

# Skills to Pay the Bills



Mastering Soft Skills  
for Workplace Success



Office of Disability Employment Policy  
United States Department of Labor

## In Their Own Words

***Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success*** is a true collaboration between government and the youth it serves. More than 100 young people provided honest—and sometimes brutal—feedback on the design and content of this publication, leading to significant revisions of the original manuscript. The section “In Their Own Words,” at the end of the publication, includes many of the comments ODEP received during the piloting of these materials.

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# Introduction

According to the 2007 report “Every Promise, Every Child: Turning Failure into Action,” a large percentage of young people preparing to enter the workforce over the next two decades is significantly lacking in the “soft” or applied skills—such as teamwork, decision-making and communication—that will help them become effective employees and managers. In addition, in a Job Outlook 2008 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges & Employers, the top characteristics sought in new hires by 276 employer respondents were soft skills: ability to communicate, a strong work ethic, initiative, interpersonal skills and teamwork. Lastly, the Indiana Business Research Center found that while credentials (e.g., degrees and certificates) are important, it is the development of soft skills (those that are more social than technical) that is critical to developing a strong, vibrant workforce.

Interestingly, research suggests that soft skills are not only important for first-time employees, but also for those with years of experience. According to a poll released in June 2008 by the Society for Human Resource Management, workplace soft skills have become increasingly important for the experienced professional. These skills include critical thinking/problem solving, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, teamwork/collaboration, and adaptability/flexibility.

According to the National Collaborative for Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), the development of soft skills is a critical component of success in activities such as civic participation and youth leadership, in addition to school- and work-based learning. The youth policy framework, [Guideposts for Success](#), developed by NCWD/Youth in collaboration with its funding agency, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), clearly indicates that all youth should have exposure to training on job seeking and workplace basic skills.

To further explore this important issue, ODEP convened a group of representatives from distinguished U.S. businesses in 2007. During the discussion, participants identified the following competencies as key to the success of young workers: communication, networking, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, problem-solving and critical thinking, and professionalism. It was at this meeting that ODEP leaders decided to develop and make available materials that could assist youth service professionals as they prepare all youth, including youth with disabilities, for employment.

The activities in this publication were created to introduce the “basics” of soft skills. The activities were designed with youth service professionals in mind—specifically those working with in-school and out-of-school youth, ages 14 to 21, on career and workforce readiness skills—and structured to prioritize convenience, cost-effectiveness and creativity. These activities were designed to be easily incorporated into current programming and/or already established curricula.

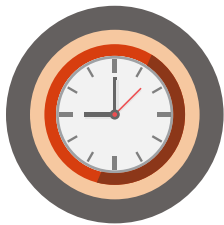
Soft skills cannot be taught in a vacuum, nor can they be acquired simply because the goal of a lesson plan demands it. Rather, they must be introduced, developed, refined, practiced and reinforced. ODEP is committed to providing resources for learning soft skills in a way that is useful, creative, hands-on and fundamentally beneficial for all types of youth programs, and thus, all types of learners. The contents of this publication reflect that commitment.

# Activity Layout

These activities were created for all youth, regardless of disability or differences in learning style. As such, they reflect an inclusive spirit and a structure that supports universal design for learning. Each exercise consists of an activity designed to get young people thinking about, practicing and discussing skills important for career and personal success—soft skills. Additionally, these activities are not weighed down with instructional methodology or specific teaching strategies, since it is the youth service professional who knows their audience best, and what might work well for one group of youth participants may not work well for another. As a facilitator, you are encouraged to modify these activities in any way that better meets the needs and interests of your particular group.

## Each activity will feature the following elements:

**JUST THE FACTS:** This short introduction explains the basic purpose of the activity—plain and simple—and is intended to be a brief description for the instructor.



### Time

A suggested time frame for completing the activity helps facilitators plan. Of course, as activities are altered or modified for various reasons, times may invariably change.



### Materials

A list of suggested materials for the activity is provided for instructors. The overall goal is to keep additional materials to a minimum.



### Directions

Directions, including sample scripts, are offered for convenience. You are encouraged to adapt or modify these activities to better resonate with your particular group, as they offer an opportunity to tackle some difficult issues and conversations.



### Conclusion

The conclusion is a guide for engaging participants in a thoughtful conversation. The goal of this dialogue is to encourage independent ideas and reasoning.



## Journaling Activity

Journaling questions are offered as a way to incorporate personal reflection using an individualized means of expression. Participants should be encouraged to choose a form of journaling that feels right for them while also being supported to “test the waters” with a technique that might stretch a traditional comfort zone. The following alternatives to “traditional” journaling (i.e., writing) are offered as suggestions:

- Dictate ideas/thoughts and/or use the computer (with or without voice-recognition software).
- Create poems, lists or streams of consciousness as a method of reflection.
- Draw (cartoons, pictures, etc.).
- Use photography (taking pictures, cutting out magazines) to create collages.

For younger audiences (e.g., middle-school age), you may find it necessary to modify the suggested journal questions to better reflect age, experience and environment.



## Extension Activity

An extension activity is offered for facilitators who wish to continue the topic. This activity may involve the use of technology, field trips, research and more.

# Through the Lens of Universal Design for Learning

The activities in this publication are career development “warm-ups” for youth. They may also be used as the basis for future lessons focusing on more extensive career and workforce development pursuits. The directions and extension activities have been specifically designed and created through a lens of universal design for learning (UDL). According to CAST (previously known as the Center for Applied Special Technology), UDL is a framework for designing educational environments that enable all learners to gain knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for learning. This is accomplished by simultaneously reducing barriers to the curriculum while providing rich supports for learning.

As most youth development professionals recognize, young people come to preemployment and employment training programs with a very wide variety of skills, talents, interests and needs. For many youth, the typical classroom curriculum—which includes goals, instructional methods, classroom materials and assessments—is cluttered with barriers and roadblocks, providing little support or opportunity to succeed for a wide range of learners. Rather than make extraordinary adjustments for particular students, UDL gives all individuals equal opportunities to learn.

As you work through these activities, consider incorporating some of the following strategies that support UDL:

- Seek opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning through multiple modalities (e.g., written, oral, graphic representations, and multimedia representations).
- Encourage the use of technology to enhance learning (e.g., access to multimedia materials) and performance (e.g., spell check and word prediction software).
- Include opportunities for students to complete “do-overs” based on your feedback.
- Provide instructions describing the components or steps for completion of activities. You might consider having printed copies of directions, audiotaped instructions and pictures. If you have access to a computer or laptop, instructions can be both seen and heard on the computer. Most computers today come equipped with accessibility software and are often prepackaged with a magnifier, on-screen keyboard, narrator functions and high-contrast options.
- Encourage students to play an active role and present their own thoughts and opinions throughout the activities.
- Provide feedback to individual students in multiple forms (e.g., face-to-face, email, online chat, telephone, etc.).
- Include opportunities for students to collaborate.
- Provide opportunities for students to contact you to ask questions.
- Promote a strengths-based learning process.

Regardless of any barrier to employment (including, but not limited to, disability) the activities in this publication, coupled with the strategies and spirit of UDL—and a sprinkle of creativity—are intended to help all youth prepare for career and personal success through the development of soft skills.



# Tips for Improving Access to This Curriculum for All Youth

Today's in-school and out-of-school youth career development programs are a true microcosm of our local communities. Within a single learning environment, multiple populations of youth are often represented. This includes, but is not limited to, youth in the foster care system, youth at risk of dropping out of school, those involved in the juvenile justice system or those for whom English is not a primary language. The one demographic of youth that has the potential to overlap with all the above-mentioned populations are youth with disabilities. The term *disability* applies to a broad array of differences, covering everything from learning disabilities to significant mobility impairment. Disabilities can be either apparent or nonapparent. As a youth service professional, you likely already encounter and serve many youth with disabilities. For instance:

- 36% of high school dropouts have learning disabilities and 59% have emotional or behavioral disorders.
- 75% of youth in the juvenile justice system have some type of disability.
- 20% to 60% of young children entering foster care have a developmental disability or delay.
- 30% to 40% of the 500,000 foster care youth receive special education services.

In addition to these youth with disabilities, there may be other youth you work with whose disability has not been identified or has not been disclosed.

Successful youth service professionals recognize that disability is an aspect of diversity and are prepared to support students from different backgrounds, cultures and educational environments. Furthermore, they understand that all youth learn in different ways.

If possible, before beginning the activities in this curriculum, take time to get to know your students. Talk with all students openly about their strengths and challenges. Ask them to think about how they learn best and what they might need from you (or a supervisor) to facilitate their success. As you prepare to use these lessons, remember that one size does not fit all.

To meet your learners' needs, try to step out of your preferred method of teaching (or your personal comfort zone) and use a variety of instructional approaches, such as discussions, PowerPoint presentations, inquiry-based instruction, hands-on experiments, project/problem-based learning and computer-aided instruction. This curriculum is designed to provide information to learners and instructors in a variety of ways. Instructors are encouraged to adapt activities to meet the needs of each class.

Using a variety of instructional techniques will not only support various learning styles, but can also help learners become more flexible in their learning. While most learners do have a preferred style of learning, this does not mean they are strictly dependent on that style to learn. By exposing young people to a wide variety of learning styles and methods, you will enable them to become more flexible learners. Providing a variety of activities and access to learning will enable students of all ability levels to succeed.

## Consider the following global strategies:

- Appreciate the individuality of each youth. It is important for young people to recognize that you see and appreciate their individuality.
- Demonstrate that you are committed to meeting the needs of all students and that you are open to conversations and discussion about how to help each of them learn and succeed.
- Recognize that we each have our own learning style and cultural assumptions. These styles and assumptions influence how we teach and what we expect from our students. Oftentimes our preferred method of teaching is not a student's preferred (or required) method of learning.
- When teaching, use multiple examples to illustrate your points and to help students move between abstract, theoretical and concrete knowledge—specific experiences expand everyone's learning. Use pair and group work to help students learn from each other.

## Consider the following inclusive teaching strategies:

- **Get young people “doing” in addition to listening.** Whether it is a group exercise, a role-playing activity, or an individual paper-and-pencil exercise such as journaling or drawing, creating lessons that support different learning styles and engage young people in a variety of ways allows everyone to access the curriculum.
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** Repetition is key. It often takes repeated exposure to something before we remember it. Taking extra time to reinforce earlier topics in the context of the new ideas being discussed will help young people retain the important lessons and skills needed to be successfully employed. You can be creative in the ways you repeat concepts or emphasize a point: When a concept is considered again, offer it from a different point of view; when a concept is demonstrated again, use a different exercise.
- **Get excited!** Excitement is contagious. Demonstrating honesty, authenticity and excitement for teaching can often inspire the same qualities within your learners as they engage with this curriculum. Your passion is infectious. As a youth service professional, it is important that you find ways to maintain your passion and excitement for working with youth, and recharge when necessary.
- **Presume competence and instill confidence.** Providing young people with confidence and an opportunity to succeed is one of the best gifts you can give. Have high expectations for all youth and help them to realize their potential as you support them to become independent decision-makers in the future.

Whatever teaching or training strategies you put into place, there will be students who will require accommodations. Making accommodations benefits not only the intended recipient but also other class participants. Any adjustments or adaptations should be targeted specifically to the area of difficulty or functional limitation the individual is experiencing.

The following list of strategies is offered to help you consider changes, adaptations and accommodations to the way information is both presented and received within the learning environment and to create the greatest potential for success for all youth.

### **Possible reading accommodations:**

- Underline or highlight key concepts.
- Provide a word bank or a list of important words for review and discussion.
- Use recorded reading passages or use computer screen reading software.
- Allow for extra time.
- Provide an outline or a preview of the material before it is to be read.
- Rather than require individuals to read aloud, ask for volunteers.
- Read aloud and use discussion and reflection strategies to ensure comprehension.

### **Possible writing accommodations:**

- Allow for dictation (and have someone else write).
- Supply the individual with prewritten assignment sheets, rather than requiring copying.
- Allow extra time for journal writing.
- Provide (spelling) word banks for writing assignments.
- Use computers with voice-recognition software to allow for dictation.
- Provide opportunities for proofreading before completion of a writing project.

### **Possible audio/visual accommodations:**

- Record presentations and allow information to be reviewed later.
- Provide lesson outlines.
- Provide prewritten notes or designate a notetaker.
- Summarize lessons regularly.
- Keep instructions brief.
- Present lessons in multisensory ways.

### **Possible math-related accommodations:**

- Allow the use of calculators.
- Provide graph paper for calculations.
- Allow additional time and/or group projects involving math.
- Read and discuss math questions aloud.

### **Possible organizational skills accommodations:**

- Use a recording device to allow individuals to listen to the information for review.
- Color-code papers, folders and notebooks to help with organization.
- Use Post-it arrows to mark important pages or information in books.
- Present material in multisensory ways, allowing for hands-on instruction.
- For lengthier projects, encourage check-ins at different (and agreed upon) points.



# Communication

## Activities

Communication skills top the list of job candidates' "must-have" skills and qualities, according to a 2010 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

# Communication

Communication skills are important to everyone. They are how we give and receive information and convey our ideas and opinions to those around us. Communication comes in many forms:

- Verbal (sounds, language and tone of voice);
- Aural (listening and hearing);
- Nonverbal (facial expressions, body language and posture);
- Written (journals, emails, blogs and text messages); and
- Visual (signs, symbols and pictures).

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

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

During interviews, for example, employers are impressed by job candidates who answer questions with more than one-word answers (i.e., not just “Yeah,” “Nah” or “Dunno”), demonstrate that they are listening (by asking questions for clarification or follow-up) and share information and ideas. The interview can indicate to employers how the candidate or employee will interact with supervisors, coworkers and customers, or resolve conflicts when they arise. Remember, nonverbal communication is also critical during an interview. Employers expect good eye contact, good posture and “active” listening.

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

The activities in this section will not only help participants practice and recognize how they provide information to others, but will also help them consider how others may prefer to receive information. It is important to reinforce with participants that communication skills involve give and take, and can, indeed, be learned and strengthened over time.

**Note to facilitators:** *Communication skills are necessary for the development of self-advocacy and self-determination, important skills for lifelong success. To that end, the activities in this section offer many opportunities for youth to practice communicating their strengths and assets while learning*

*how to minimize any perceived barriers to employment. Please take the opportunity to add to or tweak any of the activities to better focus on the needs of your particular group.*

*For example, if working with youth with disabilities, create opportunities to allow them to practice communicating how, when and to whom to disclose a disability on the job or in postsecondary education, or different ways to communicate a request for a reasonable accommodation. If you support youth involved in the juvenile justice system, enhance this section's extension activities to include practicing how to communicate the proactive changes they are making in their lives, what they have learned from previous experiences and how their past mistakes have helped them become more focused and dedicated young adults.*

# 1. What's Your Point?

**JUST THE FACTS:** This activity helps participants understand the importance of being specific when offering and receiving communication. Often our meaning gets lost, twisted or misunderstood because we haven't been specific enough in our communication or we haven't asked clarifying questions. These role-plays are designed to demonstrate the value of being specific in communication—both to others and in what is received from others.



## Time

20 minutes



## Materials

- A few copies of Activity 1 (at least one copy per volunteer actor)
- Costumes and other props if possible



## Directions

Ask for volunteers to act out a short role-play. Each skit requires two people: one employee and one client/supervisor.

In the first role-play, Jade has a job mowing lawns and receives some not-so-positive feedback from Mr. Z., a client.

In the second role-play, Will works at a dentist's office and has gotten into some trouble with his boss, Ms. T.

**Note to facilitators:** Encourage participants to ad-lib, or improvise, if they feel comfortable. Giving youth permission to ad-lib often makes activities more “real” and memorable. In addition, volunteers may wish to retry one or more of the skits and create their own characters.

After each skit is performed, ask the following questions:

- **Role-play #1:** How did Jade handle Mr. Z.'s comments? What did she do that was constructive? Was there anything she could have done differently? What about Mr. Z.? What could he have done differently?
- **Role-play #2:** How do you think Ms. T. handled the situation with Will's lateness? How did Will handle Ms. T.'s disapproval? What might he have done differently? What might Ms. T. have done differently?



## Conclusion

In either of these role-play situations, the employee could have “copped an attitude” or gotten defensive with the adult. Reread one or both of the activities and act out the situation differently. What would it have looked and sounded like if Jade had not displayed such a

measured response? What would it have looked and sounded like if Will hadn't offered a suggestion for his situation?

Because each employee remained calm and asked additional questions to get clarity about the situation, they were able to communicate with the other person—and clearly identify the problem. Is this easy or difficult for you to do in most situations? If it's easy, what are some strategies you use that help you to “keep your cool”? If it's difficult, what might you try to do differently?



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Divide the group into smaller groups (no more than four people per group). If they are comfortable doing so, ask participants to share the situation they used for their journal entry. Use the situations to create and act out new role-play situations for the other groups. Three discussion questions should be written as well—and discussed as a group. Create three questions to be used with the larger group after the role-play is acted out.



# Activity 1.

## What's Your Point?

### ROLE-PLAY #1

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

**Mr. Z.:** You're finally here!

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

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

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

**Mr. Z.:** It was just a mess!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Z.:** Thank you very much.

## ROLE-PLAY #2

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

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

**Will:** Yes, Ms. T.?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Flipping the Switch

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to encourage youth to discuss the different types of communication they might use in different situations and environments. It introduces the idea that language/communication varies by context—and that what might be acceptable and expected in one setting may not be appropriate in another.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 2
- Flip chart, markers (optional)



### Directions

Ask participants to describe or demonstrate how they communicate with their friends. Then ask how they communicate with family members. Finally, ask how they are likely to communicate with an employer at a job interview.

Discuss the differences and similarities in the participants' responses. Ask the group:

- Why is each situation different?
- What are the expectations of each person?
- What would happen if you greeted your friends the same way you greeted an interviewer?
- What would happen if you greeted an interviewer the way you greet your friends?

Knowing how to communicate with people appropriately in any given situation is an important skill, as there are often unspoken rules and standards that are expected. For example, it's common practice in the professional world to shake hands with people when meeting, rather than offering a high five or a hug. We might use slang with our friends when talking about what happened at school or at a party, but we would usually use different words and mannerisms when telling our parents the same information.

Use Activity 2 to compare and contrast the ways we might share the same type of information to different groups.



### Conclusion

Discuss the following ideas with participants, encouraging an honest dialogue:

- When the audience changes, does the message change? Why or why not?
- What are some examples of communication (both verbal and nonverbal) that you should always try to practice when communicating with an employer? How would your friends react to you if you communicated with them the same way you would with an employer?



### Journaling Activity

We all communicate differently with different people in our lives. Does the way you communicate (or say things) affect how others perceive you? Explain.



### Extension Activity

We build great relationships by learning to become great communicators. This is not always an easy task as we may sometimes experience barriers to communication—especially in the workplace. Take some time to explore the following eight barriers. Think about what they are and the ways in which they can be lessened or eliminated for successful communication.

**Note to facilitators:** *You may wish to emphasize the importance of nonverbal communication skills, as young people often overlook these skills.*

- Physical
- Perceptual
- Emotional
- Cultural
- Language
- Gender
- Interpersonal
- Generational

# Activity 2.

## Flipping the Switch

Consider the five situations below and the different ways one might talk with each of following groups. Create a list, discuss, draw a picture or encourage participants to act out each situation.

- Friends
- Family
- Professional (e.g., interviewer, employer, teacher, etc.)

Be sure to explore *both* verbal language—what we say and how we say it (i.e., tone of voice)—and nonverbal language (e.g., facial expressions, behavior, body language, etc.).

### **SITUATION #1: Saying hello or goodbye**

Friends:

---

Family:

---

Professional:

---

### **SITUATION #2: Asking for help**

Friends:

---

Family:

---

Professional:

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### **SITUATION #3: Emailing or texting**

Friends:

---

Family:

---

Professional:

---

### **SITUATION #4: Showing excitement**

Friends:

---

Family:

---

Professional:

---

### **SITUATION #5: (Create your own)**

Friends:

---

Family:

---

Professional:

---

### 3. Oh, Puh–leeeeze!

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to help youth gain a better understanding of how nonverbal communication (both intended and unintended) can be interpreted by others—and the impact and effect of this form of communication.



#### Time

20 minutes



#### Materials

Activity 3 (words and/or pictures cut out)



#### Directions

Ask participants if they have ever gotten caught rolling their eyes at a teacher, parent, coworker or supervisor. Ask for a show of hands. Whether you rolled your eyes intentionally or didn't even realize you did it, how do you think your action was interpreted? Answers will vary but might include: I'm bored / You are really annoying / Yeah, right / I'm sooooo not interested in what you are saying or doing.

There are many types of communication. Believe it or not, the type that uses no words is the kind that is the most important. When it comes to communication, what people see is often more memorable than what they read or hear. This nonverbal communication is often referred to as body language. Body language includes facial expressions, eye behavior, gestures, posture and more. Body language can express your emotions, feelings and attitudes. It can even contradict what you say verbally! People in different cultures may understand some global nonverbal expressions, while other expressions may be culture specific.

If the participants are from many different cultures, ask if they can give an example of nonverbal communication cues specific to their culture.

Cut out the words in Activity 3, fold each and place in a hat, bowl or bag. Ask each person in the group to take one piece of paper. Using body language and facial expressions only, ask each person to demonstrate this emotion, while others try to guess it. As an alternative, you can download photos of people displaying each emotion and have participants match or identify what each picture describes. Continue until all words or pictures have been used/guessed.



#### Conclusion

Read the following statement to the group: **ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS**. Then ask:

- How many have heard this expression? When? Where?
- What does it mean?
- How is this possible when actions do not “speak”?



## Journaling Activity

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



## Extension Activity

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

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

# Activity 3.

## Oh, Puh-leeeeeze!

There are many creative ways to complete this activity. A few suggestions include:

- Write each of the following words on an index card, or print and cut them out. Fold each card and place into a bowl, hat or bag. Students can pick a word and attempt to act it out for the group. For students who read braille, use a braille printer to be sure the word can be read and understood by all.
- Write words on sticky notes or sentence strips and place around the room. Act out the emotion and see if participants can guess and move to the right one.
- Say the word out loud and have participants draw what this emotion looks like to them. Share with the group.
- Download photos that represent each emotion. Participants can match pictures to words.

**AFRAID**

**ANGRY**

**ANXIOUS**

**BORED**

**CONFUSED**

**CONTENT**

**CURIOUS**

**EXCITED**

**FRUSTRATED**

**HAPPY**

**INTERESTED**

**JEALOUS**

**LONELY**

**OFFENDED**

**OVERWHELMED**

**PROUD**

**SAD**

**SCARED**

**SHOCKED**

**SHY**

**STRESSED**

**SURPRISED**

**THANKFUL**

**WORRIED**



## 4. Listen Hear!!

**JUST THE FACTS:** This quick activity is designed to get participants to start thinking about the importance of two-way communication.



### Time

15–20 minutes



### Materials

- One sheet of paper (8 1/2" x 11") for each participant
- One sheet of paper for the facilitator



### Directions

Give each participant one sheet of paper. Then, offer the following directions, pausing after each instruction to give the group time to comply. Simultaneously complete the activity yourself using your own sheet of paper.

1. Pick up your sheet of paper and hold it in front of you. Close your eyes and listen carefully to my directions. The rules are: (a) no peeking, and (b) no questions.
2. The first thing I want you to do is to fold your sheet of paper in half. (Pause)
3. Now, tear off the upper right-hand corner. (Pause)
4. Fold the paper in half again and tear off the upper left-hand corner of the sheet. (Pause)
5. Fold it in half again. (Pause)
6. Now, tear off the lower right-hand corner of the sheet. (Pause)
7. Now, open your eyes and unfold your paper. If I did a good job of communicating and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look exactly the same! (Invariably, they won't!)

Hold your sheet up for everyone to see. Ask participants to compare their sheets. Ask why no one's paper matches the others exactly. You will probably get responses such as, "You didn't let us ask any questions!" or "The way you gave us directions wasn't clear!"



### Conclusion

Part of the communication process (and being a good communicator) is recognizing that people may need to receive information in different ways to be successful. If the goal of this activity was really to have everyone's paper snowflake look exactly the same, what changes could have been made to the directions?

Discuss the need for effective two-way communication at home, at work and in the community with friends. Ask the group to work together or in smaller groups to create a definition of "good communication" by thinking about what good communication looks like. Be sure the list includes the responsibilities of being a good communicator and a good listener.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Talk about the different TV shows participants watch. Discuss the differences in the ways people communicate (or don't communicate) with each other—and how miscommunication has caused problems and conflict for the show's characters. Select a conflict from a recent episode and have participants describe, discuss or act out how the problem was solved/portrayed in that scene.

**Questions to consider:** What was the conflict? What strategies did the characters use to solve the problem? Were the strategies effective for solving the problem solving peacefully? If not, what strategies might the characters have used instead?

Finally, create a public service announcement (video) that promotes solving conflicts in peaceful ways.

\*You may also wish to check with your local Department of Juvenile Services or other social services agency and find out about conflict mediation specialists in your area. Invite them in to talk with the group about conflict and ways to handle unhealthy situations before they get out of control.

## 5. Quit Talkin'! I Know What to Do!

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to discuss the importance of understanding directions before you start a task. Participants will examine the pros and cons of different types of direction and decide which type of direction they are most comfortable with and how to receive that type of direction as often as possible.



### Time

15 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 5 for each participant
- Stopwatch or watch with a second hand



### Directions

This activity can be completed independently or in groups of two. Say: For this activity, you will have three minutes to complete a short quiz. I'm going to pass out these papers and ask you to not look at them until I say so. When I say "go," you will have three minutes exactly to do what is asked of you on this paper. Ready, get set, go!



### Conclusion

Discuss with the group how they felt about this activity? Was it fun, frustrating, easy or difficult? What aspects of the activity made it so? What is the moral or message of this lesson? How does this message relate to work?



### Journaling Activity

Give an example of a time when you really thought you knew what you were supposed to do but did not. What happened?



### Extension Activity

Consider all of the different ways directions can be offered and how they can be collected or received. Think about people who might have difficulty reading the English language or understanding the spoken word. What are some different ways instructions can be given to ensure that everyone understands?

Next, have students think about how they learn best (if possible, complete a basic learning-style assessment). Are they primarily visual learners, auditory learners or hands-on/kinesthetic learners? Consider ways in people can communicate what type of learner they are before getting information. Think about school or a job. How might you be proactive in helping a teacher or a supervisor understand how you need to be taught? Share strategies with the group.

# Activity 5.

## Quit Talkin’! I Know What to Do!

You have three minutes to take the quiz below.

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



# Enthusiasm & Attitude

## Activities

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

## Enthusiasm and Attitude

What is the difference between “You’re hired!” and “Thank you for your interest, but...”? In a word: enthusiasm.

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

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

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

**Note to facilitators:** *A positive attitude is an “I can” attitude. Young people with real or perceived barriers to employment (such as those who struggle academically possibly due to a learning or other disability, are in the foster system, have dropped out of school or are raising a family) may not always have ready access to feelings of “I can.” The activities in this section offer an opportunity for you to help all youth learn how to develop a positive attitude and, almost as important, how to showcase it to others, including employers. Regardless of the challenges young people have faced, developing and displaying a positive attitude will often help propel them toward success.*

## 6. Never Underestimate the Power of PMA

**JUST THE FACTS:** PMA, or positive mental attitude, is a person’s ability to maintain the belief that they can transform or change a tough situation into something better. This activity will help participants find ways to empower themselves in difficult situations and turn negative thinking into positive thinking.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- One six-sided die for each small group. Alternatively, you can use a “cutout” cube and create it to look like a die, drawing pips on the sides or labeling them 1–6. Download and print a cube shape here: [Cut-and-fold cube cutout](#).
- Chart paper, markers (optional)



### Directions

Pose the following questions to participants. (This can be accomplished by full-group discussion or by having smaller groups discussing together and then presenting to the larger group.)

- What is a positive attitude? If I have a positive attitude, what actions might I display?
- What does a positive attitude “look” like to others?
- What is a negative attitude? If I have a negative attitude, what actions might I display?
- What does a negative attitude “look” like to others?

Then say: A positive attitude starts with learning to believe in oneself. In order to believe in ourselves, we must first understand our personal strengths. In this activity, you will be considering and sharing your personal strengths.

Divide participants into groups of four. Write the below statements on a piece of chart paper for all to see, or give a “cheat sheet” to each small group for reference. For visual learners, you might choose to draw a chart with a picture of each side of the die in one column and the corresponding statement in the other.

Each participant will take turns rolling their die two or three times and complete the following statement upon each roll:

**Roll a 1:** I am thankful for...

**Roll a 2:** Other people compliment me on my ability to...

**Roll a 3:** Something I would like other people to know about me is...

**Roll a 4:** I feel really good about myself when...

**Roll a 5:** I am proud of my ability to...

**Roll a 6:** Something nice I recently did for someone else was...

**Note to facilitators:** *If the group knows each other well, feel free to substitute questions that ask about the positive qualities of their peers.*



## Conclusion

Ask participants why they think the statement for “Roll a 6” was included in this activity. Answers should be directed toward the fact that helping or “doing” for others often helps people feel good about themselves. And when we feel good about ourselves, we often demonstrate a positive attitude that can be seen by others.

Discuss with participants how our internal feelings can impact those around us. How might a positive attitude help us on a job?



## Journaling Activity

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



## Extension Activity

Have participants keep a daily log for one week. Ask them to write down 50 (or 40 or 30) great things that happen throughout the week. Encourage them to include even the small things like: someone held the door open for me; I found a quarter on the sidewalk; when I went shopping, the clerk at the store was really friendly and helpful. The goal of this activity is to have participants focus on the positive and then discuss whether they felt any different during the week as a result—either in their interactions with others or in their own feelings about themselves.



