**Discussion Board Excerpts from Classes 1-4 of Job Development and Job Retention**

This document includes the questions from the Discussion Boards and selected responses. There is a short editorial about each of the questions to provide a review of the content. We selected responses that best exemplified the concepts or skills in the Discussion Board. There were many rich discussions and we wanted to use “revisit and reinforce” the course. There has been some editing to have clear sentences, to reduce the volume and to use universal language. Hope this is acceptable with all of you.

Sometimes there was confusion about the **three P’s** which are clearly different. The most confusion was in Module 3 about the PITCH, which is not meant for employers, but to gain leads to employers. It is important to keep the three goals and concepts separate. Here it is in a nutshell:

Happy reading and I hope you find this helpful.

**Joan Rapp**

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**Job Development and Job Retention Discussions (Classes 1-4)**

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| **Module 1. Discussion:**  **1. How can you give positive feedback to a job seeker?**  **2. Give examples of good accommodation that would support job seekers when they go to work.** |

***Instructor’s Comments: 1. Your discussion postings point out that there is an ongoing process of providing feedback to job seekers, including both the positive and negative consequences of their job related actions. 2. Your comments mention accommodations that we often think about. It is worth thinking outside the box about creative solutions and also looking at some of the solutions used for persons who do not have a mental health condition, but get an accommodation. Teri mentions practicing with the employee how to ask for a specific accommodation – this would be very helpful. Pauline brings out the fact that some people do not want to use an accommodation, because it would make them feel “different”. However, in some cases there may be ways to just offer the idea as a suggestion that some people find helpful vs. something they do because of a disability such as the cue cards. They would help all of us. Finally, several people commented on the benefits of talking about other peers who have successfully become employed. I would go a step further and introduce job seekers to the peers who are employed whether in person (best), online in the many thousands of stories published on websites today or written. If you need to know any, let me know and we will share.***

**Pauline Banducci**

For the past 8 years I have worked with a few hundred individuals. Through their feedback to me, which I solicit, I have been able to grow and improve in my way of thinking about feedback.

I am lucky. The population I work with are mostly in their 20's (some as old as 60) and educated. They have shame about their inability to concentrate, remember, focus, problem-solve, but we are a large therapeutic community and a farm. Through their daily farm work their cognitive abilities improve; they learn that feedback helps them to appreciate their successes and feedback is given when we expect them to grow even more. So feedback is seen as real. When they miss work and the chickens aren't fed that day - there are consequences for the chickens, and they get that feedback. When they don't show up to the bakery, the dessert for Tuesday night won't be made, and they hear some grumbling from their peers. They crave the honest feedback and tell me over and over if they just receive praise it's hard for them to trust that. I try to be rigorously honest - and deliver it softly and with kindness, but deliver it. I have been thanked for it several times. I think this is great preparation for an actual job.

Accommodations: The other posts were excellent. Most people I work with do not disclose. They find honest ways to deal with the gaps in their applications/resumes/cover letters, which we practice. Those that request accommodations might be: doctor's/therapist appointments & longer training time.

**Cheryl Nicholas**

I like your post. I think the perception of "accommodations" is fear based, in that it will cost me/my company something. I reframe in that most companies make some type of accommodation to a number of employees every day. For example, letting someone take an early lunch; letting someone leave 10 minutes early three days a week to pick up a child at daycare. I think we have to think and talk more in term of what job seeker can and cannot do. If we as SE specialist and our consumers are comfortable with talking about and asking for the accommodations, employers will eventually be too.

**Teri Sauve**

The employment specialist (ES) should ask the job-seeker if they can meet to check in. The conversation environment should be comfortable for both people. The ES might ask how things are going at the workplace, what the job seeker likes and dislikes and ask about any issues or concerns they might want to address or discuss. The ES can then ask the job seeker if they can give them some positive feedback. The ES gives the feedback and asks the job seeker for his/her own feedback about the conversation. This is an excellent opportunity for the two people to build rapport for the job seeker to build trust with the ES. This will also help to improve self-confidence and self-esteem for the job seeker as well as provide motivation to continue working toward career goals.

One accommodation that comes up in the youth that I work with is that they would like a break during their work shift. So we practice a conversation they will have with the employer to ask for this, then they will go to the employer and request a shorter lunch break in order to take the extra time to have a short break midmorning and mid-afternoon. This has been very successful with most employers.

**Linda Schroeder**

1. I met with a client yesterday. He was scheduled to come to the office at 10:00. He left a message that he would be there but was running late. We had started an application together and his homework was to finish the application and to meet me at the office to make copies and review.  When the client arrived I said "John, I appreciated the fact that you took the time to call me to tell me you were going to be late. This is showing me that you are responsible and respectful to the person you are meeting with. Thank you." John had dressed for success and several people in the office commented on his appearance as did I. After reviewing the application, I told "John" great job on filling out the application.  It was done neatly and you filled in all the blanks. This is important. John said "I learned at the workshop at Work source that you should always fill in every blank on an application." After finishing reviewing the application, we made a game plan for what for him to do next.  He left the office knowing what the next steps were to be done.

2. Examples of good accommodations to support job seekers going to work:

* Checklist on cue cards that are laminated on a key ring with clip to keep on their belt loop to take on and off as needed
* Fatigue mat to stand on to support long hours of standing
* Folding prop to help fold shirts in a laundry facility
* Headphones to listen to at work to block out the voices (if allowed on work floor)

**Pauline Banducci**

I especially liked the example of positive feedback to a job seeker. You were specific and gave tangible examples so that John knew exactly what he had done well. It was also helpful I am sure that John was able to express what he had learned at Work source, since it will reinforce for him exactly what would be effective. He in some way was re-teaching himself. He is probably ready to now help others do the same e.g. fill out an application effectively.

**Linda Schroeder**

Often after the individuals start work and we review how they are doing, I specifically ask them if they are having any problems in any area and if so brainstorm with them possible solutions to their issues.

**Christina Finamore**

Starting a new job can be very stressful for a myriad of reasons... "Where's the stapler, I don't know that code, one moment please, I'm sorry I'm new..."

I would tell someone just going back to work for the first time in a while, "number 1, congratulations, you worked hard and got the job so you should be very proud of yourself for that." Then I think a good accommodation would be to establish a routine. I suggest preparing a sandwich for tomorrow to grab out of the fridge on the way out the door and maybe bathing at night. Then get a good nights' sleep, wake up at the same time every day and get a few other things done before work such as making the bed, eating some breakfast, wash your face and teeth and then head out to work.

I would also let them know that if at any time they feel they need support, to either call me or stop by the clubhouse and if I don't know the answer I will find someone who does.

I think acknowledging a job well done is important and letting the person know that they can rely on you to be there for them if and when they have any questions and also that you will check in with them weekly to simply ask them "how's it going,.." and wait for them to answer.

There are many positive things I have to say to the members I work for and it's different for every person but today a woman was getting frustrated and I sat with her and reminded her of her strengths. She is good with people, she is patient and understanding. I told her that when you need a job, searching for a job is your job. I told her to take her time and that the right job is out there for her and we need to just keep looking.

**Pauline Banducci**

I really liked what you said: looking for a job -- is your job! When our clients are so anxious and shamed while looking for a job, it’s a great idea to remind them that this is their job right now. I love this. It’s very difficult to write an excellent cover letter and letting the man know that is very important, I think. Maybe he could teach others how to do that? It’s quite a skill and creates anxiety in nearly everyone I know. I think it’s also important for folks to look for something they will love that will get them out of the bed every day. Many individuals don't even know what they might love - so this is my focus - helping them find out what they will truly love, combined with what they are qualified to do - and then finding that job. The best jobs are never advertised, so we actually go a different route.

**Irina Markovich**

1. I believe that the most important aspect of giving feedback to a participant is respecting this individual as a holistic person and appreciating his values, feelings, needs and beliefs. Developing rapport and trust is essential for providing a sincere and genuine feedback that individual will be interested to listen to. I am acknowledging even minor steps on the way to success, such as showing for an appointment or thinking about job search. I try to find specific things to praise in individual’s work, and prefer to give suggestions rather than direction for things that need improvement.  If individual share his/her success with me, I always get back to him/her congratulating and telling how impressive it was. Complementing and making a big deal of their success; let them know that I believe that they are capable of doing amazing things and help them to receive feedback on required improvements more openly. As any other information, I believe it is very important to give feedback in a way that person can understand and relay to.

 2.  In addition to examples that have been shared in previous posts I will add such helpful accommodation as:

* Appointing/ finding  “go to“ person  at work, preferably the co–worker who can answer immediate questions
* Supportive supervisor, who would provide clear instruction and will follow up when task is done and discuss  what was done well and what  needs some improvement
* Modifying instruction in a way that person can understand them (quick cards, pictures, bigger fonts etc.)
* Recoding equipment to record verbal instruction and refer to them as needed

mentorship

* Educating other employees (or some employees) about individual conditions and early signs of stress/illness
* Extended  training  time
* Flexible time

**Pauline Banducci**

For me the most important thing I received from your discussion is the information on giving feedback in a way the person can understand and relate to. I do think this is very important.

**Katherine Slye-Griffin**

I will typically ensure that any feedback I provide is (1) structured (2) uses a good ol’ compliment sandwich and whenever/wherever possible (3) is provided in both verbal and written format. I have personally found that my greatest success with clients results from a friendly and engaging conversation followed by a concise and very clear written summary of what was discussed. