to reach your goal if you know specifically what that goal is. The following worksheets will help you analyse your job goal to learn whether the goal you have set for yourself is realistic and suitable to your qualifications and abilities by comparing the skills, education, training, and other requirements of the job(s) you selected as a potential job goal with the skills, education, training, interests, and work experiences that you have.

(Please type your response after each question in each section below. There is space for additional comments if you wish.)

Job requirements for (name of job wanted):

Schooling/education:

Skills:

Work experience:

Physical demands/requirements:

Working conditions:

Other:

Matching personal skills/qualifications with job requirements

List your current skills and qualifications in the same manner as you did above for the requirements of the job wanted (job goal).

My schooling/education:

My skills:

My work experiences (related to the job wanted):

My physical requirements:

Working conditions of job: Any problems or modifications required in order to do the job? If so, list.

Other:

Comparing the two lists

What are your strongest points regarding your qualifications for this job?

What specific areas are you weak in?

What qualifications are required for the job that you do not have?

Are there any other problems to be overcome in order to prepare for or to be qualified for this job? If so, list.

What do you plan to do to obtain the needed qualifications that you do not currently have or to overcome any problems listed above?

Goal setting

After reviewing the above information, is the prospective job(s) a reasonable job goal for you? (Yes / No)

If not, you may wish to discuss this problem with your teacher.

If it is a reasonable job goal, what do you need to do in order to achieve the job you want?

Output: Students complete a discrepancy analysis.

References

- Wolffe, K. E. (1997). Career counseling for people with disabilities: A practical guide to finding employment. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed Inc.



Step seven: Communication skills and students' initial presentations

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised people with the necessary information to:

- Discuss the range and scope of different communication styles (passive, assertive, and aggressive).
- Understand how people can acquire an awareness of nonverbal communication skills such as body language and facial expression.

Rationale

One of the significant challenges low skilled individuals faced is their difficulty with the interpretation of non-verbal communication, such as facial expression and body language and, conversely, with producing nonverbal cues for others. In some cases, for students with disabilities like visually impaired, it can be difficult to pick-up on these non-verbal cues because they often cannot get close enough to the other person to easily see their expressions and body language or the non-verbal cues are too subtle or too quick to be readily discernable to someone with impaired vision. Compounding the problem is the fact that sighted people do not think to verbalize how they feel, there may be cultural or ethnic customs inhibiting demonstrative signalling of feelings, or they may simply not realize that someone with vision, albeit impaired vision, might not be able to see their nonverbal communication cues.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: Communication skills presentation based on creative dramatics (addresses voice, tone, gestures and how to express oneself when stressed).
- Discussion of communication as an integral skill needed at work and role play scenarios that require the use of nonverbal communication skills and assertiveness.
- Assignments: Complete communication skills worksheets.



Teachers notes

Talk/discussion: Communication styles

In this discussion, you'll want to introduce the students to the range and scope of different communication styles: passive, assertive, and aggressive and then let them discuss each style.

It can be helpful to ask the students to identify popular book, television, or film characters that they think exemplify each of the communication styles as you discuss them. They can also identify historical or contemporary political or famous personalities for this activity.

At a minimum, you'll want to engage the students in:

- a discussion of the characteristics of people who use passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles;
- how they feel when they engage with someone using the communication style being discussed;
- how they think the person with whom they are engaging feels about himself or herself during the interaction;
- how they think the other person feels about them when they use the communication style being discussed.

Passive communication

People who communicate passively tend to say what they think others want to hear rather than what they truly feel or think. They often tend to be evasive, not wanting to state their true intentions for fear that others will disapprove. They are emotionally untrustworthy or dishonest and other people eventually learn that they are not openly sharing their true feelings and grow to distrust them. They are often perceived as self-denying and inhibited. When communicating passively, people often feel hurt or anxious because others can't tell (it's really a guess) what it is that they really want or how they honestly feel. Others will often take them at face value (believing the untruth) and the passive communicators frequently become irritated or angry because they weren't understood.

People accustomed to dealing with passive communicators tend to either feel guilty because they think they're taking advantage of the other person, who typically let's them take the

lead rather than take a stand. When this occurs, the other people tend to feel irritated or sorry for the passive communicator because they never really know how he or she feels. Or, they feel superior because they think they know better than the other person (the passive communicator) what's best for that person and can ignore his or her true feelings and desires. When this occurs, the other person most often feels put-out or disgusted with the passive communicator.

Aggressive communication

People who communicate aggressively tend to blurt out their true feelings and wishes, often to the detriment or discomfort of those in their company. They are inappropriately honest or forthright. They are direct and forceful, typically ignoring the wishes or feelings of others, which causes them to appear self-absorbed or self-enhancing. They tend to insist on their own desires being foremost in any discussion and assume a dictatorial style. It's "their way or the highway!" and they are self-enhancing at the expense of others. While aggressive communicators tend to be expressive, their approach is off-putting to others who are typically ignored or forced to do as the aggressor insists. Aggressive communicators usually feel superior to others and quite righteous with regard to their opinions and views – they come across as zealots.

Other people often feel hurt or humiliated by aggressive communicators. They are left feeling as if their thoughts, sensitivities, or wishes are immaterial to the aggressive communicator. Ultimately, other people engaging with someone who typically uses an aggressive communication style feel angry with the individual. Others often seek revenge at the perceived slights these communicators leave in their wake.

Assertive communication

People using an assertive communication style are appropriately honest and sensitive to the feelings of others. They are self-expressive and self-enhancing without being egocentric or ignoring other people's needs and wants. They clearly state how they feel and what it is they desire, but they make clear that they are receptive to others' feelings and desires. They present as negotiators – willing to discuss both their wishes and the wishes of others to reach a compromise that both parties can agree is workable. When communicating assertively, people feel confident and comfortable with their presentation. They feel self-respect both at the time of the interaction and later when they reflect on their presentation.

People who are interacting with someone using an assertive approach feel valued – as if their thoughts, feelings, and desires are respected. They also generally respect and value the communicator. They want to engage and they are happy to negotiate because they feel respected as communication partners.

There are components of assertive behaviour that the students need to learn or review. Once you’ve introduced and discussed the differences between the communication styles as described above, you’ll want to provide the students with the following tips on how to communicate effectively using an assertive communication approach and then give them opportunities to practise what they’ve learned.

Components of assertive behaviour

Eye contact: In some societies, looking directly at another person when you are speaking to him or her is an assertive technique. It is an effective way of declaring that you are sincere about what you are saying, and that your message is directed to the listener. For individuals with severe sight loss, establishing and maintaining eye contact may be impossible or difficult. What a blind or partially sighted person must do is orient toward the speaker and stay oriented toward the speaker throughout their interaction. Sighted people understand that blind people may not be able to make or maintain eye contact, but they will feel more comfortable if the person communicating is “looking” toward them.

While other cultures do not follow this same social convention, individuals without good eyesight who are interested in working in the West must understand that this is the acceptable convention.

A comparison of passive, assertive, and aggressive communication styles

--	--	--	--

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Characteristics of the person using this communication style:	Emotionally dishonest, evasive, self-denying, and inhibited	Appropriately emotionally honest, direct, self-enhancing, and expressive	Inappropriately emotionally honest, direct, self-enhancing at expense of others, and expressive
Your feelings when you engage in this communication style:	Hurt, anxious at the time and possibly angry later	Confident, self-respecting at the time and later	Righteous, superior, deprecatory at the time and possibly guilty later
The other person's feelings about himself or herself when you engage in this communication style	Guilty or superior	Valued, respected	Hurt, humiliated
The other person's feelings toward you when you engage in this communication style	Irritated, pity, disgust	Generally respectful	Angry, vengeful

Modified from Alberti and Emmons (2008)



Teacher Tip

If students with visual impairments choose to follow their own cultural dictates (for example, casting their eyes down) that is fine, but they must understand that this may inhibit the list of job options available (you'll need to point this out). They would still orient toward the speaker.

There is no culture that allows for disregarding the speaker by turning away from him or her or appearing to look elsewhere... it's one thing to look down in deference to the speaker's rank or authority, but it is unacceptable socially to ignore the speaker visually (by turning away or looking elsewhere).



Body posture

The importance of body posture cannot be over-emphasised for blind and partially sighted students as they may have had mixed feedback concerning their own posture. The key here is to explain that “correct” body posture in an assertive interchange is to stand straight (not ramrod straight, but with feet comfortably apart – 8 to 10 centimetres – and with hips and shoulders aligned with the feet) with one’s chin parallel to the ground.

The “weight” or importance of a message can be emphasised if the speaker faces or orients toward the listener, stands appropriately close to the listener (the rule in Western culture is approximately arm’s length), sits leaning slightly toward the listener, and holds his or her head erect (chin parallel to the floor). You may want to spend a minute here asking students how they feel if someone stands too close to them in an interaction or too far away. Typically, if someone is too close, the behaviour is perceived as threatening and fits an aggressive rather than assertive communication style. If someone is too far away, the behaviour tends to be perceived as timid or passive rather than assertive.



Gestures

A message accented with appropriate gestures takes on an added emphasis; however, blind and partially sighted individuals may need coaching and practice to comfortably use gestures in their social interactions with others.

You will want to have a discussion and demonstrate if necessary, some of the most commonly used communicative gestures for the students. Consider the following gestures: hands-on-hips; both arms bent at the waist in front of the body with hands palms up and shoulders lifted; both arms bent at the waist on either side of the body with hands with palms facing the listener, etc. Students also need to be reminded that overenthusiastic gesturing can distract from a listener’s attention.



Teacher Tip

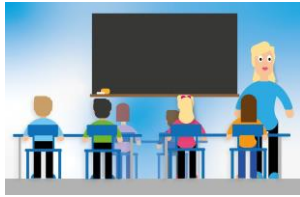
Some individuals with partial sight and other disabilities tend to engage in “mannerisms” – gesturing or repetitive movement that is socially unacceptable. Examples of such mannerisms are rocking, flicking one’s hands, nodding out of context, and such. If there are students who are engaging in such behaviours, it will be important to take time to discuss the negative impression such unexpected body language conveys to others. It’s important not to single out any participant, but a general discussion can help anyone in the group who is prone to such behaviour. If the situation warrants it, you may need to speak to any individual exhibiting such behaviour privately and work out a plan to eliminate the behaviour or encourage moving it into a private location.



Facial expression

As you may well imagine, facial expression is a huge issue for people with partial sight. You’ll want to chat with the group about the four major emotions that typically result in distinct facial expressions: anger, happiness, sadness, and fear. There are some hints worth sharing: anger usually prompts a “clenched teeth” and compressed lips response; happiness usually elicits a smile – the level of pleasure is often equated to the “brightness” of the smile or the teeth showing (no-teeth smile = happy, some-teeth smile = happier, most-teeth smile = happiest); sadness often elicits tears, a pout or lower lip rolled out, and down turned mouth; and fear is usually represented by an open or “O” mouth shape, wide-open eyes, and raised eyebrows.

While this is an oversimplification, it is important to give, particularly congenitally blind individuals some simple guidelines for evidencing appropriate facial expressions. Effective assertions require an expression that agrees with the message. Coupled with appropriate facial expressions, body language strengthens the message further. For example, a stern or angry facial expression and hands-on-hips or shaking one’s finger at someone sends a powerful nonverbal message of irritation or ire! Practice with the activities detailed later in this module will help reinforce these learned behaviours.



Voice tone, inflection, volume

For many people with partial sight their greatest strength in assertive communication exchanges is their ability to modulate their voices and listen carefully to others' verbal expressions. A level, well-modulated conversational tone is assertive and can often convince others of one's sincerity without intimidating anyone. A raised voice or strident tone, on the other hand, can easily be intimidating. A whispered monotone will seldom convince another person that the speaker means business, and is often construed as passive. A shouted epithet or shrill tone, markers of aggression, will typically elicit other people's defences rather than paving the way to a productive interchange.



Timing

Spontaneous expression is a hallmark of assertive communication skills applied. Hesitation may diminish the effect of an assertion. However, judgment is necessary on the part of the individual who's initiating the exchange. It is important to select an appropriate occasion and location for interactions. For example, it would be more appropriate to speak with one's employer in the privacy of his or her office about an issue of concern rather than in front of a group of other people (subordinates or peers). Someone approached or confronted at the wrong time or in the wrong place may respond defensively and close out the speaker.



Content

What the speaker says, the content of the message, is an obvious dimension of assertiveness. Although what the speaker says is clearly important, it is often less important than most people generally believe. The more critical element of the message is that it is true – a fundamental honesty in interpersonal communication and spontaneity of expression is what is most important. What this means is that when a person is truly angry, it's important to

say, “I’m angry about (whatever happened or occurred) and I don’t understand how you feel about this (or what you are asking me to do)!” rather than “You’re a (fill-in-the-blank) and I hate you (or you can’t make me do whatever)!” People who have for years hesitated because they “didn’t know what to say” have found the practice of saying something to express their feelings at the time the incident of concern occurred to be a valuable step toward greater assertiveness.



Group activity: Communication skills

Following a short break, you’ll want to encourage the students to experiment with their communication skills using any or all of the following activities. If they are interested in further skills training, you may want to recommend that they investigate creative dramatics courses in the community or through colleges.

Simplest communications activity...

Have the students break-up into pairs and ask them to take turns as speaker and listener to discuss the following topics for two to five minutes.



Teacher Tip

Use a stopwatch or timer to keep these interactions to five minutes.

- the thing I’ve accomplished in my life which pleases me the most is...
- the thing that saddens me most about the world is...
- the thing that angers me most about other people is...
- the thing I fear above all other things is...

Following their discussions, ask students if the person that they listened to used appropriate (meaningful) body language and facial expressions. Ask them to describe what they saw, felt, or heard their communication partners doing that they felt worked well.

Slightly more complicated communications activity...

Ask students to role-play (act out) the following scenarios. Follow their performances with a discussion of what worked and didn't work in their communication efforts within the scenario. Ask the observers to name the communication style used by each player and how they could have communicated differently using assertive techniques. (In the instance where both communicate using assertive techniques, how do the observers feel the scenario played out... was it realistic, comfortable, what would have made it better?)

**Customise**

Give each player (labelled – one, two, three – at the top of the card) an index card with the following scenarios printed.

- A co-worker (Player One) comes to a colleague (Player Two) with gossip about their boss (Player Three). The gossip is that the boss has demoted another worker. While the two co-workers are gossiping, the boss walks by and stops to listen. When the boss confronts the co-workers, Player One plays the passive role, Player Two plays the aggressive role, and Player Three plays the assertive role.
- Your supervisor (Player One) asks you (Player Two) to come to her office. You go without knowing what to expect and when you arrive she shuts the door and proceeds to tell you how pleased she is with your work. She asks if there are any other accommodations that the company can make to ensure that you can continue to work to your potential. You are both assertive communicators.
- Your father (Player One) and mother (Player Two) are upset with you (Player Three) because they feel like you're not putting enough effort into finding a job. When the three of you sit down to dinner, they begin to harangue you. You play the passive role to their more aggressive roles.
- Your girlfriend (Player One) wants to go to a movie and you (Player Two) want to go to a rugby match. You play the aggressive role to her passive role.

**Teacher Tip**

You can also have the actors use only nonverbal cues and recruit someone with vision to be the audio describer of the actors' actions. If you use this technique, you may want to ask the actors to periodically "freeze" so that the audio describer can keep pace with the action.

Sample quotes follow or you're welcome to use your favourites. The key is to highlight the non-verbalised cues that the audience picks up on that give meaning to the acting.

"When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us." Helen Keller

"No good deed goes unpunished" Clare Boothe Luce

"The best thing about the future is it comes only one day at a time." Abraham Lincoln

"It is a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it." Somerset Maugham

"Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The price of greatness is responsibility." Winston Churchill

"People forget how fast you did a job – but they remember how well you did it." Howard W Newton

"There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an Idea whose time has come." Victor Hugo

"Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly." St Francis De Sales

Output: Students gain knowledge of good communication skills and have the opportunity to apply what they've learned.

**Assignment**

Complete communication skills worksheets. There are Communication styles worksheet, Verbal communication worksheet and Non-verbal communication skills worksheet. If students are unable to complete these worksheets in class, ask them to finish them at home.

**Practical tools****Communication styles worksheet**

Think about situations you've been in where you have used a passive or aggressive communication style in your interaction with another person. Describe one of those situations when you used either a passive or aggressive communication style.

(Type or write your response in the space below each section)

How did you feel when you spoke to the other person using this communication style?

How do you think the other person felt when you used this communication style?

What assertive communication techniques could you use to approach the situation differently? Describe below what you would do differently.

Non-verbal communication skills worksheet

In the space below, list the gestures that you use routinely to communicate non-verbally.

In the space below, list all of the gestures that you've learned of in this session or heard other people talk about that others use to communicate nonverbally, but you haven't used.

Which of the gestures listed above (that others use, but you've not) would you like to target to add to your repertoire? (Write or type your response below).

Worksheet "Verbal communication"

Your voice makes direct contact with your listener. Electrical energy in your brain becomes kinetic energy in your larynx which becomes acoustic energy as a shock wave travels from your mouth at the speed of sound. This then becomes kinetic energy again as it vibrates your listener's eardrum, and finally electrical energy again as your listener understands your words. This all takes far less than a second!

Top tips for voice production

- Drink plenty of water – drinking plenty of water (not coffee, tea, etc.) is the best and simplest way to keep your voice healthy. Vocal health is directly related to your body's hydration levels.
- Breathe – your voice should always be supported by plenty of breath beneath it as you speak.



Exercise one

Try this exercise for practising your breathing.

- Stand up and place a hand on your stomach.
- Breathe out fully, feeling the way your stomach assists by pushing out the air.
- Then simply release all tension in your stomach muscles, and allow this release to be the start of a deep inhalation.
- Practise repeatedly until it becomes second nature!
- Sing – when you're at home, travelling in a car, whenever you can! Singing freely and comfortably (never force the volume) will strengthen your voice.
- Chant and speak.



Exercise two

- Take a poem or a song you know by heart and chant it slowly.

- Do this, like a monk, on only one note, making the most of every sound. Enjoy the sensation of sound filling your mouth.
- Chant through at least once. Then, starting again, chant one line then speak the next!
- When speaking, allow the energy of chant to carry through into speech.
- Talk Nonsense! – practise the following exercise with friends or colleagues.



Exercise three

- Hold conversations without using real words – this way only tone of voice will be able to convey meaning.
- Play like this for a good period of time, then go straight into talking with words but ask yourself to allow the same variety of tone and pitch.

References

- Alberti R and Emmons M, 2001. Your perfect right. 8th ed. San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact Publishers.
- Wolffe KE, 2006. Teaching social skills to adolescents and young adults with partial sight. In SZ Sacks and KE Wolffe (Eds), Teaching social skills to students with partial sight: From theory to practice (pp 405-440). New York: AFB Press.
- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counselling for people with disabilities. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step eight: Looking for work is harder than working!

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised people with the necessary information and tools to:

- Successfully network with others.
- Learn techniques to engage with others when attending events where sighted attendees will be present.
- Learn strategies for maintaining network contacts.

Rationale

Once low skilled and marginalised students have evaluated the viability of career options and identified what jobs they are interested in pursuing, they must determine how best to uncover job leads. They will likely know the most common methods for finding work: following up on job advertisements and working with job placement services; however, they may not have discovered how to find hidden or unadvertised jobs. This session helps students learn about alternatives to traditional job seeking and gives them the skills to seek out careers of their choosing using research skills and communication skills such as networking to uncover job openings or opportunities.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: How people find jobs and networking DOs and DON'Ts
- Activities: Discussion of strategies for networking with special emphasis on techniques which do not require vision, how to maintain network contacts (use of filing systems for keeping up with names and contact information, note taking following events, and appropriate follow-up techniques).
- Assignment: Develop a personal network list. Start looking for information about prospective employers and their companies to submit in advance of mock interviews.



Talk/discussion: Networking do's and don'ts

You'll want to lead the following discussion by first reminding the students of one of the most important points of the preceding talk: the importance of networking. Given the importance of developing a robust network, the following points adapted from an online listing called "Career networking do's and don'ts" by Katharine Hansen of Quintessential Careers are worth discussing as a group. (The link to Hansen's complete list is in the references.) You'll want to introduce each point and then open the discussion for comments from the students.

Do:

- Think creatively about where to find network contacts. Make a list of all the people you know, close family, extended family – relatives, friends, acquaintances, services providers, former employers, teachers, or others in influential positions. Consider asking those people about people they know that you might add to your list. Be sure to take time to note how you know people that you add to your list that are not well-known to you, particularly referrals so that when you follow up with them you will be able to reference the person who referred you to them.
- Get into the habit of travelling with your portable access technology (be sure your networking list is handy and that your personal data sheet is loaded and up-to-date). You never know when a prospective employer may want to interview you on the spot or ask you to complete an application. If you don't have portable access technology, in fact, even if you do: always have an alternative note taking option with you (a slate and stylus with paper, pen and paper, digital recorder, or the like) so that you can jot notes on-the-fly concerning people to add to your networking list or add new contact information for people already on your list who've changed jobs, addresses, or other pertinent details.
- Join a professional organisation related to your field and attend their meetings and conferences whenever possible. Likewise, attend consumer organisation meetings or support groups (Job Clubs) where other blind or partially sighted people looking for work or working successfully gather – either can lead to networking opportunities. Be sure to keep up with who else attends – if you need memory "joggers," write notes to yourself after the meetings about who was in attendance, where they work, and anything else of interest that you may need for future reference.

- Volunteer in an area of interest and doing something like what you want to do career-wise. Volunteer work can help you build your network contacts quickly. Same comment as above: keep notes about who attends and how to get back in touch with them.
- Find a mentor who can guide you, help you, take you under his or her wing, and nurture your career efforts. A mentor can be a valuable network contact.
- Come up with a system for organising your network contacts, whether on a spreadsheet in your computer or in a text file, a file box of index cards, a three-ring binder, or another option – whatever works for you. Think about how you organise your other papers and appointments (colour-coding items, for example, or assigning alpha or numeric codes that have meaning to you) and coordinate your network list with your other systems.
- Consider conducting informational interviews, the ultimate networking technique. Write out the kinds of questions that you'd like to have answered by someone doing the job of your dreams so that you'll be prepared to do an informational interview when the time is right and be sure before leaving the interview to ask permission to add the person to your networking list.
- Keep networking even after you've found a job. You never know when you might need your network contacts again. And, don't forget to maintain your organisational system for keeping up with your contacts.

Don't:

- Go anywhere without copies of your CV and business cards or networking cards. Don't hesitate to give them away! And, don't hesitate to ask for others' cards in return.
- Be afraid to ask for help with your career exploration and job search. Most people are flattered to be asked for their assistance. It makes them feel important. Remember that the more specific you can be about what it is that you want to do and how you can do what you want to do (think about what information to share concerning your disability-specific skills and accommodations that the average sighted person in your acquaintance may be unaware of) – the more helpful people can be.
- Forget to thank everyone in your network that helps you, preferably with a nice thank you note. It's just common courtesy to show your appreciation for people's time and assistance, and your contacts will remember your good manners. If you are concerned that your signature may not be legible, enclose a business card or a short, printed note of thanks that includes your name in print – but sign your card!



Assignment

Students need to write out their lists of the people they know (close family, extended family – relatives, friends, acquaintances, services providers, former employers, teachers, or others in influential positions) that will comprise their network contacts.



Group activity: Breaking into a group

Introduction

While there is a great deal of “chatter” in the mainstream about the importance of networking, this is a technique that can easily thwart an individual who is blind or partially sighted due to its inherent visual demands. Consider, for example, the typical party or social event where the average, fully sighted job seeker attends and networks. Usually, the individual will arrive at an event, look around and determine if there is anyone present who is a known entity and then approach that person to chat and ask about others in attendance. The “reporter” will point out key individuals, identifying the “targets” by their dress, hairstyles, or other visual cues.

He may not offer to actually introduce other people in attendance to the job seeker – he may just point others out and leave the introductions to the person interested. If that’s the case, the job seeker has to look for an opening, approach the target, and introduce himself.

Sometimes there is no one available to point out people of interest and in that event the average sighted person set on networking will simply scan the attendees and note who amongst the crowd appears to be of interest – based on clothing, posture, affect, and other overt visual cues. If there is someone without a conversational partner, the sighted person may bravely approach and introduce himself. Or, if someone appears interesting, the sighted person will watch for an opening – when others with the person of interest are engaged with one another and then approach the person of interest, sometimes with a comment like, “You look familiar, have we met?” or “I see that you are alone at the moment, may I introduce myself?”



Group activity: Networking

The Breaking into a group activity is a networking exercise. The purpose of the activity is to demonstrate to the students the benefits of careful listening, persistence, and taking a proactive stance in order to break into a group most efficiently. There is not a “correct” approach – there are alternatives, as noted above, and individuals need to decide what will work best for them.

Let everyone know that the activity being set up will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. Break the larger group into two smaller groups and send one group out of the room with another staff member, who’ll introduce the activity to them. If you don’t have help, simply ask them to step outside and continue the discussion amongst themselves while you set up the remaining group.

Depending on the size of the group remaining, either further divide them (groups of three are ideal) or leave them as a single group (if you have too few students to make up at least two groups of three). Explain that the group in the room is to act as attendees at a conference related to job seeking. If there is only one group, they are to engage in conversation about jobs available and employers of interest or any other related topic that they can sustain for 15-20 minutes. If there are two groups, give each group a topic to discuss related to job seeking, interviewing, finding employers, or the like. When other students return to the room, they are not to reach out to them or go to them to encourage them to join the discussion. They are to wait and be approached by the other students.

Ask the students (in the group outside the room) to consider the following scenario: Imagine that you have decided to attend a conference in an area of interest. The conference is being held in (the training room) and you must enter alone and try to break into one of the conversations in progress. Send the remaining students into the training room in five minute intervals. Do not tell them how many groups are available or give them any other hints about what’s going on in the training room. The task is to break into a group.

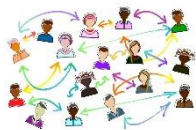
Give each participant attempting to break into the group(s) approximately five minutes to “work the room” before you send in the next person. If you have adequate staff, you may want

to ask other staff to help keep the group conversations moving. As individuals join the group(s), encourage them to stay engaged as others come in to try to break into the group(s).

After the students who were outside the training room have all entered and been assimilated into the group(s), give everyone a few more minutes to wrap up their conversations. (Be sure that the last person entering has had his five minutes to break in!) Once the conversations have stopped or been called to a stop, ask the students to discuss the activity.

Cover the following points:

- What worked best for people entering the training room?
- What were the differences in the approaches used?
- Were there strategies that people in the groups felt others could have/should have used?
- Would the strategies have used in this activity work in real life? Why or why not?



Talk/discussion: How looking for work is harder than working

In this session, your challenge is to help the students understand that their upcoming effort to look for work requires considerable and sustained labour, if they want to be successful. The critical points you'll want to cover in the talk/discussion on how looking for work is harder than work itself follow. You'll want to focus on what job seekers need to be doing during their periods of unemployment:

- The amount of time and effort that one puts into looking for work is typically directly proportional to how quickly one finds a job and how closely the job matches one's desired job.



Teacher Tip

Remind students of the various methods that you discussed earlier that job hunters use to search for jobs and their levels of effectiveness.

- Out of every 100 job seekers who use only one method to hunt for a job; for example, responding to classified ads or applying online only – 51 of them abandon their job search by the second month. On the other hand, out of every 100 job seekers who use several different ways of looking for a job, up to four in number, typically only 31 of them abandoned their job search by the second month... not perfect, but better odds and with good reason – they have more options and are taking greater control by availing themselves of them!
- Career counsellors and job placement personnel agree that job seekers should organise their days as if looking for work is their full-time job – that means scheduling eight hours a day (Monday through Friday) at a minimum – of job seeking activity. Students should consider activities such as the following.
- Maintain a calendar and review it daily.
- Identify employers and jobs of interest... use all the resources available from your personal network to the internet (if you search online use keyword and Boolean logic in your searches) and never hesitate to go out walking in areas of town where you're interested in working to "check out" the neighbourhood.
- Do not spend more than two hours a day online – get out of your house, dressed for work and go to prospective employers; if you don't have employers to visit, go to employment agencies, personnel offices, and temporary agencies to see if there are openings available. (Remember that fewer than 15 per cent of jobs secured last year were captured online!)
- Tailor your CV and cover letter to match job descriptions for positions you are interested in applying for – you can get the job descriptions from companies' websites or the local personnel office staff; however, the local staff may have only print copies easily accessible and you may do better to request an electronic copy by email or telephone. Connect-the-dots for anyone reading your cover letter: what makes you the best candidate for this job and be sure that your résumé includes all of the key words that are embedded in the job description!
- Submit applications for jobs as soon as you see a position posted and follow-up routinely. If you submit an application and it's rejected, find out if the company maintains an "active" candidates file and ensure that your application is in that file. Make copies of applications that you submit and resubmit them, if and when appropriate. (Use control-a to highlight all the text, control-c to copy text to the

clipboard; then, open a Word document and use control-v to past the text into a new file.)

- Monitor all of your efforts... keep records of where you've gone, where you've submitted applications, and where you still need to go... keep a "To do" list with all of the things you need to accomplish and do those things in the order of their true importance... use a calendar!! Use a tickler file!! Use whatever system will work for you – but have and use a system to help you stay organised.
- Attend conferences, meetings, or social networking sites where you can mix and mingle in person or virtually with people doing the kind of work that you want to do.
- Attend classes or seminars that build or refine your work-related skills. Practise the skills you learn so that they don't become rusty. Participate in online discussions or on message boards with others in your field so that you stay up-to-date with regard to what tools are being used, who's doing what and with whom, etc.
- Practise your interviewing skills and keep practising!!!
- Volunteer in organisations where people are doing the kind of work that you're interested in doing – take your responsibilities seriously and keep records of where you're helping, who's supervising you, and what tasks you're accomplishing.
- Never, ever give up!

References

- Bolles RN, 2009. The job-hunter's survival guide. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Hansen K, 2007. Career networking do's and don'ts.
- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counselling for people with disabilities, 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step nine: Myth busters – the reality of working as disadvantaged youth (session for students with disabilities)

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information to:

- Understand services available while in employment and while engaging with employers.
- Learn their legal rights regarding employment.
- Respond to employers' possible objections to hiring someone with special needs or disability.
- Determine when to disclose specific problem or disability in the hiring process and feel more confident in doing so.

Rationale

Many people in the general public underestimate the abilities of people with special needs and disabilities. The misperceptions of the public (and employers) are due to information conveyed through social networking channels over time (oral histories, literature, television, films, etc.). To alleviate others' stereotypical notions, students must first know what misperceptions they may have and then how best to counter their concerns. Job seekers need to prepare how they would like to discuss their problem or impairment with a prospective employer so that they won't be caught unaware by employers' concerns. This session also supports students to proactively address with co-workers, prospective customers or students, and the general public any stereotypes that they may encounter.

Content

This session includes:

- Activity: Group debates myths vs. facts when employing people with special needs/ disabilities.

**Group activity: Debate myths versus facts**

You'll want to divide the large group into smaller groups of two to three people and ask them to discuss what they feel are the most common myths that prospective employers might have concerning employing a person with a visual impairment. Give the small groups approximately 30 minutes and ask them to designate one person in the group as the reporter. At the end of the 30 minutes, come back together as a large group and have each "reporter" report on one of the myths that his group discussed and the group's conclusions. Continue until all the points raised have been thoroughly discussed and the entire group has had an opportunity to "weigh-in" on each issue.

Some of the likely myths that may come up are listed below:

Myth: Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities.

Fact: The employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities. In fact, these studies show that on the average, individuals with disabilities have better attendance rates than their non-disabled counterparts.

Myth: Individuals with disabilities should be placed in jobs where they will not fail.

Fact: Everyone has the right to fail as well as to succeed. Be careful not to hold someone back from a position or a promotion because you think that there is a possibility that he or she might fail in the position. If this person is the best-qualified candidate, give them the same opportunity to try that you would give anyone else.

Myth: Individuals with disabilities are not reliable.

Fact: Individuals with disabilities tend to remain on the job and to maintain better levels of attendance. A US Chamber of Commerce study revealed that workers with disabilities had an 80% lower turnover rate.

Myth: Someone will always have to help person with disability or low skilled.

Fact: This is not the case with proper training. Individuals with disabilities have adjusted to

their disability in most cases. It does not affect their ability to work unaided.

Myth: Workers with a disability are a bad influence on other workers.

Fact: More often than not, the worker with a disability brings additional diversity into the workplace. For example: Someone who uses a wheelchair may point out ways to make physical access better for all by uncluttering walkways and offices. Someone who has a learning disability may develop a filing system based on colors in addition to words that increases efficiency and ease of use.

Myth: Individuals with disabilities are not able to contribute to society.

Fact: More than anything, individuals with disabilities are restricted not by their abilities, but by society. As an employer, do not let a person's disability get in the way of an opportunity for him or her to demonstrate talents. Misconceptions that insurance costs/rates will go up, and that they have a high rate of absenteeism and low productivity levels should be overcome and an equal opportunity afforded to individuals with disabilities.



Practical tools

Exercise “Chilling out”

You can perform this exercise with your students as long as is appropriate to the situation that s/he is in, or as long as s/he likes. The good thing is that it can be done wherever s/he wants.

Here are some simple step-by-step instructions.

Let your students feel free to insert his/her own time allowances and to change it to suit him/her.

Step One: Physical relaxation

Guidance by the teacher:

- Make sure you are sitting comfortably with your back straight.
- Place your hands in your lap with your palms facing upwards, so that your body is open to taking in as much positive energy as possible.
- Now close your eyes...

- Relax your body, starting at your feet. Your feet should be flat on the floor. Become aware of your feet and consciously let go of any tension and relax the muscles.
- Continue to your ankles, your calves, your knees and your thighs – taking your awareness up your legs and let go of any tension.
- Now take your awareness up towards your hips, your buttocks and the base of your spine, all the time relaxing. Then feel relaxation flowing up your spine.
- Keep moving up your back until you reach your shoulders – this is a key area where lots of people hold a lot of stress and tension, so spend as long as you need, relaxing your shoulders and losing the tension.
- Now bring your awareness to the front of your body and relax your abdomen. Relax your chest. Take your awareness to your hands and just relax your hands. Feel the relaxation rising up your arms as you re-join the shoulders and just let go of any tension.
- Now relax your neck as best you can in accordance with your posture.
- Relax your chin and your mouth, relax your nose, relax your eyes, and your eyebrows and forehead. Tension is held in all the small parts of your face and it will feel better when you have taken it away. Just let go of any tension in your face and relax your scalp.

Step two: Balancing emotions

Now that your body is completely relaxed and tension free, you can take your awareness deeper to the emotional level.

- First of all become aware of any negative emotions you may have experienced throughout the day. Just bring them to your mind's eye. They could be to do with how you have been made to feel during this course, on your journey, or even something those occurred earlier this week, but find the emotion and focus on it.
- Feel the emotion and focus on it for a few moments.
- Now take in a deep cleansing breath of air and concentrating on the negative emotion, breath it out and away from your body. Picture the emotion as a murky grey mist, or an unpleasant smell or texture leaving you and leaving your emotions settled and cleansed.
- Now take your awareness back to your emotions. Focus on a positive emotion, a feeling of happiness that you may have had today when you were pleased with something that you achieved, a moment when you felt loved or appreciated today and just hold it.
- Concentrate on that emotion and feel the positive energy that comes from the emotion.
- Take a deep breath, and focusing on the good emotion that you are feeling, concentrating on how it makes you feel, breathe in the warmth of the emotion and let it

fill your whole body. Let the positive energy fill every cell of your body as you breathe in. And feel that your emotions are settled.

- Spend a few moments in this calm, relaxed state.

Step three: Positive thoughts

Now your emotions are settled and calm, you can go a level deeper, to your thoughts. Again we are first of all going to become aware of the negative and then the positive.

- Take your awareness deep into your mind and become aware of any negative thoughts you may have experienced recently. Just bring them to your mind's eye.
- Once you have the negative thoughts, whatever it is, do not judge yourself for having it, just become aware of it and realise that you can let go of it.
- Take a deep breath, and just release, breathe out the negative thoughts from your body, picturing it leaving you as murky grey cloud.
- Now take your awareness back to your mind and bring to mind any positive thoughts you have experienced recently.
- Hold the positive thought and recognise that this is the real you.
- Now taking a deep breath, breathe in the positive energy that the thought is producing and bring it into every cell of your body. Let the positive energy flow throughout you and hold that warm relaxed feeling.
- Just enjoy the sensation for a few moments.
- Now become aware of your body which is relaxed, your emotional state which is settled and your mind which is calm. Just stay with this state and focus on your breathing for a few moments.
- You can access this positive energy whenever you need to.
- Let the positive energy flow out and bring success to your day.
- And when you are ready, just open your eyes and relax.



Step ten: How and when to disclose disability in the job search process (session for students with disabilities)

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students (especially those with disabilities) with the necessary information and tools to:

- Examine ways to present themselves in a positive light.
- Respond to employers' possible objections to hiring an individual with a disability.
- Build confidence concerning disability disclosure.

Rationale

There are a lot of issues related to job seeking and disability: what to disclose, when in the job search process to disclose, and how to present disability constraints positively while responding to concerns that people without disabilities may have about how tasks can be performed with adjustments or modifications. These issues need to be dealt with in a safe environment where students can determine for themselves how they will handle this issue.

Content

This session includes:

- Activity: Discussion disclosure statements on a one-to-one basis with the teacher.



Group activity: Disability disclosure statement presentation

In this activity, students present their disability disclosure statements to the group. Ideally, this can be set up so that the participant is seated before the group as if in a group interview and you or another facilitator asks, "Can you tell me a little bit about your disability, please?"

to initiate the presentation by the participant. Following each presentation, the group should provide the participant with feedback.

Ask the group to view the presentation as if they were prospective employers:

- Would they consider hiring the candidate?
- Do they feel as if they found out what they need to know to make a good decision about the candidate's ability to perform in the job?
- Did the presenter speak in a way that was understandable, pleasant, and assertive?
- What body language or other nonverbal communication techniques did the speaker employ?
- Did the presenter leave the audience feeling as if he was confident and comfortable with his disability?
- What could the presenter do to improve his presentation?



Practical tools

Worksheet "My declaration for self-respect"

You as a teacher/pedagogical counsellor could discuss the following statement with your students with disabilities. This will help you to build up his/her self-respect.

That's me. In the whole world there is no one like me. Some people have features which are similar to mine but no one has the same unique combination like me. Thus everything which comes from me is authentically mine because only I possess it and I have chosen it.

I am aware that all my personality: my disability including everything which my mind does, including all its thoughts and ideas; my eyes including all the images they see; my feelings regardless their nature – anger, joy, disappointment, love, illusions, annoyance; my mouth and all the words that come out of it – kind, polite or rude, decent or obscene; my voice – quiet or harsh; and all my deeds regardless the fact that they affect other people or me.

I am aware about my ideas for the future, my dreams, hopes and fears.

I accept my victories and successes; my failures and mistakes.

As I accept everything which is mine and which belongs to me I can connect the knowledge with myself in an intimate way. By doing this I can love myself and be in good terms with each

part of myself. Thus I can act in such a way that all my inner self can work for me in the best way.

I know there are some aspects connected with me which interest me as well as others which I don't recognize. But as long as I have the feelings of love and friendship towards myself I can look with courage and hope for solutions of my problems and ways which help me to learn more about myself.

Regardless the fact how I look like, what is my disability or limitations, what I say, what I do, what I think and how I feel at a given moment – it's me, it's authentic and it shows what is my position at a given time.

After I understand later, how I look like, what I say, what I do, what I think and how it may happen that some parts of my personality will look unacceptable for me. I can eliminate the things which are relatively inadequate, find something new and replace with it the eliminated features.

I can use means which allow me to survive and be close with the others, to be productive, to give a certain meaning and order to the world of people and things which surround me.

I am aware of myself and thus I can build up myself.

I am aware of myself and I feel very well.



Individual work time

If time allows, have the students revisit their written disability disclosure statements and edit the statements following their presentation and receipt of feedback. If you've been able to download the recordings immediately, you can share those with the students as well for their review.

References

- Wolffe K, 1999. Responding to a common concern about hiring people with visual impairments: Access to print information. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 93 (2), 110-113.
- Wolffe K, 1999. Addressing transportation concerns of potential employers of people who are visually impaired. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 93 (4), 252-253.
- Brown, D. (2003). *The Da Vinci code*. New York: Random House.



Step eleven: The perfect worker

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- Successfully maintain employment by understanding the expectations of supervisors and colleagues.
- Recognise how employer expectations change over time.
- Develop an action plan to correct any soft skill deficits that might interfere with job maintenance.

Rationale

Students participating in the session need to receive honest, open feedback from teachers to evaluate their soft skills (work habits and behaviours) in the workplace. This session provides them with this specific, written and verbalized feedback, focusing on their behaviour in the workplace. This feedback provides the participant with ideas to consider in developing an action plan to change behaviours that are not well-received; thereby circumventing job maintenance problems in the future.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: The Perfect Worker
- Discussion of critical areas of concern to employers (attendance, punctuality, honesty, cooperation, etc.) and behaviours demonstrated by ideal employees.
- Activity: Students complete a self-analysis using The Perfect Worker Worksheet. They begin work on an action plan to correct any soft skills deficits that are identified.
- Assignment: Continue looking for information about prospective employers and their companies to submit in advance of mock interviews.



Practical tools

Worksheet “Employer expectations”

Prospective employers have different expectations of you than your acquaintances, friends, and family members. Employers’ expectations of employees and how they change over time, from first impressions in an interview through the first year of work, are detailed below.

Employers expect applicants to come to interviews well-prepared and to be successful you will need to:

- Get a good night’s sleep to avoid dark circles under your eyes and to stay alert during the interview.
- Eat breakfast or a light lunch to keep your tummy from rumbling embarrassingly during the interview.
- Bring a notetaking device and use it during the interview. If you want to use a recorder to take notes, you must ask permission to record; if the device you use is something out-of-the-ordinary, you must be prepared to explain what it is and how it works like some tool the interviewer may be familiar with like a laptop.
- Bring any identification papers required for employment to the interview; i.e., you should be prepared to get the job!
- Bring a neat and complete CV to the interview to share with the interviewer, even if you have submitted one previously in case it’s been lost!
- Present appropriately, the employer expects you to come to the interview properly groomed (wearing little or no perfume or after shave, no excessive jewellery, no heavy make-up, and with clean hair and teeth) and appropriately dressed for the type of work sought or slightly more formal, not less.
- Demonstrate a positive attitude by: being punctual, initiating a greeting with a firm (but not bone-crunching) handshake, making eye contact or maintaining facial orientation toward the interviewer, nodding occasionally and asking relevant questions to indicate that you’re paying attention, and speaking clearly when addressed.

- Demonstrate respect for others by: turning off or muting any talking or noisemaking devices such as watches and mobile phones.

Anticipate questions such as:

- Why did you leave your previous jobs?
- Why there are breaks in your work history?
- Why do you want the current job (you must know something about the company and position)?
- How does your education, training, and experiences relate to the job sought?
- Which involvement with clubs, organisations, or hobbies indicates interests or abilities you may have in performing the type of job duties required?
- What special skills that are job-related do you have?
- If you left school early, what further adult education efforts have you pursued?
- Ask appropriate questions such as what you want to know about the job; e.g., specific duties, details about work schedule, supervision (chain of command) etc.

Employers expect workers to perform in the following ways the first days and weeks on the job and to be successful you will need to:

- Be on time (work out any transportation “bugs” before reporting to work by making a “dry run” prior to starting the job).
- Be well groomed and dressed appropriately (determine how to dress before reporting to work by asking about a dress code or asking for feedback from others).
- Be cheerful and polite – try to get along with everyone you meet.

Be willing to:

- Be supervised closely at first.
- Learn and develop skills.
- Listen and pay attention to corrections.
- Ask questions if a task or direction is unclear.
- Establish your reputation as a competent worker by accomplishing your assigned tasks (remember, it is difficult to change a poor initial impression).
- Become familiar with company policies and procedures.

Employers expect workers to perform in the following ways their first month on the job and to be successful you will need to:

- Continue to be on time because others depend on you. Take coffee breaks and lunch only when specified and only for the agreed upon amount of time or less.

Establish friendships:

- Continue to interact and get along with co-workers and supervisors.
- Be aware of informal social structures like cliques and how you fit.
- Keep biased view of others to yourself.
- Resist the temptation to gossip and don't attend to rumours.
- Learn company policies (both written and unwritten).
- Be flexible in developing skills: When given new tasks or assignments, ask questions about how best to accomplish them.
- Show productivity increases and decrease the amount of supervision you needed.
- Become accustomed to the new environment. You will have to adjust to your new surroundings, as when moving to a new house or apartment.
- Be aware of your probationary period (it is typically a time when the employer does an initial evaluation of your work).
- Learn the duties and responsibilities for your job.

Employers expect workers to perform in the following ways their first six months to one year on the job and to be successful you will need to:

- Be doing your job as if it were second nature—performing your duties on time, using good time management, knowing company policies, and getting along with your co-workers and customers.
- Be willing to expand your skills through off-the-job training (further education classes, company-sponsored courses, online seminars, etc.) to enhance your qualifications and ability to take on added responsibilities. (This kind of activity can enhance your promotion potential as well).
- Find out how to be a candidate for promotion and advancement by asking your immediate supervisor or HR about what additional qualifications you need or responsibilities you'd be expected to assume.

Take the initiative:

- Be self-directed; find work in slack times.
- Anticipate requirements; don't wait to be told what needs doing.
- Make appropriate suggestions based on increased experience, knowledge, skills, and so on.
- Volunteer to train or help with new employee's inductions.
- Demonstrate your loyalty to the company and your identification with company goals—speak up at meetings and identify yourself as a company employee at conferences, parties or informal get-togethers.
- Consider investing in the company through purchasing stock options or making donations to company charities.

Finally, be cautious:

- Don't develop a false sense of security in a good situation or assume that you know as much about the job or company as others with longer tenure, particularly your supervisor.
- Don't take long weekends by using sick leave on Mondays or Fridays.
- Be careful if you take a second job not to let it interfere with your primary job responsibilities.
- Do not look for another job overtly, particularly with a competitor, unless you can afford to give up the job you have!

Worksheet “The perfect worker”

Name:

Date:

The perfect worker activity asks you to consider those traits that employers expect from employees. When considering the following worker traits, try putting yourself in the employer's place to help you understand why these work habits are important. For each trait that is listed, rate your demonstrable work habits. Consider your performance over time from the employer's perspective or, if you've never been employed, from a teacher or parent's perspective.

Give your answers by putting a X in the relevant response box (Good, Neutral or Needs improvement)

	Good	Neutral	Needs improvement
Honesty			
Positive interaction skills with clients/customers			
Sense of humour			
Cooperation			
Good appearance			
Tolerance			
Experience			
Flexibility			
Team player			
Dependability			
Punctual			
Good Attendance			
Good communication skills			
Reliable transportation			
Medical condition under control			
Follows rules			
Asks for help when necessary			
Understands lines of authority			
Doesn't bring personal concerns to work			
Accepts criticism			
Responsible			
Attention to detail			
Organisational ability			
Tidiness			

In the space below, please identify a work habit that you would like to improve and draft a plan to do so.



Step twelve: The trail

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- Explain the purpose and function of a CV, cover letter, and applications.
- Complete an application, CV, and cover letter (electronic or hard copy versions).
- Avoid common errors when completing an application, CV or cover letter.

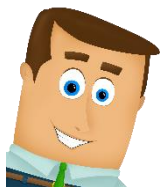
Rationale

One of the greatest challenges to the job seeking process is dealing with the necessary paperwork inherent in the application process. Many employers now use an electronic application process and Europass type CVs to secure information about prospective candidates for job vacancies. Therefore, low skilled and marginalised students may never have seen samples of CVs or cover letters and therefore have little or no understanding of the subtleties of format and structure. This session provides them with examples of CVs and completed applications in formats they can access to review how others have approached this task.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: DOs and DON'ts of completing applications
- Discussion: How to get started—is the application form accessible? What needs to be included? How to: complete a person specification, email a job application, apply in person and apply on-line
- Instruction: How to produce an exemplary CV?
- Discussion: CV contents options



Teachers notes

Completing electronic application forms can be accomplished in most instances by job applicants without a scribe simply by using access technology such as a screen reader or screen magnification software.

There are a variety of ways to apply for jobs online:

- the employment application may be available on the company's website and the applicant simply completes it and submits on the website
- the job candidate may need to request an electronic version of the application via email
- the job candidate may want to register with a service that matches candidates to jobs, which may require posting a CV or completing an application-like questionnaire online
- a prospective employer may email an application as an attachment to a job candidate in response to an enquiry about jobs or as a consequence of meeting the candidate elsewhere or through a network.

Completing online applications requires the same attention to detail that completing paper applications required. The job candidate must:

- carefully review the job advert to determine what skills, knowledge, and abilities the job requires
- carefully read and follow the instructions on the application
- correctly spell all names, addresses, and information shared on the application and use proper grammar
- list knowledge, skills, and abilities developed outside of work experiences, and
- have a friend, relative to check the application for accurateness before sending it.



Talk/discussion: CVs

The purpose of this discussion is to ensure that all of the students understand the purpose of CVs and they have the skills necessary to produce a quality, targeted CV. You will want to

show students a variety of CVs and talk with them about the pros and cons of the different styles. Each of these objectives is detailed below.

During the discussion, be sure the following information is covered: a CV is used to showcase an applicant's experience, skills, qualifications, and talents to a potential employer. The CV may be used to reply to job adverts or "trawl" for opportunities. In the latter instance, an applicant sends out a CV as a type of speculative application, which provides a prospective employer with a synthesis of the job candidate's attributes with a cover letter. In some instances, an employer will accept a CV in lieu of an application form. The job advert will indicate if a CV is required.

The CV should be short and to the point. Many job counsellors suggest no more than one print page or a page of good quality paper printed on front and back. It's important that the students realise that many sighted employers will collect the CVs of the candidates they are seriously considering (this means they will print out the electronically submitted CVs) and compare them side-by-side. Typically, they will only look at one side of the page!

Following the discussion activity, you will want to quickly review with the students what they need to include on their CVs:

- Personal details: (name, address, telephone numbers, email address) – an applicant's name should be prominent and should recur on all pages of the CV. If an applicant uses a nickname, it should be included in quotation marks on the first page of the CV; thereafter, the applicant's last name alone can appear. The CV only requires current contact information – no need for historical information sharing.
- Personal statement: this is a short introduction where the applicant briefly mentions his or her key assets that match the employer's needs. A strong personal statement highlights the job candidate's aims and goals in reference to the company's mission.
- Key skills: these are the applicant's demonstrable skills and talents that match up to the job's essential task requirements. It is through the key skills that the applicant explains how he can do the job.
- Experience: this section is where the applicant describes both his paid and unpaid work experience that has helped build the skills needed for the current offering.

- Education and qualifications: in this section, a job candidate succinctly describes his relevant education and qualifications. There is no need to detail every course or programme an individual has attended! It is important, however, to list what credentials the applicant has, where he got those credentials and when. The latter (when) is not required, but is preferred.
- Interests or additional information: this is an area where a job candidate must decide whether his hobbies and interests or affiliation with certain groups or organisations works for him and, if so, what to share with the prospective employer. Job candidates may want to tell about their engagement in sports, social or community activities, particularly if they are relevant to the job or if they indicate that the job candidate has skills or talents of interest to the employer. Sharing information about engagement in political or religious activities, or listing too many hobbies or social commitments may be perceived as a negative. Caution must be exercised, if in doubt, leave it out!
- References: you only need to say “On request;” however, you must have three to five references ready to share with an employer in case you’re asked for those references! Ideally, job candidates will have a list of two to three professional references (no relatives or friends allowed!), their relationship to the job candidate, and their contact information on a separate sheet of paper.

Positive reasons for choosing a chronological CV are listed below:

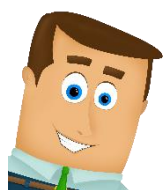
- It emphasises that the job candidate has a considerable amount of experience in similar roles to the job being sought.
- It shows how the job candidate has progressed in his career.
- It shows how the job candidate’s education and training relate to the job being sought.
- It shows how the job candidate has added responsibilities and been rewarded through career advancement over time.

Possible reasons not to choose a chronological CV are listed below:

- It may be detrimental if the job candidate is changing career direction because his work experiences may no longer be as relevant.
- If the job candidate has had a mix of different jobs or short-term placements, it will be emphasised.
- Likewise, if the job candidate has any gaps in his employment, they will be highlighted.

- If the job candidate hasn't worked or has had limited work experience, it is readily apparent.
- Likewise, if the job candidate has limited education and training, it is readily apparent.

A skills or qualifications-based CV describes a job candidate's capabilities (knowledge, skills, and abilities). It focuses on matching the job candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities to the job rather than focusing on the jobs the candidate has performed in the past that may be relevant to the job being sought.



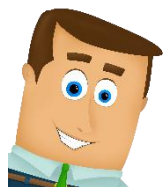
Teacher Tip

You may want to give students skills or qualifications-based CV examples that show a young candidate with minimal work experience and an older worker with a weak or problematic work history to illustrate how and when it is appropriate to develop such a CV.

Although not all employers require a CV, it is advantageous for job candidates to have one. Job candidates can send a CV to alert an employer that they are available even if no job has been posted. If the employer does request a CV, the job candidate has one at-the-ready. If the employer requires an application in lieu of a CV, the CV can be a tool to take to an interview to underscore the key information included on the application and it can be handed off to the employer as a reminder of the applicant's interest and suitability. Finally, it can be helpful to send a CV to anyone that a job candidate plans to use as a reference or from whom the candidate has requested help in finding appropriate job openings because it reminds that person of the job candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as work experience and training credentials. And, those individuals can share the information contained in a CV with others.

Important

You can show the example of creation Europass CV through its digital platform - <https://europa.eu/europass/en/create-europass-cv>



Teacher Tip

Remind to students that they first have to create your Europass profile with information on their education, experience and skills. After they complete the Europass profile, they can create as many CVs as they want with just a few clicks. Its available in 30 languages including Bulgarian and Turkish.



Individual work time

Students need to take time to develop or modify their CVs in any way needed based on the previous discussion. Ideally they will edit and refine their primary CVs as either chronological or qualifications-based CVs and save the file to their memory sticks. If they don't have job adverts that they are responding to of their own, you may want to ask them to use the same job advert and application that was shared with them earlier in the application activity and have them redo their CV as if they were applying for that particular job. It's important to see if they can tweak their CVs to match a job. When they've finished, you will need to look over their work and give them feedback. You may also want to have the students save their work to their memory sticks or print it out for future reference.



Talk/discussion: Cover letters

There are basically two types of cover letters: the traditional business letter that accompanies a hardcopy of an application or CV and the contemporary iteration, which is email. The former necessitates that you have examples prepared in braille and print to share with the students.

Critical points to cover in a discussion of cover letter writing using the traditional business letter format:

- Use good quality paper and envelopes that match, preferably in white or off-white. Print the letter in black ink using a business letter format.
- Date your letter and be sure to include your full name and return address.
- Address the hiring manager (be sure the name is spelled correctly) and include the job reference number in your opening sentence.

- Quickly point out how you match the skills and qualifications requested in the job advert.
- Be pleasant and positive as you succinctly describe your skills and experience.
- If you've experienced a lengthy period of unemployment or have significant gaps in your work history that will be apparent when the employer reviews your CV or application, indicate what you've been doing such as voluntary work, raising a family, or further education.
- Indicate when you will be available for an interview and don't forget to include your contact information: email address and telephone number (indicate if it is a mobile phone or a landline with an answering machine).

Important

Ensure that the email addresses of students are suitable for job search activities. If their email addresses are distasteful or bizarre, encourage them to set up an alternative email address to use strictly for job seeking.

Consider the following:

- Indicate that you are enclosing a CV or application and don't forget to do so!
- Thank the reader for considering your CV or application.
- Use an appropriate valediction or ending such as 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours faithfully' and sign your full name with print below. The 'rule of thumb' is to use the former when you know the name of the person with whom you are corresponding and the latter if you do not. If you are looking for something less formal, you can use 'sincerely' or 'regards.' Do not use 'Fondly' 'Yours truly' or other more personal or intimate valedictions.
- Review your letter before sending it for grammar and spelling errors. Do not trust a software spell check as you may have used a word that is spelled correctly but is the wrong word for the sentence. For example, using 'to' when 'two' or 'too' was what you meant to write. Have someone else review and edit your letter, if necessary.
- Post your letter with plenty of time allowed for delays so that it will arrive in advance or no later than the due date listed in the job advert.

If the job candidate plans to submit a cover letter and CV or application electronically, there are a few additional points that you'll want to cover. It is important that students understand that when applying for jobs via email the email itself becomes the cover letter. In addition to attending to the construction details (writing a formal business letter with formal salutation

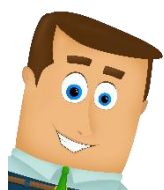
and valediction) as if the email is a print cover letter, the job candidate needs to: avoid using abbreviations, slang, acronyms, and jargon; and clearly state who the writer is (especially if the email address is cryptic or unclear with regard to the sender's name). It will also be important to underscore the need to include in the email the sender's telephone contact information as well as the email address. Finally, it is imperative that the CV or application be attached to the email! Remind the students that the file name should include their surname at a minimum.



Individual work time

Having completed applications and refined their CVs, students now need to practise composing a cover letter. Ideally, they will have time to do a formal cover letter for their applications and an email variant as a cover for their CVs, or vice versa. As in the previous activities, they can either use their own job advert or the one you provided to them for this practice writing activity. When they've finished, you need to look over their work and give them feedback.

Internet job posting has gained in popularity over the last decade and now many companies prefer posting to the internet rather than using traditional hardcopy adverts in newspapers or on bulletin boards.



Teacher Tip

Before students leave this session, they should have completed an application, a targeted CV, and a cover letter in response to either a job advert you've given them or their own. Ideally, they will also have explored several job boards online.



Practical tools

Activity: “Preparation of CV and cover letter”

Writing and updating a CV is a useful technique during job search as it helps your students to keep track of his/her skills and experience in one document. Putting a CV together can also help him/her think about what s/he has done in employment, education or leisure activities.

Please provide the following guidelines while preparing together his/her CV.

Chronological

- A traditional format (e.g. Europass) where work experience is organised in date order.
- Job history shows career development or last employer’s name may be advantageous.

Functional

- Emphasises his/her transferable skills and experience gained.

General tips

- Limit it to a maximum of two sides of A4 – keep it concise.
- Keep it clear and specific – simple language works best.
- Highlight his/her selling points clearly.

Interests (examples):

- “I am a keen participant in my local amateur dramatics society.”
- “I have been regularly attending Japanese language lessons for the past five years.”
- “I am an active member of the university snowboarding society and have helped to plan several excursions to dry slopes and a trip to Turkey.”
- “I play the guitar in a band and regularly play at local venues.”

Cover letter

A covering letter is even more critical if his/her application is speculative, that is not in response to a specific vacancy.

Structure:

Advice the student to base his/her covering letter on the following outline structure:

Paragraph one

Introduction of the person, state what s/he is applying for and where s/he saw the vacancy.

Paragraph two

S/he needs to outline why s/he is applying. What in particular has made him/her to send a CV or an application form for this particular job? S/he needs to try to demonstrate how enthusiastic s/he is about the job. At this stage s/he can also demonstrate any research s/he has done so far..

Paragraph three

This should be a summary of the key points of the CV or application form. What are the two or three best reasons for giving him/her an interview?

Paragraph four

This paragraph is flexible, and it is his/her opportunity to explain any gaps in his/her career. It is also a good place to disclose his/her disability or mention any adjustments s/he may needs at an interview or a test.

References

- Boatman K. The dos and don'ts of posting your resume online.
- Europass portal <https://europa.eu/europass/eportfolio/screen/cv-editor?lang=en>
- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counselling for people with disabilities 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step thirteen: What you see is what you get – it's all in the presentation!

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- Effectively prepare for a competitive interview
- Evaluate their presentation performance based on feedback from group members.

Rationale

In order to prepare for competitive interviews, students need input from teachers/pedagogical counsellors on how successfully to secure jobs and researched techniques that others are using to succeed in this effort. This session allows group students an opportunity to apply what they learned in earlier sessions. The additional practice in presenting enables individuals to build confidence and doing a presentation related to disability disclosure helps prepare them for the actual interview.

Content

This session includes:

- Instruction: How to achieve a successful interview?
- Discussion: Advantages to researching a company, reviewing the job description, thinking about potential questions, creating a travel plan, dressing appropriately, etc. in advance of an interview.



Talk/discussion: Top ten interviewing tips

You'll want to introduce the low skilled and marginalised students strategies for successfully interviewing. You may want to give them hard copies of the handout that accompanies this talk. Each of the action items listed on the handout is introduced below with the points that you will want to make in your presentation.

1. Research the company in advance: (call and ask for public information, go online, visit the library, read the newspaper, ask people you know who work there about the company, etc). This action item is one that you've been working on with the participants throughout the course and you'll want to point this out. Both now and in the future, when they are looking for work and have been selected for an interview, the real work in preparation for the interview involves seriously looking into and finding out as much as possible about the company where they want to work.

They need to know obvious things such as the size and location of the company and what the company produces or supplies in the way of services. They also need to know who the competition is – what other companies offer the same or similar products or services? How fiscally sound is this company? They can look at annual reports to shareholders or similar documentation that is part of the public record to see how well the company is performing. What kind of community service is the company supporting?

Many companies post this kind of information on their websites or participants may be able to locate newspaper or magazine articles describing activities of the company in the local community. The more they can find out about companies of interest, the better. They should not hesitate to ask family members, friends, and acquaintances what they know about the company – what they do, what kind of a reputation they have, how they treat their workers, and so forth.

2. Establish a friendly rapport with the interviewer: (greet properly and respectfully, smile, introduce yourself, smile, shake hands, visit...). This item is of particular importance to blind and low vision job seekers because so much of the initial impression one makes on others is related to how one looks. Some career counsellors suggest that employers make

their initial assessment of a candidate's viability within the first 30 seconds of the interview process. This means that the old adage "What you see is what you get!" has a specific meaning in this instance – the employer is making a determination largely on what he sees.

They need to know if the workers others can see are dressed formally (men in suits and ties and women in dresses or skirts and blouses), in uniforms, or informally (casual business attire or construction trade gear, for example). Regardless of what others are wearing, participants must understand that part of establishing a friendly rapport with the interviewer necessitates basic grooming in preparation for an interview: brushing teeth, bathing, washing hair and clothing selection and preparation (washing and ironing or dry cleaning, mending when necessary, and ensuring that the clothes selected match or go together with one's entire outfit). It is a good idea to keep one outfit for interviews.

Finally, the interviewee needs to understand that social protocol demands that when two people meet for the first time by choice (as in an interview) that they interact in a way that indicates interest in each other.

3. Be prepared to respond to: "Tell me a little bit about you...": This item calls for preparation and participants need to know that the employer is hoping for a short (no more than two minute) response that gives him or her three things:

- a wee bit of information about the person being interviewed (evidence of social standing, stability, connection to the community, pleasant personality, interest, etc.) – no more than 30 seconds worth
- a sense of training and experiential background as it relates to being qualified and able to do the job for which one is interviewing (academic and informal education and training as well as volunteer and life experiences that have taught the applicant critical knowledge, skills, and abilities) – no more than 60 seconds, and
- a short goal statement (and how the applicant's personal goal ties to or relates to the company's goals and objectives) – no more than 30 seconds.

4. Give at least three good reasons (habits and abilities) why you should get the job: (for example, "During secondary school, I had perfect attendance." "I have extensive experience with Microsoft Office software products."). This item also requires preparation and participants ought to be encouraged to write out the three most relevant or impressive

reasons why an employer would want to hire them. If the applicant's strength is in his or her knowledge, skills, or abilities, the interviewee should note two skills or abilities that are needed for the job and that she or he has and can demonstrate. The third reason should focus on a commendable work behaviour or habit that the applicant can show evidence of having. If the applicant has less experience or fewer job skills and greater strength in terms of work behaviours, it's fine to flip-flop and give two work habits and one work skill for the three good reasons the applicant should be hired. The key is that these habits and abilities should be necessary for success on the job applied for and that the applicant can point to evidence of both.

5. Have at least one job-related question: (for example, "Will you be my immediate supervisor?" "Can you describe the computer skills needed to be successful on this job?"). This item points to the fact that many interviewers gauge an applicant's interest by the questions that he or she poses in the interview. Applicants should have three or four questions prepared to ask during the course of the interview.

6. Be prepared to respond to the interviewer's disability-related questions: (the only "bad" question is one that isn't asked because you don't have the opportunity to explain what you want the employer to know about you). This item also alludes to the idea that the employer can't ask, but the disabled applicant can tell and that's what is recommended here... that the person with the disability explains how he or she can do the work and if the employer doesn't ask questions that the person with the disability anticipates what questions the employer may have.

Employers are almost universally concerned with four critical issues when considering candidates with disabilities: safety, travel to and from work as well as within the company, access to material and information, and productivity (quality and quantity of output). If an interviewer doesn't ask about these four concerns overtly, the interviewee may want to address them as part of his or her disability statement or as separate concerns that the applicant asks and answers for the interviewer.

7. Thank the interviewer (by name) for his or her time and find out the next step in the hiring process: (ask if you can check back and if so, when?). This is a common sense step that most interviewees (with and without disabilities) simply ignore... if participants want to

make a good impression, they'll thank the interviewer for his or her time before they exit and find out when the interviewer will make a decision about the position. This is the time to find out what the most appropriate method will be for following up with the interviewer: by telephone, email, or in person?

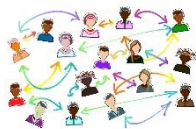
9. Follow up: (thank you note or email, telephone enquiries, visits) but don't be a pest! If you don't get the job, ask for referrals to other, similar positions. This item underscores the applicant's responsibility to check back to find out if he or she is still being considered, if there is any further information that the interviewer might need or want from the applicant, etc. It is perfectly acceptable to ask for referrals to other hiring sources or known managers in other departments. It's also okay to find out if the company keeps resumes or applications on file and, if so, how long they are considered active. If the applicant isn't chosen, it's also acceptable to ask the interviewer for feedback about the job applicant's performance (sometimes it's hard to get the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but it's still worth asking!)

9. Document for your files: where you interviewed, with whom you interviewed, when you interviewed, how and when to check back on your status in the hiring process – write it all down! This is the tenth step and it relates to keeping up with where one has interviewed and with whom so that the applicant can continue to pursue leads without embarrassing him or herself by going back to a posting where the door's been closed! This concept of documentation is most important, however, for knowing when and with whom a job applicant needs to follow up – it helps the applicant stay organised moving forward.



Individual work time

Participants need to write out how they will respond when asked to tell about themselves. They need to write out three good reasons they should get the jobs they plan to interview for and one good job-related question. They also need to review and edit their disability disclosure statements.



Group activity: Presentations

In these presentations, students stand before the group and respond to the query, “Tell me a little bit about yourself...” These presentations should be no more than two minutes and you’ll want to record them for the participants to review later. Encourage the audience to share what they like about the presentations and to offer the presenters constructive feedback on how to improve.

If time allows, encourage participants to do a second taping of their disability disclosure statements.

Be sure that everyone has scheduled an interview for the next session and that they have submitted to you the job-related information that the prospective interviewer will need to do the interviews with them.



Practical tools

Job interviewing handy reminder (to be distributed to students)

Do:

- Know the name and location of the company.
- Know your interviewer's name.
- Know something about the company and its products.
- Know about the job for which you are applying.
- Be well groomed: Bathe, use deodorant, shave, wash and comb hair, have pleasant breath, clean and press clothes, shine shoes.
- Take all important documents: List of former employers, work dates, and references, driver's license, CV, qualification details, samples of work.
- Take a pen and writing paper.
- Get plenty of rest—be wide awake and alert.
- Go alone.
- Take an interpreter if needed.

- Be on time, at least 5 minutes before scheduled time.
- Call and postpone your interview if you are ill.
- Tell the receptionist when you arrive—give your name.
- Shake hands firmly but not too hard.
- Want the job—be enthusiastic.
- Listen to the interviewer.
- Think before answering questions.
- Speak clearly in a moderate voice.
- Use proper grammar.
- Be courteous and polite.
- Be honest, positive, and optimistic about yourself.
- Stress your qualifications for the position and the contributions you can make to the company.
- Be relaxed and be yourself.
- Sit, stand, and walk straight and tall.
- Look the interviewer in the eye.
- Be confident and friendly.
- Explain physical limitations briefly if asked.
- Know your own goals—long-term and short-term.
- Ask questions about aspects of the job.
- Know when the interview is over.
- Thank the interviewer when the interview is over.

Don't:

- Be fidgety.
- Bring up personal problems or apologise for your disability.
- Ask unnecessary questions.
- Start by asking about salary
- Talk too much or waste the interviewer's time.
- Chew gum, smoke, or display other annoying habits.
- Complain about your last job or former supervisor.
- Put yourself down.
- Be rude or offensive.

- Argue with the interviewer.
- Plead for a job.
- Mumble or talk too loud.
- Be a show-off or know-it-all.
- Try too hard to make an impression.
- Yawn through the interview.
- Bring anyone along to answer questions for you.
- Get discouraged if the first interview is unfavourable.
- Give up—Ever!

References

- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counseling for people with disabilities. 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step fourteen: It's showtime... an interview performance

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- Apply what they've learned in the course to successfully complete a simulated job interview.

Rationale

Job seekers (low skilled or marginalised in the society) infrequently take the opportunity to practice their interview skills and this session is designed to give that chance to group students. In addition, it's rare that interviewees have the chance to see themselves perform in a job interview and low skilled and marginalised students need input, ideally through close observation of self to understand what works best for them in an interview situation. By performing and receiving feedback in a controlled environment, students can practice and improve their presentation style. Thus students are able to gain confidence in their ability to perform.

Content

This session includes:

- Activity: Mock interviews (with an unknown interviewer, if possible, or someone other than the teacher).



Group activity: Review of previous session

Following roll-call (and a reminder to participants to complete their timesheets), you will want to review the previous session activities and suggested questions are listed below:

- What are the most important elements in an interview?
- What kinds of things have unsuccessful interviewees said or done in their interviews?
- What are employers' most likely concerns about hiring an individual who has a medical problem or disability?
- How will you counter an employer's concerns about you as a job candidate?



Group activity: Mock interviews

In this session, participants are required to do mock interviews with strangers (HR personnel or employers you've invited in to do interviews with the participants) or unknown staff available to assist with the activity and have their interviews videotaped for review in the next session. In preparation for this activity, each participant should have submitted to you a job analysis for his current preferred job opportunity under consideration and you should have shared those job analyses with the interviewer(s) who'll be doing the interviews as far in advance of this session as possible.

Remind participants of the schedule for this session... who will be interviewing with whom and when. Explain clearly what your expectations are of them for while they await their turn at interviewing and once they've completed their interviews. Suggestions for simultaneous activities are provided in the Individual work time section below.

The interviewers should be prepared to ask participants specific questions based on their job analyses as well as standard questions such as "What can you tell me about yourself?" "What qualifies you to do this job?" "Why do you want to work for this company?" "What previous work have you accomplished and how did your past job duties compare to the tasks required on this job?" as well as any queries that they can relate to the participants' abilities to perform job tasks. You'll want to encourage the interviewers to probe about the participants' disabling conditions and what accommodations they think they will need to compete on the job – tell them not to worry about the legality of what they ask for in these mock interviews. Better that they should be frank and open than politically correct, especially if participants don't bring up critical points that need to be discussed as this will help them process what's missing in their presentations.

Let participants know that their interviews will be videotaped and replayed for feedback. I also recommend that you plan to put the digitised videos on the participants' memory sticks so that they will have them for future reference. The interviews should be no more than 10 minutes in length and ideally two or three can be running one after another.

Finally, if time allows, you may want to ask the interviewers to stop for a short question-and-answer session following completion of all the interviews. Encourage the participants to ask questions that will be relevant to the entire group (this is not an individual feedback session – it is a group Q and A session). In this Q and A session, you may want to start the questioning and cover some or all of the following.

- What were the overall strengths that you observed in the interviews you conducted?
- What were the weakest areas you observed in the interviewees' performances?
- Do you think hiring managers would seriously consider these candidates for work and for what reasons?
- How could the interviewees improve their performances?
- Considering all of the interviews you've conducted over time (with people who do and do not have disabilities), what are the differences between successful and unsuccessful job interviewees in your experience?



Form that can be used during the interview

Questions

You can use speed interviewing questions or any questions that they have used or prefer to use in their own interviewing experience.

1. Why do you want to work here?
2. What kind of experience do you have for this job?
3. What are the broad responsibilities of your current job?
4. How does your current job relate to the corporate objectives of your organisation?
5. What aspect of your current job is the most important?
6. What are your greatest achievements?
7. What did you dislike about your last job?
8. How long would you intend staying with us?

9. Tell me about yourself.
10. What interests you about this job?
11. What is your greatest strength?
12. What can you do for us that someone else cannot?
13. Describe a problem you have had to deal with?
14. Do you prefer working alone or with others?
15. What would you like to be doing in five years from now?
16. Why should I employ you?
17. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
18. How do you see yourself in five years?
19. What makes you think you are qualified to do this job?
20. Can you work under pressure?
21. Why are you leaving your current job?
22. Why should we employ you?
23. Why do you want to work for us?

It is essential that you are as critical and honest as possible, in order for jobseekers to gain the utmost benefit from the exercise.

You as a SE coacher could provide the following clarification and guidance in terms of those tough questions:

Why do you want to work here?

- Prior research will help your student to decide the company's good points – s/he could say e.g. "I believe your company will provide me with a stable and happy work environment".

What kind of experience do you have for this job?

- The student should “sell” him/herself.
- S/he needs to know what is critical to the employer.
- All companies are looking for someone who can make a difference within six months.

If you the student doesn't know what the job involves s/he may ask:

- What kind of work would I be expected to do?
- What are the broad responsibilities of a ?

This question has three levels:

- The student should know where s/he could fit into an organisation.
- It establishes how much s/he knows or does not already know.
- If s/he doesn't understand the job, s/he will be knocked out there.

Always advise your student to avoid use of jargon.

How does your job relate to the corporate objectives of your organisation?

- This checks his/her ability to get the job done as part of a team.

What aspect of your job is the most important?

- A wrong answer to this can knock him/her out of the running.
- The question establishes time management, prioritising and task avoidance.

What did you dislike about your last job?

- Most interviews start with a preamble about the organisation/job - this will help the student to answer the question.
- Advice he/she to keep his/her answers short and positive, e.g. s/he likes everything about your current job.

How long would you intend staying with us?

- Explain to your student that the interviewer may be thinking about offering him/her a job.
- The jobseeker could put the ball back in their court e.g. "I'd like to stay as long as I'm making a contribution. How long do you see me as staying?"

What would you like to be doing 5 years from now?

- Advice that the answer should show a desire to be regarded as a professional team player.

What are your qualifications?

- The student should check out whether the interviewer means job related or academic?

What are your greatest achievements?

- Advice that the student should keep answers job-related.
- The information which is on students' CV will help him/her to answer this question.

What is your greatest strength?

- The student may identify the main ones from his/her CV.
- Remind to the student that s/he needs to demonstrate: reliability, tenacity, reactivity to change.

What interests you about this job?

- Be sure that your student has enough information to answer.

Why should I employ you?

- Here you student should give a short and to the point answer.
- S/he may repeat his/her job description and skills.

What can you do for us that someone else cannot?

- Use job description and overlay with what s/he can do – relate to achievements.

Describe a problem you have had to deal with

- This question is designed to assess his/her analytical skills.
- Advice to use this five step plan when answering the question:
 - a. Examine the problem.
 - b. Assess hidden factors.
 - c. Identify possible solutions.
 - d. Consider consequences and cost implications of solutions.
 - e. Recommend solution and seek advice and/or approval.
- Then the student could also give an example.

What have you done that has shown initiative?

- This assesses whether your student is a "doer" who will save time, money and costs.

Do you prefer working alone or with others?

- Before answering your student should make sure that s/he knows whether s/he is required to work alone.

Here we may suggest 5 questions that your student could ask at the end of the interview:

- If you employ me what would your specific expectations be?
- Why is the position open?
- What would you most like an employee to bring to this company?
- What is a typical work day like?
- What are the career development options?
- What can someone at this level, who is performing well, hope to achieve?



Practical tools

Name:

Date:

Give your answers by putting a X in the relevant response box (Good, Average or Needs improvement)

	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Appearance			
Introduction			
Establishes friendly interaction with interviewer			
Brief personal description			
Explanation of disability			
Explains work experience as it relates to job			
Makes 3 positive statements about self			
Pays attention			
Ability to answer questions			
Ability to ask job-related questions			
Understands job duties			
Knows about company			
Body language			
Motivation			
Interest			
Seems competent/able to sell self			
Knows next step in hiring process			
Overall impression			
Comments (Fill in any additional comments in the space below)			

References

- Wolffe KE, 2011. Career counseling for people with disabilities. 2nd ed. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.



Step fifteen: Mock interview feedback and final thoughts

Outcomes

This session provides low skilled and marginalised students with the necessary information and tools to:

- Collect feedback from others concerning their performance in the mock interview process.
- Objectively evaluate their mock job interviews.
- Gain a greater understanding of students' perceptions of their performance during the pre-employment skills training programme.

Rationale

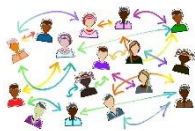
Typically job candidates receive little or no feedback on their interview performance, due to employers' reticence to speak candidly about interviewees' efforts either because of concerns related to potential litigation or social constraints. This reticence is compounded by disability issues and the general public's lack of awareness concerning the abilities of individuals who are blind or partially sighted. Therefore, students need to have the chance to assess their interview skills by listening to or viewing the mock interview videos; as well as, learning how others in the group have commented on their taped performances.

Candid feedback from peers and teachers that focuses on what others see, hear and feel can help low skilled and marginalised students to see themselves as others see them – what attributes others see as their true talents and strengths. This activity also allows students to practice giving and receiving feedback.

Content

This session includes:

- Discussion: Importance of receiving feedback and learning from others how to improve one's performance in interviews and other work-related social situations.



Group activity: Critique of interviews

As all of the students have been interviewed, you'll want to facilitate a group critique of their performance.

- **Appearance:** Does the interviewee look “the part” of the worker he or she is trying to become? Are the interviewee's clothes, shoes, and accessories (jewellery, handbag, etc) appropriate? What does the person's appearance “say” about him or her? Does the person have good posture throughout the interview, while looking comfortable? Does the person smile and look pleasant?
- **Introduction:** Does the interviewee introduce him or herself properly (full name, nickname if appropriate, clarify or spell name if it's tricky)? Does the person reach out to shake hands with the interviewer? Does the interviewee make clear the purpose for his or her visit? Does the interviewee address the interviewer by name?
- **Establishes friendly interaction with interviewer:** Does the interviewee chat with the interviewer about the weather, the season, the company, or anything else to put the interviewer at ease? Does the interviewee thank the interviewer for inviting him or her to the interview? What does the interviewee do to make the other person feel comfortable?
- **Brief personal description:** Does the interviewee provide a very brief (30 seconds or less) introduction that explains a wee bit about family, social/marital status, commitment to the community, or other type of personal information that informs without burdening the interviewer?
- **Explanation of disability:** Does the interviewee help the interviewer understand what his or her disability is and focus attention on the positives of that alternative experience? Does the disabled individual allay the interviewer's likely biases or fears? Does the interviewee explain in positive terms how he or she can do the job? What

impression does the interviewee leave the observers with about his or her acceptance of disability?

- **Explains work experience as it relates to the job:** Does the interviewee describe how his or her life and work experiences have prepared him or her for the work that the person now wants to do? Does the interviewee give examples of previous work tasks or projects that were completed successfully that are related to what's required for this job?
- **Makes three positive statements about self:** What are the three good reasons this interviewee gave the interviewer for why he or she is the best candidate for the job?
- **Pays attention:** What verbal and nonverbal cues did the interviewee give the interviewer that he or she was paying attention during the interview?
- **Ability to answer questions:** Was the interviewee comfortable with the questions that the interviewer posed during the interview and able to answer those questions to the interviewer's expectations?
- **Ability to ask job-related questions:** Did the interviewee have any job-related questions and, if so, what were they?
- **Understands job duties:** How do you know that the interviewee understood the job duties? Do you feel that the interviewee convinced the interviewer that he or she could perform the job duties described in the interview?
- **Knows about the company:** What evidence did the interviewee give that he or she was familiar with the company? Was it believable? Was it adequate? Was it too much?
- **Body language:** Does the interviewee exhibit any positive body language or distracting/negative mannerisms during the interview? Overall did the interviewee appear comfortable, nervous, excited, worried, anxious, bored, or what?
- **Motivation:** What do you feel the interviewee's level of motivation was? How did you arrive at your opinion related to motivation – what were the cues that you picked up on as you viewed/listened to the video interview?
- **Interest:** How did the interviewee express interest in the job, the interviewer, the company, or the co-workers?
- **Seems competent and able to sell self:** What cues did the interviewee give as to his or her level of competence? Was he or she believable? Did the interviewee demonstrate or use any assistive technology or alternative techniques in the interview?

- **Knows next step in hiring process:** Did the interviewee ask the interviewer when a decision would be made? Did the interviewee find out when and how he or she could follow up with the interviewer or the HR department?
- **Comments:** How could the interviewee improve over this performance?

These interview critiques will take a considerable amount of time and are critical for the participants to do so that they can see how they are coming across in interviews and how they can improve in the future. Your role as facilitator is to be brutally honest while also being compassionate and empathetic. It's important to make clear that no one is perfect in an interview and that interviewers don't expect perfection; in fact, they expect interviewees to be nervous and slightly intimidated because that's the nature of the situation.

Participants need to understand that in a group like this people are willing to be brutally honest because they want each other to be successful and know that the only way to improve is if one knows what needs to be changed or refined. The idea is to focus on the positive and underscore those attributes that are working well for participants in their interviews and help them identify where they need further work. Where you or others identify areas of weakness or challenges, you need to give constructive ideas for how to make the situation better.

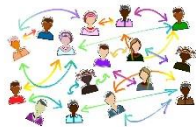
Be specific. For example, if you see that someone is biting her nails during an interview you can point that out and suggest that she hold her hands in her lap, sit on them, or put something horrid tasting on them so that she's reminded to stop during the interviews she'll do in the future. If you hear someone mispronouncing an interviewer's name, you'll want to point that out and give him suggestions such as asking the person to repeat, asking if the pronunciation used is correct, or asking the person to spell to help with pronunciation. It's important to give suggestions on how to do better – not just point out mistakes or weak areas.

You will need to listen carefully to the feedback that others give participants as their videos are shown. Ask respondents to clarify if they give a score that is radically different from the scores others give. If anyone is ultra critical, ask for examples of what was off-putting or seemed awkward. It's not enough to say to someone that they

need improvement in an area – respondents must say what needs to improve and offer up suggestions on how to improve. If necessary, open up discussion within the group – how have others handled similar issues in the past? What suggestions do others have for the interviewee who exhibited difficulty?

Remind the participants that they'll have these videotaped interviews on their memory sticks and can review them again to analyse what they like and don't like in their approach. They'll also have the comments of their peers and the staff that they can record as well as the critique forms with their scores for further review. Finally, it will be important to remind participants that they may want to do further practice interviews with their Employment Specialist or DEA and significant others in their lives following completion of this course and may want to share their videotaped interviews with them as well.

Output: Participants review their mock interviews and receive critiques from the other participants of their performance.



Group activity: Review

Following the viewing and critique of the mock interviews, you will want to review the entire interviewing experience with some of the suggested questions listed below:

- What was the most important thing you learned in the last session when you interviewed?
- Did the feedback that you received from the other participants parallel what you thought you would hear? What was different or similar?
- How will you incorporate this input, your newfound knowledge of your effectiveness in interviewing, into your future performances?
- Did you feel adequately prepared for your interview? If not, what further practice or assistance did you need? If so, what practice or assistance was most beneficial to you?
- Have you been able to complete all or your paperwork for the course?

- Are there ways that the group can be of assistance to you as you move forward in your job search?



Teacher Tip

This review should be followed by a brief reminder to the participants of the importance of receiving feedback on an ongoing basis. They need to leave understanding that learning from others about how they might improve their performances in interviews and other work-related social situations is critical to self-growth.

References

Handy, C. (2000). 21 Ideas for managers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Holland, J.L. (1994). Self Directed Search. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Wolffe, K.E. (1997). Career Counseling for People with Disabilities. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed, Inc.