## 7. Life Is Full of Hard Knocks

**JUST THE FACTS:** Failing is a part of life. In fact, failure accounts for many, many successes—without failure, success is almost impossible. Learning how to bounce back from failure is not always easy, but it is necessary. Enthusiasm for goal attainment is a necessary characteristic for success. This activity helps participants understand that failure is not something to fear and is, in fact, often a necessary step on the path to success.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 7a or 7b
- Whiteboard or flip chart with markers or blackboard
- Paper and colored pencils for drawing (optional)
- Envelopes (optional)



### Directions

Write the following statement large enough so all can see (and read aloud): THE ROAD TO SUCCESS IS PAVED WITH FAILURE.

Divide the larger group into smaller groups. Ask each group to discuss the statement and what they think it means. Alternatively, ask individual participants to draw a picture of what this statement means to them. Ask each group to share their feedback and encourage other participants to comment or expand on the responses.

Decide whether you will use Activity 7a or 7b, based on the makeup of your group:

- **Activity 7a:** This version of the activity was developed for discussion, though it could certainly be adapted to include a word bank or list of words from which participants can choose.
- **Activity 7b:** This version provides materials that can be copied, cut out, and placed in separate envelopes to be used as an independent or small-group matching exercise.
- **Alternative activity:** You may choose to have 10 large pieces of paper placed around the room, each with one of the 10 descriptions written on it. Then provide sentence strips or note cards with each of the 10 famous people written on them. Participants can take turns matching the famous person with their famous failure—and eventual success.

**Note to facilitators:** Participants may benefit from having a picture of each of the famous people on the individual cards, along with the names. You can search online for photos.



## Conclusion

Discuss with participants different ways people deal with failure. Pinpoint how people may deal with failure differently in different environments, such as at home, at school or at work. Be certain to wrap up the activity in a positive way, focusing on the fact that without making mistakes, we would never succeed. Ask: What do each of the people we discussed today have in common? (Answer: They refused to quit.)

Further discussion questions include: Would you have given up if you had lost eight elections? What if you had written a book and 23 different publishers had rejected it? What if just one publisher had rejected it? What would you have done? What might the world be like today if Thomas Edison had given up?



## Journaling Activity

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



## Extension Activity

Show students some of the “Famous Failures” videos on YouTube. Simply type “famous failures” into the search bar to find results.

Have students research additional famous failures and work in teams to create a YouTube video showcasing one of their own failures that ultimately had a positive effect.

Another suggestion would be to use the information provided in this activity (i.e., famous people's successes and failures) and have small groups work together to create a similar game or activity appropriate for younger children. This could then be shared with a local elementary school.

# Activity 7a.

## Life Is Full of Hard Knocks

### CAN YOU NAME...

1. ...a famous person who was defeated eight times while running for political office?
2. ...a cartoonist who was told by the editor of the Kansas City newspaper, "It's easy to see from these sketches that you have no talent."
3. ...an author whose first children's book was rejected by 23 different publishers?
4. ...a famous singer who was fired after his first performance at the Grand Ole Opry?
5. ...a famous actress who dropped out of high school and held a variety of odd jobs, including doing the hair and makeup for corpses, before finally succeeding in show business?
6. ...a famous author who lived on welfare for years in an apartment infested with mice?
7. ...a famous athlete who was cut from the varsity basketball team his sophomore year in high school?
8. ...an inventor who was thrown out of school in the early grades because his teachers thought he couldn't learn?
9. ...a famous Harvard University dropout?
10. ...an inventor of a fried chicken recipe that was rejected by more than 1,000 restaurant owners?

## ANSWERS:

- 1. Abraham Lincoln** was defeated in eight different elections. Yet he persisted and succeeded in becoming the 16th, and one of the most admired, presidents of the United States.
- 2. Walt Disney** was told he had no talent and was fired from a newspaper job. He wound up doing volunteer work for a church in an old run-down garage. One day he decided to sketch one of the many mice running through the garage. This mouse became the famous Mickey Mouse.
- 3. Dr. Seuss's** first book was rejected by 23 different publishers. The 24th accepted it and sold six million copies.
- 4. Elvis Presley** was fired after his first performance at the Grand Ole Opry. The manager told him, "You ain't going nowhere, son. You ought to go back to driving a truck." Elvis went on to become a cultural legend and the King of Rock and Roll.
- 5. Whoopi Goldberg** dropped out of high school, relied on welfare and worked as a bricklayer, bank teller and licensed cosmetician. After graduating from beauty college, she took a job at a mortuary doing corpses' hair and makeup. She later went on to win an Emmy Award, Grammy Award, Academy Award and Tony Award—making her one of the select few American artists ever to win the "EGOT."
- 6. J.K. Rowling**, author of the *Harry Potter* series, lived on welfare for years, in an apartment infested with mice. Her manuscript *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, which she completed in 1995, was initially rejected by 12 publishers. Bloomsbury Children's Books finally published it two years later, and the rest is history.
- 7. Michael Jordan** was the athlete who was cut from the varsity basketball team in his sophomore year of high school. Angry and embarrassed, he began to get up early each morning to practice with the junior varsity coach. Eventually he not only made the varsity team, but also became a worldwide icon and one of the greatest athletes of all time. Michael Jordan is quoted as saying: "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over, and over again, in my life. And that is why I succeed."
- 8. Thomas Edison** was the inventor who was kicked out of school. Following this, he was homeschooled by his mother. It took him over 700 tries before he got the filament right for the light bulb. Edison is quoted as saying: "I have not failed 700 times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work."
- 9. Mark Zuckerberg**, co-creator of Facebook, dropped out of Harvard University. He went on to become the youngest self-made billionaire (at the time) at age 23 and is now the CEO of Meta Platforms and a bona fide titan of the tech world. (He received an honorary degree from Harvard in 2017.)
- 10. Harland David Sanders**, better known as Colonel Sanders, had his fried chicken recipe rejected by more than 1,000 restaurant owners before it was accepted by one. Today, people still enjoy his creation at KFCs across the world.

# Activity 7b.

## Life Is Full of Hard Knocks

<p><b>ABRAHAM LINCOLN</b> (16th President of the United States)</p>	<p><b>WALT DISNEY</b> (The Creator of Mickey Mouse)</p>
<p><b>DR. SEUSS</b> (Children's Author and Illustrator)</p>	<p><b>ELVIS PRESLEY</b> (Famous Singer)</p>
<p><b>WHOOPI GOLDBERG</b> (Famous Actress)</p>	<p><b>J.K. ROWLING</b> (Wrote The <i>Harry Potter</i> Series)</p>
<p><b>MICHAEL JORDAN</b> (Famous Athlete)</p>	<p><b>THOMAS EDISON</b> (Inventor of the Light Bulb)</p>
<p><b>MARK ZUCKERBERG</b> (CEO of Facebook)</p>	<p><b>COLONEL SANDERS</b> (Founder of KFC)</p>

<b>Lost eight elections, had a nervous breakdown</b>	<b>Was told he had no talent for drawing</b>
<b>First book was rejected by more than 20 different publishers</b>	<b>Was told to go back to driving a truck and quit singing</b>
<b>Dropped out of high school and performed odd jobs, such as fixing the hair and makeup of corpses</b>	<b>Lived on welfare and in a house infested with mice, rejected by 12 different publishers</b>
<b>Kicked off his varsity basketball team</b>	<b>Thrown out of school because his teachers said he couldn't learn</b>
<b>Dropped out of harvard university</b>	<b>Had a recipe that was rejected by more than 1,000 restaurants</b>

## 8. A Super Ball and a Raw Egg

**JUST THE FACTS:** One difference between people with a positive and enthusiastic attitude and people with a negative attitude is that the former look at failure as an opportunity to try again. This activity offers an opportunity to use everyday objects to demonstrate this valuable outlook.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- One super ball (i.e., a hard rubbery ball that bounces high)
- Three raw eggs, or one for each participant (if you would rather not use raw eggs, small, thin water balloons are just as effective)
- Large sheet, drop cloth or newspaper
- Masking tape

**Note to facilitators:** *It is suggested that facilitators complete Activity 7 (Life Is Full of Hard Knocks) prior to completing this activity.*



### Directions

Tape a large sheet, drop cloth or piece of newspaper to the wall; put another on the floor directly underneath to catch the broken egg or water balloon. Draw a set of concentric circles on the sheet, drop cloth or newspaper on the wall, making a target. (Another option is to simply put the target on the floor and have participants drop each object from above.)

Without explaining the point of the illustration, ask for six volunteers. The first three take the super ball and throw it at the target, trying to get the closest to the center. The second three throw the raw eggs.

Say something to the effect of: When the super ball was thrown against the wall, what happened? [It bounced back.] What happens the harder it is thrown? [The faster it bounces back.]

What happened to the raw egg when it was thrown against the wall? [It splattered.] What happens the harder it is thrown? [The worse it splatters, or the bigger the mess.]

These objects define two very different types of people: raw egg people and super ball people. When raw egg people hit a “bump in the road,” they splatter. The harder they hit, the harder they splatter, usually giving up on their goal. When super ball people hit an obstacle, they bounce back. The more difficult the obstacle, the harder they bounce back.

If Activity 7 was used previously: The people we just talked about when we talked about successes and failures were all super ball people. With every failure they experienced, they kept bouncing back.

If Activity 7 was not used, simply ask: Why do you think people bounce back after failing at something? What are some of the things you learn when you fail? Who do you know (either a famous person or someone you know personally) who has bounced back from failure to become really successful?



### Conclusion

In a small group, discuss what makes people bounce back from defeat. Allow a few minutes for thought, reflection and discussion.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Have participants describe what success means to them. Methods of expression might include writing a poem, doing a dance, drawing a picture, creating a song or a rap, creating a collage from magazine pictures, configuring a word cloud, etc. Allow participants to express themselves in a way they feel most comfortable.



## 9. Believe It or Not: Your Attitude and Enthusiasm Just Might Get You the Job

**JUST THE FACTS:** The enthusiasm you display during a job interview can be the difference between getting hired or not. Some sources say that attitude can account for more than 40% of your rating! This activity will focus on the different attitudes that can be (and have been) displayed during a job interview. In a job interview, enthusiasm comes across as showing a genuine interest in the job.



### Time

30–40 minutes



### Materials

- A few copies of Activity 9 (at least one copy of each script per volunteer actor)

**Note to facilitators:** You may choose to forgo the role-play scripts and instead have participants answer the questions in their own way, understanding that one person should interview very well, while the other should not (to the extreme). This is a good strategy for nonreaders or those with limited reading proficiency.



### Directions

Ask participants: Did you know that an employer will often decide within the first 30 seconds if an applicant is right for the job?

What do you think can come across in 30 seconds? Why are the first 30 seconds so important? [Elicit responses.] Obviously, this means you need to be on top of your game going into the interview.

Ask for three volunteers to act out a role-play of a job interview. One volunteer will play the interviewer, one will play the “good” job applicant and one will play the “bad” job applicant. Allow the volunteers a few minutes to review the scripts. Explain to each “interviewee” that they should be over the top; the “good” interviewee should be really, really good and the “bad” interviewer should be really, really bad. (If possible, the “bad” job applicant should display behaviors such as handling their cell phone, chewing gum and having disheveled clothing, or anything else that could be perceived as unprofessional.)



### Conclusion

Discuss with participants the fact that these examples represent extreme scenarios. What are some of their takeaways from observing/participating in the role-play?

Depending on how the interviewees “acted,” there is a good chance that both of them demonstrated enthusiasm—even if it was about body art and rocky road ice cream in one case. Talk about the difference between each type of enthusiasm.

Participants may wish to act out another interview scenario (with or without the script), if time allows.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Divide the larger group into smaller groups of three or four. Instruct each group to write another role-play demonstrating positive attitude and “focused” enthusiasm. This role-play can depict another interview, or it can demonstrate a situation that might happen on the job. Each group should have the opportunity to act out their role-play.

# Activity 9.

## Believe It or Not: Your Attitude and Enthusiasm Just Might Get You the Job

### INTERVIEWER'S SCRIPT

Good morning, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be conducting your interview this morning. *[Extend your hand to shake hands with the applicant.]*

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

Now, I have some questions to ask you. *[Allow the interviewee to answer before asking each subsequent question.]*

Did you bring a copy of your resume? Tell me a little bit about yourself.

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

Why do you want to work here?

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

Why did you leave that position?

Do you have any questions for me?

## INTERVIEWEE #1 SCRIPT

This version of the interview should be over-the-top “good.” The candidate should look neat and polished, arrive on time and be attentive, enthusiastic and cheerful. The interviewee should speak politely and respectfully to the interviewer. The interviewee should also shake hands warmly with the interviewer and greet them using their name.

### **Q: Did you bring a copy of your resume?**

Yes, I did. *[Open the folder you brought with you to the interview, pull out a copy of your resume, and hand it to the interviewer.]*

### **Q: Tell me a little bit about yourself.**

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

### **Q: What are your strengths?**

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

### **Q: What are your weaknesses?**

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

### **Q: Why do you want to work here?**

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

### **Q: Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had.**

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

### **Q: Why did you leave that position?**

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

### **Q: Do you have any questions for me?**

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

### **Before the end of the meeting, the interviewee should say:**

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

## INTERVIEWEE #2 SCRIPT

This version of the interview should be over-the-top “bad.” The candidate should be dressed sloppily, wear sunglasses, chew gum, slouch, seem disorganized, arrive late, etc. In fact, the interviewee should be distracted by their phone when the interview begins—and doesn’t realize that the interviewer offered to shake hands.

### **Q: Did you bring a copy of your resume?**

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

### **Q: Tell me a little bit about yourself.**

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

### **Q: What are your strengths?**

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

### **Q: What are your weaknesses?**

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

### **Q: Why do you want to work here?**

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

### **Q: Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had.**

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

### **Q: Why did you leave that position?**

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

### **Q: Do you have any questions for me?**

Do your employees get free meals?

## 10. Translating Features to Benefits

**JUST THE FACTS:** Marketing executives translate features to benefits when they are preparing to sell products and services. For example, your cell phone plan offers call forwarding (a feature). This means you will never miss another important call (a benefit). Another example: The new car you want has a built-in GPS system (feature). The salesperson probably tells you that with built-in GPS you will never get lost again (benefit). The purpose of this activity is to help participants list and explain the positive personality traits (or personal features) they possess and how to communicate those traits to an employer. Remember: Features tell, benefits sell.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- Chart paper, whiteboard (or anything on which you can write large enough for the group to see), markers
- Three to five notecards per participant



### Directions

Write the following statistics on a flip chart or whiteboard:

**40%** — Attitude

**25%** — Image and appearance

**25%** — Communication skills (verbal and nonverbal)

**10%** — Job skills

Tell participants that according to a variety of sources, a person's attitude is the #1 factor in whether they win or lose a job. Show them the chart or whiteboard with the statistics. *[Take a few minutes to discuss what each of these "looks" like.]* For example:

- Attitude: Do you demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm? Are you on time or early?
- Image and appearance: Do you wear too much perfume or cologne? Are your clothes wrinkled or inappropriate for the work environment?
- Communication skills: Do you look the interviewer in the eye? Is your handshake firm?
- Do you speak clearly?

Ask participants (and discuss) why they think attitude is rated highest? How does an employer get a sense of your "attitude" during an interview?

Explain that a job interview is partially a sales pitch. You are "selling" yourself and your skills to an employer. This is not an easy task for many of us because we may not be sure about our skills, lack a bit of self-confidence or are just plain nervous. This is one skill that will definitely get better the more it is practiced.

In order to begin thinking about how we might "sell" ourselves in a job interview, participants will learn how to turn their personal features into benefits for the employer. This is where they

will be able to tell an employer what they have to offer while also giving the employer a reason this feature is good for business.

Take a few minutes to brainstorm some positive personality traits. Ask participants to “yell” them out while you write them where all can see. Examples of positive personality traits include, but are certainly not limited to: friendly, creative, honest, dependable, trustworthy, enthusiastic, upbeat, patient, polite, helpful, etc.

Now, ask participants to think about what these features might mean to an employer. For example:

- Honesty (feature) means you can be counted on to do the right thing (benefit).
- Friendliness (feature) means you will help customers feel welcome (benefit). Review a few of these examples until participants feel comfortable with the activity.

Give each participant a set of notecards. On one side of the card participants should illustrate or write a feature they possess. On the other side of the card, they should illustrate or write the benefit (i.e., why this feature would be valuable) to the employer. Depending on the group, this activity can be done individually or in groups of two or more.

Once complete, ask for volunteers to read their personal traits and how they might benefit a future employer. Alternatively, you can ask participants to act out their features and see if the group can guess both the feature and the benefit to an employer.



### Conclusion

Discuss with participants the ease or difficulty they experienced with this activity. In addition, discuss some examples of different features that may be perceived as “challenging” and how they may be described positively as benefits. For example:

- Someone with ADHD: “Over the years, I’ve learned what it means to multitask.”
- Someone who uses a wheelchair: “I am a great problem-solver. You should see some of the places I’ve needed to get into!”



### Journaling Activity

Describe how it makes you feel to talk about yourself in a positive way. Is it easy, difficult, awkward? Since this skill is important when it comes time getting a job, what might you do to improve your ability to talk yourself up? If it is already easy for you, how can you be sure you don’t come across as “full of yourself” or conceited?



### Extension Activity

Have participants use their individual “features to benefits” cards to create a 30-second “commercial” selling themselves. Explain that their goal is to hook an employer, just as a TV ad might hook viewers on buying a product. A few suggestions for this activity: Record participants, allow for multiple takes and retakes, encourage feedback and suggestions from peers, etc. Encourage participants to view each of their successive videotapes to gauge improvement.

## Enthusiasm & Attitude Activities

You may also wish to invite one or more employers in to critique each commercial and provide feedback and suggestions. Only bring employers into the mix once participants have had the opportunity to practice and feel a bit more confident “selling” themselves.





# Teamwork

## Activities

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

# Teamwork

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

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

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

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

The activities in this section seek to teach participants about the importance of teamwork for success in the workplace and the specific role each individual on a team may play. Participants will learn about positive teamwork behavior and discover how their own conduct can impact others on a team. The section also discusses possible obstacles to successful teamwork and helps participants build constructive strategies for overcoming these challenges.

**Note to facilitators:** *Learning the value of teamwork and becoming an effective member of a team is an important first step to developing leadership skills. For disconnected youth, especially those with underlying disabilities, the development of these skills is critical. Young people who lack a strong connection to work or school typically have had limited exposure to positive, proactive support from a community. Giving young people experiences through which they can learn to rely on themselves and others is an important factor in the development of a productive teamwork mentality. If working with disconnected youth and/or youth with disabilities, use these activities to bridge teamwork skills as a stepping stone to leadership development.*

## 11. There Is No “I” in Team

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to enrich participants’ understanding of what it means to be part of a team and why being a good team player is important for career success.



### Time

15–20 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 11 per participant
- Chart paper or sentence strips, markers



### Directions

Choose and display five “teamwork” quotes from Activity 11. This can be done on chart paper, by using the accompanying worksheet, by writing quotes on sentence strips or by reading each quote aloud. What is important here is the quote itself, not necessarily who said it.

Ask participants to choose the quote they like best. Divide the larger group into smaller groups according to their chosen quote (i.e., group together all participants who liked quote #1 or quote #2, etc.). Participants should spend approximately two minutes discussing the quote and coming to consensus on the reason they liked it the best. One member of each team should be prepared to offer the group’s feedback and reflection.

For a more hands-on version of this activity, write each of the quotes on sentence strips. Cut the sentence strips into individual words or manageable chunks/phrases. Have groups work together to arrange the words/phrases in the correct order.



### Conclusion

Talk with participants about the fact that employers rate the ability to be a team player as one of the most important qualities and characteristics of employees and job candidates. Ask why this is might be so. Elicit responses and an interactive discussion.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Have participants create their own personal quotes about teamwork (why it is important, what can be accomplished, etc.). Quotes should encourage peers to gain a better understanding and perspective on the importance of teamwork—and why it is often a core value shared across different cultures, populations and groups.

Offer the opportunity for participants to research and share proverbs related to teamwork from their own cultures.

# Activity 11.

## There Is No “I” in Team

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

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

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

***“It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit.”***  
—Robert Yates, 18th-century American politician

***“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.”*** —Author unknown

***“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team. I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.”***  
—Mia Hamm, retired American soccer player, Olympic gold medalist and FIFA Women’s World Cup champion

***“Respect your fellow human being, treat them fairly, disagree with them honestly, enjoy their friendship, explore your thoughts about one another candidly, work together for a common goal and help one another achieve it.”***  
—Bill Bradley, American Hall of Fame basketball player, Rhodes scholar and former U.S. senator

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

***“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”***  
—Helen Keller, American author, political activist, lecturer and the first deaf and blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree

***“The strength of the team is each individual member. ... The strength of each member is the team.”***  
—Phil Jackson, legendary former NBA coach

***“Unity is strength. ... When there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.”***  
— Mattie Stepanek, young advocate for people with disabilities and children with life-threatening conditions, who died one month before his 14th birthday

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

***“Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story.”***  
—Casey Stengel, baseball Hall of Famer

## 12. I'll Give You Some of Mine if You Give Me Some of Yours

**JUST THE FACTS:** Part of becoming a functional member of a team is learning to understand what you bring to the group and what you might need from others. This exercise is designed to help participants begin to identify their individual strengths and needs regarding teamwork.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 12
- Pens or pencils
- Chart paper, markers (optional)



### Directions

Introduce this activity by reflecting on some of the quotes discussed in Activity 11. (If you have not completed Activity 11, choose some of the quotes to discuss with the group and offer a brief discussion on their meaning.)

Ask participants for a list of some of the characteristics they think make up a good team player. This might be phrased as follows: “What does it take from each person on a team to make a team really work?”

Students will be completing an individual inventory of the skills they possess related to teamwork. This inventory is for personal reflection and need not be shared.



### Conclusion

As part of the concluding activity, ask participants to share one of their identified areas of strengths and one area they would like to improve. This discussion allows each person to hear from others their areas of strength and need. This process may help those in need of assistance identify who might be able to offer it.



### Journaling Activity

Consider your score on the teamwork skills inventory. Were you pleased with your results? What are some of the areas you would like to improve? How will you attempt to do this?



### Extension Activity

Have participants ask someone they know and trust to rate them using a blank copy of Activity 12. Were the scores/checks similar or different? What does this tell them? Does this change any of the notes they made related to skills to improve?

Have participants redesign the activity with words and/or actions that better describe the elements of teamwork from their perspective. Alternatively, participants can schedule a meeting with an employer and get additional input as to how an employer might identify or describe the characteristics listed.

# Activity 12.

## I'll Give You Some of Mine if You Give Me Some of Yours

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

### SKILL #1: RELIABLE

This means that you can be counted on to get the job done.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

This means that you express your thoughts and ideas clearly and directly, with respect for others.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #3: ACTIVE LISTENER

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

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #4: ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

This means that you are prepared and involved in team activities. You are a regular contributor.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #5: SHARES OPENLY AND WILLINGLY

This means that you are willing to share information, experience and knowledge with the group.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #6: COOPERATIVE

This means that you work with other members of the team to accomplish the job, no matter what.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #7: FLEXIBLE

This means that you adapt easily if the team changes direction or if you are asked to try something new.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

**SKILL #8: COMMITTED**

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

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

**SKILL #9: PROBLEM-SOLVER**

This means that you focus on solutions. You do not go out of your way to find fault in others.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

**SKILL #10: RESPECTFUL**

This means that you treat other team members with courtesy and consideration—all the time.

**Rating:**    \_\_\_ Not so confident    \_\_\_ Sort of confident    \_\_\_ Really confident

**REVIEW YOUR ANSWERS:**

**Did you check mostly “not so confident”?**

If so, you are still developing your confidence as a team player. These skills often take time to develop, so don't worry. Try reaching out to someone you know and trust to help you figure out how to work on some of these skills and grow your confidence. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help when you need it is another great skill of a productive team player.

**Did you check mostly “sort of confident”?**

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

**Did you check mostly “really confident”?**

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

**CONSIDER YOUR CONFIDENCE IN YOUR TEAMWORK SKILLS:**

I am most proud of my ability to:

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---

I want to improve my ability to:

---

---

I will reach out to these people for guidance:

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## 13. The Good, the Bad and the Reasonable

**JUST THE FACTS:** Teamwork can be tough. Compromise among people with different personalities is not necessarily easy. So, what do you do when you are part of a team—whether a sports team, a team at work or a group working on a school or community project—and you face barriers to your team’s success? The purpose of this activity is to engage participants in a discussion about barriers to effective teamwork and the strategies they may be able to employ to create positive outcomes.



### Time

25 minutes



### Materials

- Flip chart, markers
- Dry spaghetti, marshmallows
- Timer (optional)



### Directions

Ask participants if teamwork is always easy. (Most likely you will receive “no” answers.) Delve deeper and ask participants why teams sometimes don’t work or what can make teamwork so difficult. Write these answers on the flip chart. Answers may include inconsistent team players, time issues, compatibility, differences in communication styles (both giving and receiving), lack of trust, no clear goal, etc.

Next, divide participants into groups of four or more. Ask each group to elect a team leader for this activity. Give each group a supply of spaghetti and marshmallows. Tell the group they will have 15 minutes to work together to create the tallest freestanding structure possible. Before you say “go,” inform the teams that their team leaders may supervise and offer instructions, but may not physically participate in this activity.



### Conclusion

After 15 minutes, evaluate the structures. Typically, the most successful structures will have solid foundations. Discuss with participants what it means to have a solid foundation and why laying a solid foundation is important—and the core of an effective team.

Use the following questions for additional discussion:

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





### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Have participants interview no fewer than 20 of their peers and ask two simple questions:

- What is the best part of working on a team?
- What is the most difficult part of working on a team?

Participants should be instructed to bring their results back to the larger group. The larger group should then examine the most common difficulties described and come up with solutions to turn these difficulties into successes.

## 14. How Many Shapes Does It Take?

**JUST THE FACTS:** It takes all types of team members to create a balanced, cohesive team. This activity will give participants the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the roles different people play on a team and the importance of each role.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- Five large pieces of paper, each with one of the following shapes drawn on it: square, rectangle, circle, triangle and squiggle



### Directions

Before beginning this activity, place each of the five shapes in a different location in the room. Ensure that there is enough room for participants to move around for this activity. Discuss the fact that teams are all made up of people who perform different roles. Think about sports teams: What might happen if one basketball player hogged the ball all the time? What would happen if a quarterback tried to run the ball on every play instead of passing? So, it takes all different types of players to make an efficient and winning team, right?

Now, switch gears. Tell participants that it not only takes all types of players to make a team effective, but it also takes all kinds of shapes.

Say something to the effect of: I want you all to look around the room. Five different shapes are hanging up—a square, a rectangle, a circle, a triangle and a squiggle. What if I told you that knowing what shape you are, and what shape your coworkers and friends are, could help you build better teams and careers?

Ask participants to stand up and take a few moments to think about the shape they like best or find most appealing. Then ask participants to walk over to that shape.

Once everyone has chosen their personal shape, use the information in Activity 14 to tell them a little bit about each shape’s “personality.” In fact, when you are finished with this activity, many participants will want to have a copy of what the shapes mean.



### Conclusion

Discuss the following questions with the group:

- Do you think people have the characteristics of more than one shape?
- Why do you think it is important to have all different shapes working on the same team?  
Offer some of the information below, if appropriate:
  - The square, rectangle and triangle are convergent. This means that they are working *toward* something specific and finite, and they do it in a logical and systematic way. Conversely, they may sometimes lack personal creativity.
  - The circle and squiggle are divergent. They may tend to be more creative, extroverted and intuitive. They will reach out around them into new areas and to other people. But they may not be particularly systematic or dependable.



### Journaling Activity

Do you think it is easy or difficult for different types of personalities to work together? Why is it important to not only understand how you work best, but also to learn how others work best?



### Extension Activity

Spend some time with participants to explore different types of personality assessments for the purpose of team building. Have students take different assessments and determine the validity of each. Research further and find out which occupations are best suited for which types of personalities.

Another option is to have participants think about and describe their favorite sport and compare players on those teams with the different roles found in the workplace. Examples might include boss/coach, customer/fan, coworker/player, etc. See how many different types of comparisons can be made and how important it is for all these roles to work together to create harmony on a team.

# Activity 14.

## How Many Shapes Does It Take?

There are some people who believe there are five basic personality types, and each type tends to prefer a different shape: square, rectangle, circle, triangle or squiggle. Knowing which shape best represents you, your coworkers and friends just might help you build better careers, teams and friendships. Here is what each shape might say about you—and how you can recognize other people for their shapes.

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

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

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

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

**If you are a triangle:** You are a born leader who’s competitive, confident and can make decisions. You also like recognition. You are goal-oriented and you enjoy executing your plans—you are motivated by the accomplishment. You will tend to look at big, long-term issues but might forget the details. When given a task, you set a goal and work on a plan for it. American business has traditionally been run by triangles—mostly men, but that is changing.

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

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

## Teamwork Activities

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

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

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

## 15. Teamwork on the Job

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to help participants understand how teamwork is managed on the job—both from the perspective of the boss and from the perspective of the employee.



### Time

15–30 minutes



### Materials

- Copies of Activity 15a or 15b, depending on your time frame



### Directions

This exercise offers two different activities. You may choose one or both, depending on time. One is scenario-based and one is a role-play.

- **Activity 15a:** For this activity, read the library scenario out loud (or ask participants to read it independently). Discuss as a group what the librarian, Shawn, did well and what she could have done differently. How might Shawn handle herself in the future? Discuss how Nathaniel, the boss, should handle this situation. Consider the fact that he probably wants to help Shawn improve and not necessarily to punish her.
- **Activity 15b:** For this activity, request volunteers to act out a role-play. Allow a few minutes for the actors to read through the scene so they know what their character is like. After the scene is read aloud, ask the following questions:
  - What was the real problem at the coffee shop?
  - What could Jarrod and/or Steffy have done differently?
  - Do you agree with how the manager handled the situation?
  - What might you have done in this situation?



### Conclusion

The importance of teamwork is undeniable. Ask the group to come up with a list of the benefits of teamwork and to illustrate or give examples of each. If the group has trouble coming up with a list, use the following conversation starters:

- **Support:** Teamwork leads to camaraderie between team members. This will not only lead to better social relationships, but will also act as a support when things go wrong.
- **Varied skills:** Different team members bring with them different skills.
- **Distribution of work:** Distributing work not only reduces each individual's burden, but also spreads responsibility and ensures better commitment to completing the task, individually and as a whole.
- **Creativity:** Different people have different skills and possess different perspectives. Therefore, any activity that involves teamwork benefits from the various creative thoughts and inspirations of different people.
- **Faster accomplishment:** People working together will tend to complete a project faster than one person working alone.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Consider different jobs in your community. Arrange for field trips to some local job sites where participants can ask both managers and employees a few questions about teamwork (or ask an employer and employees to come in to talk about the impact of teamwork on the job). Alternatively, participants can do this independently and then share their experiences with the larger group.

Work with participants to develop a single set of questions to ask of managers and employees. Questions should be focused on the importance of teamwork and what happens when one or more people choose not to be a team player.

# Activity 15a.

## Teamwork on the Job

### SCENARIO

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

### DISCUSSION

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



# Activity 15b.

## Teamwork on the Job

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

**Characters:** Jarrod Steffy  
Pam John  
Manager Narrator

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

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

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

**Steffy:** No! Jarrod starts work at 7:00. He should already have it done by the time I get here.

**Jarrold:** You're the newest employee.

**Steffy:** What's your problem? Jarrod: What's your problem? Steffy: I do my job.  
John: But you're the newest employee. It's your job to restock.

**Narrator:** Voices are getting louder.

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

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

**Jarrold:** You're impossible.

**Steffy:** No, you are!

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

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

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

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

**Jarrold:** Told you!

## Teamwork Activities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Steffy:** Thanks, Jarrod.

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



# Networking Activities

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

## Networking

*It's not what you know, it's who you know.* This common expression sums up the importance of networking as a strategy for career development and exploration. Everyone has a network, even if they don't realize it, and when it comes to job searching, this network may be just as important as skills and experience. Your personal network includes the group of people with whom you interact every day: family, friends, parents of friends, friends of friends, neighbors, teachers, bosses and coworkers. Within these networks, people exchange information and experiences for both social and potential professional reasons. Networking occurs every time you participate in a school or social event, volunteer in the community, visit with members of your religious group, talk with neighbors, strike up a conversation with someone at the store or connect with people online.

When networking for the purposes of career development, this means talking with friends, family members or acquaintances about your professional goals, interests and dreams. Most people learn about job openings through their personal network, and because each person in a network has a network of their own, your potential web of contacts can grow exponentially. This is important because, more often than not, hiring managers would rather talk to a potential candidate who has been recommended by someone they know or already employ. Networking can also lead you to informational interviews with people who have relevant wisdom and experience, even if they do not have a position they are seeking to fill, and put you in a position to become a potential candidate when a job does open up. An informational interview is not the same as a job interview by any means, but it is probably the most effective form of networking there is. In fact, according to *Quintessential Careers*, one out of every 12 informational interviews results in a job offer. This is a remarkable number considering that only one in every 200 resumes submitted results in a job offer, according to research.

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

**Note to facilitators:** *Developing networking skills is important for all youth, but particularly for those with limited work experience, including many youth with disabilities. By teaching young people to seek opportunities for researching, talking to, and networking with those who are already established in their careers of interest, we help them make more informed choices about their future. For youth who feel hesitant about networking, consider partnering them with another participant for many of the activities in this section. Teaming is one strategy that may help participants feel supported while trying out new skills and learning how to become a strategic and “seasoned” networker.*

# 16. An Introduction to Networking

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to introduce participants to the process of networking and to help them begin to understand its relevance to the career development process.



## Time

20 minutes



## Materials

- Chart paper or whiteboard, markers



## Directions

Ask participants the following question: How do people find jobs? [List responses.] If the following were not discussed, consider including some or all of them in the list: personal contacts, secondary or postsecondary career centers, employer websites, social media, online job boards (such as Indeed, Monster, SnagAJob or ZipRecruiter), career centers, professional or trade associations, or simply by walking into the place they wish to work and inquiring.

Ask participants: Did you know that approximately 80% of jobs today are not advertised? Discuss: If employers are not advertising, how are people finding jobs?

### DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The most effective job-hunting strategy is to ask your personal contacts to find out about job leads.
- Most of us find a job through personal contacts—people we already know, such as our friends and family, doctor, dentist and other people we meet when we go shopping or during our normal everyday lives. Personal contacts are also the people that our friends and family know.
- Approximately 60% of job hunters find their new job with the help of friends, family members, and acquaintances.

Break the group into smaller groups of three or four. Considering that people most often find jobs by interacting with other people, ask each group to spend five minutes developing five strategies they might use when looking for a job (who would they talk to, what would they say, etc.). Strategies should be geared to creating as many ways as possible to tell others you are looking for a job.



## Conclusion

Ask for a representative from each group to list the strategies they developed. Inform participants that what they just accomplished is called (traditional) professional networking. Learning how to network takes time and commitment. It means seeking out people you know, people who can offer advice, as well as potential friends, and building on these relationships. Networking is finding ways to “get known” by others who can help you in your job search. It is an “active” process for developing new relationships and new opportunities.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

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

Help participants arrange for an informational interview (either on- or off-site). Prep participants on the types of questions to ask (i.e., what is important to them), the importance of asking for contact information and how they should follow-up after the interview.

Questions to ask:

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

Be sure to follow up the interview with a thank you note. Mention the specific information that you found to be particularly interesting or helpful. Let the person know that you appreciate their letting you ask questions and that the information they provided will be extremely valuable to you.

## 17. You Expect Me to Do WHAT? Talk to People?

**JUST THE FACTS:** Traditional networking (talking to people) can be a pretty frightening activity. In fact, it can be so overwhelming for some that they may never attempt it. This activity will allow participants to overcome their fear by initiating the “three Ps”: prepare, practice and pull yourself together!



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 17 for each participant (optional)



### Directions

Traditional networking involves talking to people. For some this may be an easy activity, while for others it may be scary and uncomfortable.

According to Lara Zielin, author of *Make Things Happen: The Key to Networking for Teens*, the “three Ps” can help allay nervousness or fear about networking: prepare, practice and pull yourself together! “By doing your best to accomplish each of the Ps, you’ll have a good chance of overcoming [any] obstacles and eliminating fear when you network,” says Zielin.

Review and briefly discuss the three Ps in further detail. Note: The information provided in this chapter is for facilitator reference and is not intended to be read verbatim to the group.

Have participants explore, either independently or as a group, the scenario in Activity 17 and complete Part 1, “What did Pradeep do?”



### Conclusion

Conclude the discussion by having participants discuss or complete Activity 17, Part 2, “What are some strategies you could use?”

End with the importance of a thank you note focusing on the value of the person’s time and expertise. A thank you note goes a long way to having people remember you.



### Journaling Activity

Think about Pradeep’s story. Think about your wildest career dream. What is it? Now pretend you know someone who knows someone who does that type of work. Which of the three Ps would be the most difficult for you and why? Which of the three Ps would you feel most comfortable with and why?



### Extension Activity

Conduct a few role-plays with participants on the value of networking. You may even choose to bring in a few employers to participate. If you bring in employers, try to coordinate the types of employers with some of the interests of the participants in your group. Have participants create a three Ps cheat sheet to help each other prepare for the opportunity.

Have participants handwrite or email a thank you note to the person with whom they met. They should thank the person for their time and for the information they provided. The note should ideally include specifics from the meeting, such as, “I really appreciated learning about...” or “Thank you for offering suggestions on how to improve my resume.” Specifics will let the recipient know that the meeting was truly worthwhile.



# The Three Ps

Adapted from *Make Things Happen: The Key to Networking for Teens* (used with permission)

## PREPARE:

Do what you need to get ready. For example:

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

## PRACTICE:

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

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

## PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER:

Part of feeling confident at a networking meeting is to feel good about yourself. If you feel good about your appearance, your confidence tends to get a big boost!

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

# Activity 17.

## You Expect me to do WHAT? Talk to People?

### SCENARIO:

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

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

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

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

## The Three Ps

### Part 1: What did Pradeep do?

Prepare: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Practice: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Networking Activities

Pull yourself together: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2: What are some strategies you could use?**

Prepare: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Practice: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pull yourself together: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 18. Using Social Media to Network

**JUST THE FACTS:** Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok. These names have become synonymous with social media. In fact, social media and digital communication have become so foundational to the way we live in the 21st century that the terminology has fully entered the lexicon. Follow, Zoom, tweet, DM, live stream—this is a language we are all familiar with. Believe it or not, the Merriam-Webster online dictionary includes all these words!

This activity gives participants the opportunity to debate the pros and cons of their social media presence in the networking process.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- None required



### Directions

Ask the group the following questions:

1. Stand up if you have a TikTok account? (Now sit down.)
2. Stand up and turn around if you primarily communicate with others by texting? (Now sit down.)
3. Raise your hand if you have ever used YouTube for research? (Put your hands down.)

Now, read the following aloud or have it written for participants to read while listening: *In May 2010, the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., found that half of American teenagers (ages 12 to 17) send 50 or more text messages a day, with one-third sending more than 100 a day. Two-thirds of the texters surveyed said they were more likely to use their cell phones to text friends than to call them. Fifty-four percent said they text friends once a day, but only 33 percent said they talk to their friends face-to-face on a daily basis.*

Many observers are concerned that for young people growing up in the age of social media, online interactions often eclipse real-world experiences that help develop emotions, personal connections and the necessary communication skills to succeed in the workplace and in society.

Go around the room and ask the group to count off by ones and twos and divide participants into two groups.

Each group will be asked to discuss and list at least five reasons why they believe using social media and communicating digitally will not only improve the growth and development of youth today, but also help them develop higher-level communication skills than those of their parents and/or grandparents.

Each group should elect a notetaker and a reporter and will be given seven minutes to brainstorm their ideas. Reports to the larger groups should follow.



## Conclusion

Discuss the following: A recent study by an executive search firm found that 77% of recruiters run online searches of candidates to screen them; 35% of these same recruiters say they've eliminated a candidate based on the information they uncovered.

What does this mean for young job seekers with regard to their online presence?

Discuss as a group some of the types of content that young people preparing for careers should be careful to avoid posting on social media. Examples include: complaining about a former employer, showing pictures of hard partying, descriptions of sexual exploits, abusive or aggressive language, etc.



## Journaling Activity

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



## Extension Activity

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

- 1. Be careful.** Nothing is private. Don't post anything on social media that you wouldn't want a prospective employer to see. Derogatory comments, compromising photos, foul language and lewd jokes all will be viewed as a reflection of your character.
- 2. Be discreet.** If the platform offers the option, consider setting your account to "private," so that it is viewable only by followers of your choosing. And since you can't control what other people comment on your posts, you may want to disable the ability to comment altogether. Remember, everything on the Internet is archived—and there is no eraser!
- 3. Be prepared.** Check your profile regularly to see what comments have been posted. Google yourself to see what's out there about you. If you find information you feel could be detrimental to your candidacy or career, see about getting it removed—and, in the meantime, make sure you have an answer ready to counter or explain "digital dirt."

Ask participants to use these strategies to create a digital Do's and Don'ts cheat sheet when getting ready to look for a job. Help them understand why they should be careful about everything they post online.

## 19. Text vs. Email: Does It Really Matter?

**JUST THE FACTS:** Many teens and young adults consider email an old-fashioned way to communicate and would rather text or DM on social media, but when it comes time to apply to college or a job, they will still need email skills. Therefore, an understanding of email etiquette is worthy of discussion. These activities will offer participants a chance to challenge themselves to translate text messages to proper English and discuss some of the classic rules of email.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- Activities 19a and 19b



### Directions

Disseminate Activity 19a and ask the group to translate the two text messages. This can be done in whatever way is most comfortable for the group (individually, in pairs, writing, sharing aloud, etc.). Share with the group.

Ask if the note to the employer would be appropriate to send. Discuss why or why not. Discuss the word etiquette. Ask participants if they know its meaning and ask for some examples.

Etiquette is the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group. Examples include dining etiquette (place your napkin on your lap, do not talk with food in your mouth, etc.) and social etiquette (saying “please” and “thank you,” or “excuse me” when you interrupt, etc.).

Ask participants if they have ever heard of email etiquette. Ask about instances where email would be more appropriate than texting (e.g., applying to college, emailing a professor or teacher or writing to an employer).

Ask for some possible “rules” of email. Use Activity 19b as a guide/template for discussion.



### Conclusion

Conclude by reviewing and discussing the suggested answers for Activity 19b. Additionally, talk about the use of silly personal email addresses vs. business/professional ones. Why should one avoid using email addresses such as hotfoxychick@xyz.net, itsallaboutme@abc.com or partyanimal@mno.me, versus an email that simply displays one’s name, when applying for a job?



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Use this opportunity to ensure that all participants have an email account. If they do not, use a computer lab or arrange for time at a local library to ensure that each has an account they can use for job searching and networking purposes. Of course, having an account and using it are two different things; write a note to each participant and practice exchanging email communications of a professional nature.

# Activity 19a.

Text vs. Email:

## Does It Really Matter? Translating Text

IDK y adults r trippin abt teens online & txtng. Its gr8 4 keepin in touch w/friends & know wut ppl r doing & where they r.

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Hey employer. I wanna apply 4 the daytime CS position I saw on FB. Resume attached, think my skills match up. Wud luv to chat abt y id be a dope employee at ur company. Ty!

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# Activity 19b.

## Text vs. Email:

## Does It Really Matter? Professional Email Etiquette

### WHEN EMAILING PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

**Email etiquette:** Include a subject line that “helps” the reader.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Include a greeting (“Dear”) and a closing (“Sincerely”).

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Use business language, check spelling and avoid abbreviations.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Use business punctuation and formatting.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Avoid using ALL CAPS.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Do not use jokes, witty remarks or sarcasm.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Avoid gossiping or complaining.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Keep the communication short and to the point.

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Do not use emoticons (for introductory emails).

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email etiquette:** Reread before hitting “send.”

**Possible reasons:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 19a. Text vs. Email: Does It Really Matter? Translating Text (Answer Key)

### ANSWERS

IDK y adults r trippin abt teens online & txtng. Its gr8 4 keepin up w/friends & know wut ppl r doing & where they r.

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

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Hey employer. I wanna apply 4 the daytime CS position I saw on FB. Resume attached, think my skills match up. Wud luv to chat abt y id be a dope employee at ur company. Ty!

Dear Employer,

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

Thank you.

# Activity 19b. Text vs. Email: Does It Really Matter? Professional Email Etiquette (Answer Key)

## POSSIBLE ANSWERS

**Email etiquette:** Include a subject line that “helps” the reader.

**Possible reasons:** A meaningful subject line helps clarify what your message is about—and may also help the reader prioritize reading your email.

**Email etiquette:** Include a greeting (“Dear”) and a closing (“Sincerely”).

**Possible reasons:** Email should mimic a written letter. Always begin with “Dear,” and sign off with “Sincerely”—this is often the safest complimentary close for a professional letter.

**Email etiquette:** Use business language, check spelling and avoid abbreviations.

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

**Email etiquette:** Use business punctuation and formatting.

**Possible reasons:** Same as above.

**Email etiquette:** Avoid using ALL CAPS.

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

**Email etiquette:** Do not use jokes, witty remarks or sarcasm.

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

**Email etiquette:** Avoid gossiping or complaining.

**Possible reasons:** Emails can be forwarded to others or posted publicly. You never know who will see/hear what you wrote.

**Email etiquette:** Keep the communication short and to the point.

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

**Email etiquette:** Do not use emoticons (for introductory emails).

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

**Email etiquette:** Reread before hitting “send.”

**Possible reasons:** Once your email has been sent, there is no turning back!

## 20. It's a Small World

**JUST THE FACTS:** This activity will get participants thinking about different relationships they have and how those relationships weave a web of networking. Participants will begin to realize how to use their current networks to broaden their future networks. After all, it's all about the people you know...who know someone...who knows someone...and so on.



### Time

30–40 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 20 per participant



### Directions

Ask participants if they have ever heard of the concept “six degrees of separation,” the networking theory that posits that everyone is connected to everyone else by six steps (i.e., friend of a friend) on average.

Let participants know you will be spending a bit of time thinking about whom they know—and how to connect this list to whom they want to know.

Discuss the concept of “degrees” of relationships using the chart in Activity 20 and explain the differences between first-, second- and third-degree relationships. Further explain that networking is all about weaving a web of contacts and strengthening relationships (so others can help you and you can help others).

Spend a few minutes brainstorming what type of person might be a first- or second-degree contact (use the examples listed in Activity 20, recognizing that those listed may not be relevant to all participants).

Participants should spend a bit of time thinking about and writing down the names of people who are closest to them (first degree), then do the same with their second-degree relationships. Participants should consider acquaintances, or people they don't know very well but might be helpful to get to know a little better.



### Conclusion

Conclude this activity by discussing ways to strengthen second-degree contacts. For example, take some time to get to know the barista's name at the coffee shop, send your counselor a birthday card or congratulate your neighbor on the birth of a child. Discuss the fact that it is often the small things we do that help to make a connection with someone, which is what networking is all about.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Work with participants to build a list of third-degree contacts and work together to develop a plan for possible ways to connect with them. Then, use third-degree contacts to set up a series of informational interviews. As a group, decide on some of the questions that might be important to ask during an informational interview (see below for examples), and why it would be important to send a thank you note after the interview.

Sample questions to ask during an informational interview:

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

Participants should share experiences with the group after informational interviews occur. Each should be prepared to discuss the aspects of the informational interview that went well and explore any parts that didn't go as well as expected.

# Activity 20.

## It's a Small World

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

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

Name	Relationship to you <i>Example: uncle, brother, mother</i>

**The next circle contains your SECOND-DEGREE CONTACTS.** The people in this circle are those you are familiar with but might only feel comfortable interacting with occasionally. These people are aware of you, and you are aware of them, but you don't have a close relationship. These people include those who say "hi" in passing at school or at the gym, the barista at the local coffee shop, the neighbor who waves to you while walking the dog. Other examples of people in your second degree include coworkers, teachers or counselors, your friends' parents, neighbors, etc.

Name	Relationship to you <i>Example: friend's parent, neighbor</i>

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

Name	Relationship to you <i>Example: local politician, chef at a local restaurant, etc.</i>



# Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking Activities

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



## Problem–Solving and Critical Thinking

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

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

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

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

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

## 21. Praise, Criticism or Feedback

**JUST THE FACTS:** In a work setting, we give and receive many different types of information. The purpose of this activity is to help participants determine the differences between criticism, praise and feedback—not not only how to offer it, but how to receive it as well.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- One set of “Praise | Criticism | Feedback” cards for each group. Alternatively, you can hang three pieces of chart paper, each with one of the words written on it. Slips of paper can be made with the statements below.



### Directions

Discuss the difference between praise, criticism and feedback and ask participants for examples of each.

- **Praise:** an expression of approval
- **Criticism:** an expression of disapproval based on perceived mistakes or faults
- **Feedback:** information about a person’s performance of a task, used primarily as a basis for improvement

Divide the group into pairs. Read the following statements aloud, one at a time. It is suggested that the facilitator use different tones of voice to help participants differentiate the intended meaning of each sentence (which can certainly vary depending on their delivery). After each statement, give each pair 10 seconds to decide whether the statement is criticism, praise or feedback. Someone from each team should hold up the card that represents their collective decision. If chart paper and sentence strips were used, participants can move to the sign that matches each statement.

- Mr. Jones told me how much he appreciated your thank you note after the job interview. He thought it was a great personal touch.
- Your desk is such a mess. Are you sure you are not trying to grow your own paper?
- I noticed that you’ve been coming in late the last couple of days.
- How many times do I have to tell you how to file these documents?
- Your comments in the meeting today were helpful.
- It would work better for me if I could explain my version of the story out loud before you ask questions.
- You’ve improved a lot this week.
- I found it difficult to evaluate this resume because it was messy.
- I liked it much better when we got to choose the projects instead of being assigned to one.

With the larger group, discuss the different ways people may react or respond differently to praise, criticism and feedback. It is inevitable that we will all receive criticism at some point on the job, and the way in which we respond can impact our own attitude and the attitudes of those with whom we work. Discuss with the group how they, personally, respond differently to praise, feedback and criticism.



### Conclusion

Take the opportunity to rephrase the way in which any of the above statements were made. How might rephrasing get a different response or reaction? If you had to make a rule for how you would like to receive feedback and criticism, what would that rule be?



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Oftentimes, the inability to give or receive criticism and feedback might cause conflict in the workplace. Reach out to the National Conflict Resolution Center ([ncrconline.com](http://ncrconline.com)) to find local training opportunities or workshops. You might also try your state or county's mediation center (often connected to juvenile services).

# Activity 21.

Praise, Criticism  
or Feedback

PRAISE

CRITICISM

FEEDBACK

## 22. Workplace Ethics

**JUST THE FACTS:** We all have our own set of values or standards of behavior that we operate by. However, we may not always feel we can apply these same principles or standards while at work. The purpose of this lesson is to help participants learn some of the steps necessary to make ethical decisions on the job.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 22 for each participant or group. (These materials were adapted from *Lesson Planet: Tools for Success: A Study in Employer/Personnel Issues, Ethics, and Professional Behavior*, Alabama Learning Exchange.)



### Directions

Ask participants the following questions and discuss answers with the group:

- How do you make decisions?
- Is decision-making a skill that was taught to you?
- Do you have personal rules for decision-making? If so, do these rules change if you are making decisions at home, at school, with friends or at work?

Now, let's discuss ethics. What are ethics? One possible answer to be discussed: Ethics are a set of often-unspoken and generally understood moral principles relating to a specified group, field or form of conduct (e.g., a group of moral principles, standards of behavior, or set of values regarding proper conduct in the workplace).

Ethics on the job often deal with a code of conduct or a set of principles for both the employer and the employee. Ask for and offer some examples of workplace ethics from both the employer and the employee. For example:

A list of work ethics for an employer or a company might be:

- To provide a safe work environment for staff and employees
- To treat employees with dignity and respect
- To provide a fair wage for the services rendered
- To handle all business transactions with integrity and honesty

A list of work ethics for an employee might include:

- To show up on time
- To tend exclusively to company business during work hours
- To treat the company's resources, equipment and products with care
- To give respect to the company; that means honesty and integrity Ask the group what types of ethical issues might come up at work?

Choose one of the scenarios in Activity 22 for group discussion (be sure to read the introduction first). Read the scenario aloud and have copies available for those who would like to read along. With the group, walk through a basic process for ethical decision-making.

**Four-Step Process for Making Ethical Decisions at Work:**

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

Divide the group into four smaller groups and have each group choose one of the remaining scenarios. Each group should take no more than 10 minutes to read, discuss and put a plan in place for discussion.



**Conclusion**

Do you think these situations really happen on the job or in real life? Share how the decision-making process worked for each group. Were these easy problems to solve?



**Journaling Activity**

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



**Extension Activity**

Have the group create additional “case studies” to share with each other for problem-solving practice. Participants might ask an adult they know to offer a real-life example of an ethical dilemma they have faced. These should be shared with the group. You might also consider expanding the discussion to include more examples of sexual harassment on the job. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon issue for teens to encounter at the workplace.

# Activity 22a.

## Workplace Ethics: Case Studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Activity 22b.

## Workplace Ethics: Steps to Solving Ethical Dilemmas

**Identify the problem or ethical issue:**

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**What are the facts?**

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**What are some possible solutions?**

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**What are you going to do?**

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



## 23. Problem–Solving on a Team

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



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 23



### Directions

There are times when getting a team of people to work together successfully on a job or at school can be a challenge. Occasionally, one person’s bad attitude can cause the entire team to be less than productive. Activity 23 presents 10 different situations where the action of one team member interferes with the team’s success.

Divide the group into smaller groups. Have participants act out or create a skit for each situation providing both positive and negative alternatives for working through and solving each problem. Participants should take turns being the “difficult” team member. Participants can compare skits and responses and, ultimately, decide (as a larger group) on the best way(s) to handle each situation.



### Conclusion

Should each person on the team be “dealt” with in the same way? Are there ever any exceptions? Explain.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Using the problems listed in Activity 23, invite employers to talk about how these situations are handled at their place of work.

# Activity 23.

## Problem-Solving on a Team

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

**1. Is always late**

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

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**3. Gets upset when their recommendations are not followed**

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**4. Hogs the conversation/discussion**

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**5. Leaves before the job/work is done**

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**6. Constantly tells jokes and gets people off track**

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

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**8. Refuses to share in the leadership role**

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**9. Falls asleep**

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**10. Just sits there and doesn't participate**

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## 24. Perception vs. Reality

**JUST THE FACTS:** Perception is one’s ability to see, hear or become aware of something through our senses. It is a way of understanding or interpreting something. Sometimes the way we perceive the actions or statements of those around us may or may not reflect what is actually intended. This is generally due to our previous life experiences or our beliefs. The purpose of this activity is to get participants to reflect on and consider different perceptions and how to be proactive in making decisions based on those perceptions.



### Time

15 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 24
- Flip chart, markers (optional)



### Directions

Write the following on a flip chart or provide one copy of the sentence to each participant:

**FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS.**

Ask the group to count the number of Fs in the sentence (allow 15 seconds). On average, most people will spot three or four instances of the letter F in the sentence. It actually appears six times. (The brain tends to skip the word *of* or perceive it as “versus”). Point: One’s perception may not always be correct.

**Read the following short paragraphs aloud, or ask a youth participant to volunteer to read:**

1. Bob’s daughter is on the basketball team, but she doesn’t get to play much. His daughter works hard and never complains, but Bob believes that her benching is yet another injustice in his life and that his daughter is not getting a fair shake. Bob becomes annoyed and irritated. He angrily confronts the coach, embarrassing his daughter.
2. John’s daughter is on the basketball team, but she doesn’t get to play much. His daughter works hard and never complains. John believes that the coach wants to win and most likely plays the girls that will help him reach that goal. John feels proud of his daughter’s commitment to the team despite not getting to play very much. John offers to help his daughter improve her basketball skills.

Is there any difference in the events as they were described? What is the critical factor in the different ways each person reacted? Perception! Bob believed the coach’s actions were totally unfair, while John believed the coach was generally acting fairly. Why might each person perceive the situation differently?

Now, discuss the four situations listed in Activity 24. How might different people react to these situations? What might their reactions be based on? If a friend found him or herself in one of these situations, what advice would you offer?



### Conclusion

As a group, discuss some of the strategies you might use when faced with situations similar to those in Activity 24. Is there always a right or wrong way to respond? Are there certain things you should always try to do? If so, what are they?



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Search online for posters or illustrations depicting the idea of perception vs. reality. Print them out and offer reasoning as to why perceptions and realities might not always be the same.

# Activity 24.

## Perception vs. Reality

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

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

## 25. Tell Me About a Time When...

**JUST THE FACTS:** Thinking on your feet is an important part of getting and keeping a job. Interviewers will often ask “behavioral” questions in addition to technical questions about actual job skills. Oftentimes, these open-ended questions will begin with, “Tell me about a time when you...” Being prepared for these types of questions—and having a plan for answering them—is an important skill. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce a strategy that participants can use to answer these types of questions calmly and effectively.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 25 for each participant



### Directions

Ask participants the following questions:

- Who has been on a job interview?
- What types of questions were you asked?
- Were you ever asked questions that started with, “Tell me about a time when you...”?

Discuss with participants that many employers ask certain types of questions to see how well people can think on their feet. Sometimes these questions are easy to answer and other times, not so much. There is a strategy called STAR that can guide you through the process of answering these questions in a clear and complete way. Use Activity 25 to help participants see the STAR method in action.

Before asking participants to work on their own answers, use the following as an example of how the method works.

**Question: Tell me about a time when you provided customer service to an upset client.**

**Answer using the STAR method:**

#### **S (Situation/Task)**

I was volunteering as an office assistant in the payroll department of a local nonprofit organization. An angry employee came to my desk complaining that his check amount was incorrect—too low—and that he wasn’t able to pay rent on time because of the mistake.

#### **A (Action)**

I promised the employee that I would work with him to figure out what had happened and what could be done. I compared the payroll records in the logbook with the computer payroll database. I discovered a data error, which explained the incorrect amount. I explained what

had happened and was able to put in a request to issue the employee a check for his missing balance.

**R (Result)**

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

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



**Conclusion**

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



**Journaling Activity**

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



**Extension Activity**

Arrange for participants to meet with a series of employers for mock interviews. Ask employers to use a sampling of the behavioral interview questions they use most frequently when interviewing potential candidates. Part of self-improvement is self- reflection. How can you use this activity to improve your soft skills overall?

# Activity 25.

## Tell Me About a Time When...

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

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

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

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

### TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU...

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





# Professionalism

## Activities

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

## Professionalism

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

As the labor market becomes more and more competitive, job seekers will continually need to find ways to stand out from the crowd. There are few things an employer values more than employees who carry out their duties in a professional manner. Professionalism isn't one single thing; it's a combination of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. A professional worker takes responsibility for their own behavior and works effectively with others. High-quality work, honesty and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace are also an essential part of professionalism.

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

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

**Note to facilitators:** *Professionalism is not an easy skill to develop, since it is made up of many different skills and tends to take years of experience to perfect. More than any of the other soft skills covered in this publication, professionalism is the one about which employers say, “I know it when I see it.” Recognizing that there is a population of young people who may struggle with one or more of the individual skills that make up professionalism, it is important to provide a safe environment for all youth who are determined to practice and reinforce these skills. Young people need an environment where they feel safe enough to make mistakes, learn from their mistakes and are provided the opportunity—and the encouragement—to try again. It is by offering a safe environment, along with encouragement, that all youth can succeed and develop their own personal style of professionalism.*

## 26. Diversity—and Stereotypes—in the Workplace

**JUST THE FACTS:** The face of the workplace is constantly evolving. For example, an office may have a mix of Gen Xers, Millennials and Gen Zs all working together. In addition to generational differences, differences in education, upbringing, social norms and values bring a variety of perspectives to the workplace that can benefit and strengthen an organization enormously. Yet, the same differences may create cultural gaps that can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflict. The purpose of this activity is for participants to discuss how to bridge generational, cultural and other diversity gaps to build a new standard for professionalism in the workplace.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 26
- Flip chart, markers (optional)



### Directions

The modern workforce is made up of people from many different cultures and generations. In fact, some workplaces include people ranging in age from 16 to 60 (or older), all working together. How can these different generations of workers get along when so often their values, ideas and experiences are so different?

#### **Begin a discussion around these questions:**

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

Discuss the word *stereotype*. According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, a stereotype is a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude or uncritical judgment. When we stereotype groups of people, we depict all people within that group as having the same characteristics.

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

Divide the larger group into groups of no more than four. Each group will be using Activity 26 to discuss some of the situations that might create a “cultural divide” in the workplace. Discuss the small-group answers as a larger group.



## Conclusion

Draw out a list of some of the strategies one can use on the job to ensure that everybody (not just different generations) works well together. Discuss some of the proactive steps one might take to avoid stereotyping on the job. Some examples might include:

- Look past stereotypes.
- Find common ground.
- Learn from each other.
- Listen to each other.
- Acknowledge and appreciate differences.
- Promote intergenerational discussions.



## Journaling Activity

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



## Extension Activity

Connect with an employer who can talk about diversity in the workplace—its importance, its relevance and how most companies strive to eliminate stereotyping in the workplace and encourage diversity.

You may also wish to delve further into a discussion about groups that tend to face stereotyping and stigma frequently (such as women, people of color, people with disabilities, formerly incarcerated people, teen parents, certain cultures, etc.) and what a world without stigma and prejudice might look and feel like. Participants can work together to come up with a slogan or educational campaign for promoting a workforce that truly celebrates diversity and inclusion.

# Activity 26.

## Diversity—and Stereotypes—in the Workplace

The modern workforce is very diverse. People of different ages and backgrounds are working alongside one another more so today than ever before. The purpose of this activity is to consider how we perceive others, how others may perceive us and whether these perceptions paint an accurate picture of who we are. Consider the following situations:

- Terrence is 18 years old and just graduated high school with a 4.0 average. Terrence has an interview today for a summer internship. Terrence is a wheelchair user. Do you think the interviewer may avoid asking Terrence the same interview questions they would ask of someone who does not use a wheelchair? Why or why not?
- Marissa is in 10th grade. She comes from a family of mechanics. Her dad and three brothers are mechanics, and her grandfather owns a garage. Marissa has secretly wanted to work on cars but has been afraid to tell her family. She now wants to approach her grandfather for a summer job. Why do you think Marissa has kept her career dream a secret? How might she ask her grandfather for a summer job?
- Ruthie is 62 years old and looking for a job. She loves one of the local clothing stores and applied online for a job as a salesclerk. She has an interview today and is afraid the store manager will be much younger than her. Ruthie considers canceling the interview. Why do you think Ruthie is worried about her interview? What would you tell Ruthie?
- Sam is 20 years old, a sophomore in college and looking for an engineering internship. Sam has Asperger syndrome (a form of autism), and while he has an A average in his engineering courses, he recognizes the fact that he has trouble interacting socially and is worried about his interviews. Why do you think Sam is worried about his interviews? What advice would you give Sam?

## 27. Professional Work Attitudes

**JUST THE FACTS:** As an employee, your attitude at work contributes to your work environment and how you get along with your coworkers and supervisors. A positive attitude can improve morale and increase productivity for all. The purpose of this activity is to generate a discussion about workplace attitudes (of both supervisors and coworkers) and how these attitudes impact those around us.



### Time

30 minutes



### Materials

- Activity 27
- Flip chart, markers



### Directions

Imagine it is your first day on a new job. Discuss what you would do to make a good impression on your coworkers and supervisors (make a list for all to see). Why might it be important to make a good impression on your first day?

Divide the larger group into smaller groups. Each group will work together to offer advice on an issue related to Justin, a stock clerk at the grocery store (see Activity 27). As the facilitator, read the story aloud, one section at a time. Pause after each section and ask each group to confer and share their collective answer/solution to the question at hand. Each group should be given the opportunity offer their advice first, followed by any additional advice from the other groups. You may choose to continue the discussion around the room.



### Conclusion

Ask the group to describe Justin's work attitude. What do you think would be the most difficult part of being Justin's supervisor? How can a supervisor or boss affect your job performance? How can a coworker's attitude affect your job performance?



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Using the situation in Activity 27, have participants work in small groups to create a series of short skits or role-plays about both coworker and supervisor attitudes—and how those attitudes can affect the job performance of others.

# Activity 27.

## Professional Work Attitudes

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

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

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

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

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

**Question:** *Was it appropriate for Justin to argue with his coworker? What could Justin have done differently?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 28. Professional Behavior

**JUST THE FACTS:** Part of understanding professionalism is figuring out how each of our individual actions impacts the actions and work of others. This activity is designed to give participants a quick way to rate themselves and their own professional actions. It also gives them the opportunity to reflect on the positive behaviors they demonstrate, and how these behaviors impact others.



### Time

20 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 28 for each participant



### Directions

Using Activity 28, participants will rate themselves on workplace behaviors that are typically thought of as “professional” in the workplace. Participants should be encouraged to be honest, as this paper can be kept 100% confidential. The purpose of this activity is to generate discussion and thought related to the workplace soft skills often sought by employers.



### Conclusion

Ask the group to share the skill they feel the proudest of. Without asking who wanted to improve, discuss some of the strategies people could use if they wanted to improve a few of these skills (select two or three). Ask the group if there are any additional skills missing from this list. What are they?



### Journaling Activity

Do you think that the strengths and weaknesses you recognize in yourself are the same as those that others recognize in you? Why or why not? How do you think your behavior impacts those around you?



### Extension Activity

Using additional copies of the activity sheet, have participants ask three people they know and trust to complete the form (about the participant). The forms can be completed anonymously if possible. Participants should take some time to determine whether the way they view themselves is similar or different from the way others view them. Discussion can then be generated as to why this may be. Participants should pay particular attention to the answers to the three questions asked at the bottom of the activity. How does this information impact the young person’s original answers to these questions?



# Activity 28.

## Professional Behavior

Here are some quick tips for being a good employee—and a good team player. Determine which of your skills are “on target” and which might need some improvement by choosing how consistently you exhibit them at work.

**1. I get to work on time. If I am going to be late, I call and let my boss know.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**2. I rarely miss work. If I am going to miss work, I let my boss know ahead of time (or call if I am sick).**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**3. I work as hard as I can.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**4. I pay close attention to my work.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**5. I do my work as I am told. If I am unable to do something or have questions, I ask my supervisor or coworkers.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**6. I am friendly on the job.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**7. I try to solve problems that come up.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**8. I follow safety and company rules.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**9. I use materials and equipment properly.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

**10. I behave professionally.**

Always     Sometimes     Never

Now answer the questions below.

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

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**One skill I'd like to improve is:**

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**Some strategies I might use to improve this skill are:**

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## 29. Is It “Professional” to Have Friends in the Workplace?

**JUST THE FACTS:** Working with friends can make work lots of fun. It may not always be the best situation, however. The purpose of this activity is to get participants to discuss the benefits and potential drawbacks to working on a job alongside friends.



### Time

15 minutes



### Materials

- One copy of Activity 29 for each person or each group
- White board or flip chart, markers (optional)



### Directions

Ask the group to discuss (or list) some of the pros and cons of being on the job with friends. Divide the larger group into groups of three. Hand each group Activity 29. Discuss/define clique if necessary: a small group of people with shared interests or other features in common, who spend time together and do not readily allow others to join them.

Each group should read together and discuss Scenario #1. With the larger group, discuss what the lifeguards’ supervisor meant by “not letting close friendship get in the way of doing their jobs.” If you were the supervisor, what specific instructions would you give?

Next, the small groups should read together and discuss Scenario #2. Each group should come up with possible solutions for each of the four questions for consideration and be prepared to discuss with the larger group.



### Conclusion

Come back together as a group to discuss the possible solutions. These may include, but need not be limited to:

- Too much socializing at work may result in poor production.
- Coworkers may feel alienated by the clique. They may be suspicious or jealous that they’re not included in the group.
- The three can maintain their friendship outside of work hours.
- It’s important to like people at work. It makes the job more enjoyable.

Use this opportunity to discuss cliques in general—and the problems that might arise (in different situations) because of them. Think about how cliques may be perceived by others. Ask if anyone has ever had the experience of being part of a clique or an outsider to a clique. If comfortable, ask each to share a story explaining what it felt like to be in either position.



### Journaling Activity

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



### Extension Activity

Participants can create a list of tips for:

- How to manage friends in the workplace
- How to develop friendships on the job
- What to do when your workplace friend turns into a “frenemy”

# Activity 29.

## Is It “Professional” to Have Friends in the Workplace?

### SCENARIO #1:

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

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

### SCENARIO #2:

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

### Questions for Consideration

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

## 30. Self-Reflection: Professional Problem-Solving at Its Best

**JUST THE FACTS:** Problem-solving is an important skill in work and life. Though there are many ways to solve problems, learning the skill of self-reflection as part of career decision-making can be extremely helpful. The purpose of this activity is to have participants see themselves in the future—and then reflect on how the decisions they made got them to where they are.



### Time

30–40 minutes



### Materials

- Paper (legal-size or chart paper may work best)
- Writing instrument of choice for each participant (pen, pencil, colored pencil, marker, etc.)



### Directions

Ask the group what the term *self-reflection* means to them. [Solicit responses.] Self-reflection is a process of giving serious thought to our lives and our decisions by examining our character, our actions and our motives or motivations. Sometimes we make decisions and then reflect on our choices; other times we reflect before making choices.

**Say something to the effect of:** This exercise will get you thinking about your future. You will be asked to think about what you want to do with your future and define some life goals by working backward in time.

Ensure that each participant has a piece of paper and their writing instrument of choice.

**Then say:** I'm going to ask you a series of questions. You will need to think about these questions very carefully and then either draw or write your reactions on your paper. Your responses do not need to be in any particular order, but keep in mind that they will ultimately help you to tell or retell your own personal history.

**Ok, here goes:** Imagine you are in your final years of life. You are sitting in a rocking chair reflecting on the life you have lived. You are contemplating the answers to the following questions:

- Did you choose a career (or careers) that you enjoyed?
  - If so, how did that happen?
  - If not, why not?
- What accomplishments did you achieve?
- What accomplishments did you want to achieve but did not?
  - What held you back?
- Which activities did you do that you wanted to?
  - What encouraged you to do them?
- Which activities didn't you do that you would have liked to?
  - What held you back?

- If you had your life to do over again, what would you have done differently?
- What would you have kept the same?
- What things did you choose to do in your life that made you happy?
- Could you have done more of them?
  - Why didn't you?

Thinking through your answers while in this imaginary rocking chair can have tremendous power. By looking ahead to what you think your life will be, you open opportunities to take more control of your life right now.



### Conclusion

Ask for volunteers to talk about their “rocking chair” life story. It may be helpful for you to have a previously completed picture or word collage you can use to share your personal rocking chair life story with the group first.

Discuss with the group how self-reflection activities have the power to help us make the personal decisions necessary to plan for our future.



### Journaling Activity

Think about a time you needed to solve a personal problem and acted first, then reflected later. Now think about a time when you needed to solve a problem and you reflected first, then acted. Which way turned out the best for you? Why do you think this is so?



### Extension Activity

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

#### **Self-Reflection: 10 Questions to Move You Toward the Career of Your Dreams**

1. How do you want your life to be?
2. What are the 10 most important work values to you?
3. What would you do if time, money nor experience were a concern?
4. What would you do or learn if you knew you couldn't fail?
5. What are you passionate about and energized by?
6. What are your current skills, abilities and talents?
7. What is preventing you from moving forward and achieving your goals, including any self-limiting beliefs about yourself?
8. What beliefs do you need now to achieve the life of your dreams?
9. What are the choices you have in front of you?
10. What will you commit to now to move forward?

# Activity 30.

## Self-Reflection: Professional Problem-Solving at Its Best

### 10 Questions to Move You Toward the Career of Your Dreams

**QUESTION:** *How do you want your life to be?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What are the 10 most important work values to you?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What would you do if time, money nor experience were a concern?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What would you do or learn if you knew you couldn't fail?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What are you passionate about and energized by?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What are your current skills, abilities and talents?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What is preventing you from moving forward and achieving your goals, including any self-limiting beliefs about yourself?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What beliefs do you need now to achieve the life of your dreams?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What are the choices you have in front of you?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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**QUESTION:** *What will you commit to now to move forward?*

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

**ANSWER:**

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Source: Louise A. Newson

# A Word About Social Networking

The internet and social media have significantly changed the way our society communicates, connects and does business. Generations of young people have never known a world without the internet—something that older folks must put into context when they think about how to communicate with others, both at work and at home. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, more than 93% of teens (ages 12 to 17) and young adults (ages 18 to 29) in the United States use the internet regularly, and more than 70% use social media. Furthermore, among teens who use the internet, 62% use it to get news about current events and politics, 48% use it to make purchases and 31% use it to get health, nutrition and physical fitness information.

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

## ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **Social skills.** Social media allows people to keep up with current friends and make new ones. When used in a healthy way, social media can increase self-esteem and help someone feel less isolated.
- **Independence and self-expression.** Creating content allows people to express themselves and share their interests. They can become part of an online community of people with similar interests—or discover new ones.
- **Digital competence.** Technology is evolving faster than ever. Young people need to be able to adapt to and understand new technologies (or new applications of existing technologies) to ensure that they can use social media and consume other online content with sophistication, smarts and safety.
- **Educational development.** Young adults in secondary and postsecondary education will often use social media to discuss schoolwork, share discussions about assignments and schedule school-related events.
- **Research.** Young adults can gather information about topics that are hard to discuss with others, such as drug use and sexual health.
- **Additional advantages for youth with disabilities.** Social media can open up a new world of communication, integration and community participation. Young adults can express themselves, including their thoughts and feelings, more easily and without fear of the rejection or stigma they may experience in real life. Research also suggests that these young adults may be more willing to ask for help online than in face-to-face situations. Furthermore, young adults who experience difficulty with social skills can socialize anonymously online, experiment with different personas and practice initiating and maintaining online friendships. They can also take the time they need to respond to others, reviewing and editing communications before sending them. Ultimately, these skills may carry over into “real life” and give youth a new sense of courage to make and maintain friendships in everyday life.

## RISKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **Sharing one’s personal information with the wrong crowd.** Young adults need to be aware that information shared online could also put them at risk of victimization. People looking to do harm could use their shared content to identify them or gain their trust. They can also be deceptive by pretending to know a young person. Encourage young people to privatize their online social media accounts (such as Instagram and TikTok).
- **Bullying.** Cyberbullying can be relentless and devastating and it may spill over to offline bullying if victims are located. Cyberbullying can cause significant emotional harm resulting in depression, anger, school avoidance, violence and suicide.
- **The permanence of online profiles.** Once information has been shared on the internet, it’s out there forever! Deleting information that others have already viewed and shared is nearly impossible. Inappropriate pictures, captions and comments could come back to haunt youth as they start applying to colleges or looking for jobs.
- **Disclosure.** People tend to be far bolder and less discretionary in their behavior online versus in person. This means there is a greater risk of giving out information—including the presence of a disability—that they might not have wanted to disclose otherwise.
- **Additional potential risks for youth with disabilities.** Social media can further isolate those who already feel isolated or excluded and may ultimately lead to loneliness or an increased risk of depression. In addition, for young adults with disabilities, who must make important life decisions regarding the disclosure of their disability (if, how, when, to whom), activity on social media can have unintended consequences. By posting pictures or becoming fans of disability support groups, for example, they may end up disclosing information unintentionally. While this may or may not be an issue, it makes the “disclosure” discussion even more important. For more information on disability disclosure, see “The 411 on disability disclosure: A workbook for youth with disabilities” (available online at [thinkcollege.net/resource/transition-planning/411-disability-disclosure](http://thinkcollege.net/resource/transition-planning/411-disability-disclosure)) and “Cyber Disclosure for Youth with Disabilities” (available online at [fndusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Cyber-Disclosure-for-Youth-with-Disabilities.pdf](http://fndusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Cyber-Disclosure-for-Youth-with-Disabilities.pdf)).

The process of empowering youth to make safe and responsible decisions online is not unlike teaching them to cross the street safely. First, they hold hands with an adult in the crosswalk. Then, they gain a little more independence and can be watched from afar. Eventually, they become capable of making safe and responsible decisions on their own. Educating youth about social media use must be grounded in proper knowledge, skills and values, so that eventually they can be expected to exercise good judgment independently.

# Cyber Resource: CyberSmart!

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

## **Who Are You Online?**

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/who-are-you-online>

What does it actually mean to “be yourself” or to “be real”? Those are deep thoughts for any middle schooler. For kids today, these questions matter online, too. Help your students explore why some people create different or alternate personas for themselves online and on social media.

## **Chatting and Red Flags**

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/chatting-and-red-flags>

Having conversations online, without the benefit of nonverbal cues or seeing people’s faces, can be awkward and sometimes even risky—with drawbacks from simple misunderstandings to manipulation or inappropriate messages. Help students navigate and avoid these situations before they go too far.

## **The Power of Digital Footprints**

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/the-power-of-digital-footprints>

Our digital footprints can impact our future. What others find about us online shapes how they see us or feel about us. Help your students learn about their digital footprint and the steps they can take to shape what others find and see about them online.

## **Digital Drama Unplugged**

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/digital-drama-unplugged>

Miscommunication is a common occurrence online and on social media. Plus, being behind a screen makes it easier to say things they wouldn’t say in person. So how do we help students avoid the pitfalls of digital drama? Help them learn tips on avoiding online drama in the first place and de-escalating drama when it happens.

## **And From the Office of Disability Employment Policy:**

### **Cyber Disclosure for Youth with Disabilities**

[fndusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Cyber-Disclosure-for-Youth-with-Disabilities.pdf](https://www.fndusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Cyber-Disclosure-for-Youth-with-Disabilities.pdf)

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

# Additional Resources for Youth with Disabilities

## **Career Planning Begins with Assessment: A Guide for Professionals Serving Youth with Educational and Career Development Challenges**

[files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED533383.pdf](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED533383.pdf)

This guide serves as a resource for multiple audiences within the workforce development system. Youth service professionals will find information on selecting career-related assessments and determining when to refer youth for additional assessment, and additional information on accommodations, legal issues and ethical considerations. Administrators and policymakers will find information on the development of practical and effective policies, collaboration among programs, and interagency assessment systems.

## **The 411 on Disability Disclosure**

[thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/411\\_Disability\\_Disclosure\\_complete.pdf](https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf)

This workbook is designed for youth and the adults who work with them. It helps young people make informed decisions about whether to disclose their disability—a deeply personal decision that differs from one person to another—and how disclosure may impact their education, employment and social life.

## **The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Families, Educators, Youth Service Professionals and Adult Allies Who Care About Youth with Disabilities**

[capeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/05/Adult-The\\_411\\_On\\_Disability\\_Disclosure\\_for\\_Adults.pdf](https://capeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/05/Adult-The_411_On_Disability_Disclosure_for_Adults.pdf)

This adult-focused workbook is a companion to “The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities” (see above). It is written for adults supporting youth with disabilities and introduces numerous examples of young people grappling with the question of disclosure.

## **JAN: The Job Accommodation Network**

[askjan.org](https://askjan.org)

JAN is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.

## **The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth (CAPE-Youth)**

<https://capeyouth.org/>

The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth (CAPE-Youth) is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, The Council of State Governments, and the K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University. CAPE-Youth was created in 2019 by the Department of Labor. It seeks to improve employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by helping states build capacity in their youth service delivery and workforce systems.

## **Making the Move to Manage Your Own Personal Assistance Services: A Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities Transitioning to Adulthood**

[pueblo.gpo.gov/CAARNG/ODEP/PDF/ODEP051.pdf](https://pueblo.gpo.gov/CAARNG/ODEP/PDF/ODEP051.pdf)

This guide assists youth in strengthening some of skills that are essential for successfully managing their own personal assistance services: effective communication, time-management, working with others and establishing professional relationships. Such skills are key not only to enhancing independence, but also to thriving in the workplace and growing professionally.

## **ODEP: Guideposts for Success**

[dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/individuals/youth/guide](https://dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/individuals/youth/guide)

Developed by ODEP, in collaboration with NCWD/Youth, *Guideposts for Success* reflects the most robust research on the key educational and career development interventions that can make a positive difference in the lives of all youth, including youth with disabilities.

## **PACER Center**

[pacer.org](https://pacer.org)

PACER Center is a training and information center for parents and families of people with disabilities, from birth through age 21. Located in Minneapolis, the center serves families in Minnesota and across the nation. Parents can find publications, workshops and other resources to help them make decisions about education, vocational training, employment and other services for their children with disabilities. PACER designs materials for parents and families, but also educators and other professionals who work with students with or without disabilities.

## **Universal Design for Learning**

[cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl](https://cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl)

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that gives all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments that work for everyone using flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs, rather than a single, one-size-fits-all solution. UDL implementation guidelines for educators can be found at [udlguidelines.cast.org](https://udlguidelines.cast.org).

## In Their Own Words

The final version of this publication was a collaborative effort by the Office of Disability Employment Policy; Concepts, Inc.; and the youth and facilitators of seven different youth programs across the country. Careful time and attention were taken to ensure that youth, ages 14 to 21, from all different backgrounds, had the opportunity to experience and contribute to the Soft Skills pilot activities over a five-week period. Changes were made to the original manuscript, based on both youth and facilitator feedback. Here is what our youth participants and program facilitators had to say:

### Youth Participants

*Interview in 2 hours, I need to get ready  
But I'm so nervous, my hands ain't steady  
Body got shivers, what should I do  
Grabbed my notebook and started to skim through  
Remember eye contact, firm handshake  
Take no calls, put phone on vibrate  
Speak clear, big smiles, don't show no fear  
Give the boss good reasons for working here  
Don't forget collared shirt, black slacks and low heels  
Turns out I got the job  
THANKS SOFT SKILLS  
—J'Laan H.*

***Soft skills make a difference because they will help you deal with situations in everyday life, such as job interviews, getting along with others, and just communication with people. Soft skills also help you find yourself...and really make a difference because they help you to think critically.***

—RaeMisha Sierra

*When students are writing or talking in class or at an interview, they sound like they are on the streets talking to a friend. Who would want to hire someone like that? And that's where I feel soft skills should come in for young people. [We] never learn about these things. I feel [that] the younger people are when they learn these skills, as they get older it won't be a problem. —Jessica Alexis*

***Be open-minded because if you just go with [these activities], you can learn a lot about being successful in the workplace.*** —Giselle Padilla

*I can't think of just one thing that we did because I enjoyed everything. —LaShondra Neely It was an experience going beyond my dreams. —Brandon Pursley*

***I was putting things in my text messages that I shouldn't have, and I learned about it during the ODEP project. It was fun because I didn't know that people text that way.*** —Shionte Davis

*I liked the hands on. Building the spaghetti tower was the best. —Chavario McQuay*



***I liked the projects because I learned how to be team leader.*** —Jasmine Turner

*I learned so many new things.* —Rayalshia Daniels

***The journals help you work on a better you.*** —Youth participant

*I like Soft Skills because I got to do activities with my classmates and teacher.* —Rachael Washington

***I liked Soft Skills because it gave me an opportunity to interact and engage with my peers.***

—Michael Francis

*My favorite activity was the one that talked about failures. It was interesting to learn about how Mickey Mouse was created.* —Justine Thomas

***How I felt about Soft Skills is GREAT! It teaches people how to get along with each other. My favorite activity was when we had to build the tallest structures made out of marshmallows.*** —Troy Booker

*I liked the Soft Skills program. My favorite activity was acting out the skits.* —Tyrone Hunter

***Soft Skills had different activities to help you talk more about how you feel.*** —Brittany Prue

## Facilitators

*These activities were great in getting students to think about how they would react or respond to various situations that could arise in the workplace. It also helped them to recognize that a job can entail a lot more than just showing up. They began to recognize that teamwork, attitude, communication, networking and problem-solving and critical thinking are all crucial components to success, both in the workplace and outside of the workplace.* —Jamie Youngblood, Denver, Colo.

***The ODEP pilot program was one of the best projects that we have participated in. The students learned so many skills while developing team building and leadership skills through fun-filled activities. The activities addressed areas that everyone could benefit from, while providing new, exciting ideas.*** —Mary Coody, Madison, Fla.

*I was delighted to hear about the curriculum [and to] see how much the students were enjoying the program. It was evident by their conversations that they were learning a lot about how to apply the skills to their everyday lives.* —Dr. Dierdre Williams, Washington, D.C.

***I have not enjoyed teaching a program this much in my over 25 years of working with students that have an intellectual disability. The Soft Skills curriculum is a marvelous teaching tool that is able to reach all students wherever they may be in their learning process.*** —Lisa Haynes, Washington, D.C.

*I think that the students really enjoyed the ODEP pilot program. The students responded well to the group activities, and I found [the program] to be very educational and informative.* —Jean James, Madison, Fla.

***I found the activities to be very energizing and adaptive for any age group.*** —Mike Radel, Madison, Fla.

*We finished the workshop with a lighthearted activity called A Super Ball and a Raw Egg. Each student had the opportunity to throw a bouncy ball and a raw egg at a giant bull's-eye drawn on a vinyl table cover. After observing the effects on the objects being thrown and the wall covered by the tablecloth, we asked the students if they knew what this symbolized in relation to their outlook on life. "Are you a raw egg or a bouncy ball?" we asked them. When you hit a barrier in your plans, do you shatter? Or do you bounce back stronger and faster than ever? Our students were still debating the meaning of the activity as we cleaned up the eggshells and ended the workshop. An hour and half had never flown by so quickly! We knew it was one of the best workshops Gainesville Area HS/HT has had this year! —Stephanie Weeks, Gainesville, Fla.*

***At first the students were a little skeptical about the activities and the corresponding paperwork [associated with the pilot program], but once I explained that they had the opportunity to give their input for a publication that will be distributed across the nation, they were very excited and eager to tell me what they thought! They really impressed me with their feedback (about what they liked and did not like). We enjoyed the activities so much, that before we knew it, we had gone over our allotted workshop time. Gainesville HS/HT is excited to be involved in this special opportunity and we look forward to completing the rest of the activities with our students!*** —Mellissa Merrill, Gainesville, Fla.

*The Soft Skills [activities] are fabulous. They cover the five areas that are desperately needed in today's workforce. Soft skills used to be taught at home; however, in today's world, it is our obligation to teach our young folk what is needed to succeed in life and in work, and Soft Skills fits the bill.*  
—Virginia Dever, Louisville, Ky.

***The [Life Is Full of Hard Knocks] lesson provided our students with the opportunity to see firsthand that even those who are now viewed as highly successful people were once in a tough space as well.***  
—Facilitator, R.I.

*The interview role-play [in Activity 9] allowed students to see what a good interview looked like versus one that needed some critiquing. This particular activity was interactive and held the students' attention the entire time. It also generated conversation that kept the group thinking while having a good time.*  
—Facilitator, R.I.

***As the facilitator of the activities, they were definitely very useful and meaningful because they truly educated and informed students in a way that helped them take personal responsibility for their skills or lack thereof, instead of an adult telling them what they need to do or know.*** —Facilitator

*From the exploring of their attitudes and how they respond to instruction and authority, to communication styles, teamwork and networking, these activities gave [participants] some real-life, practical experiences that they could learn from—but presented in a way that was fun and educational. I think the communication activities were really insightful because students had to explore their forms of communication and what messages they could be sending that are not always intentional.* —Facilitator

***I enjoyed the activities on listening and asking questions because this showed [participants] that it was okay to ask a question, which they seldom don't want to do because they are afraid of looking dumb. This activity showed them the necessity of using this skill in the workplace and how impactful it could be to their success on the job.*** —Facilitator

*The [Life Is Full of Hard Knocks] activities were very helpful and insightful because students could see that the road to success is not an easy climb, that everyone starts at the bottom and that it takes time and plenty of failures before you make it, but that's okay, as long as you don't quit.* —Facilitator

***Overall, I think the students really learned a lot and were challenged by exploring and addressing skills and styles of communicating that could not be articulated or explained, but now have meaning and comprehension that will help them be more successful in the workplace—because keeping a job is just as successful as getting one.*** —Victoria West, Renton, Wash.

*It was really great to see how the students began the class with one outlook, and at the end of the sessions, I could see how their perceptions had changed. Many of them believed that once they interviewed for a position and obtained the job that they no longer had to make themselves presentable.* —Facilitator

***A lot of [students] didn't realize that they have been networking or that networking was an important component when trying to get ahead. Many of the group activities were eye-openers for the students. They all loved the Super Ball and a Raw Egg activity. I think that particular session stood out to them. They learned that when things happen it's okay to fall apart, but it is more important to get back up and learn and live!!!*** —Kiana Davis, Renton, Wash.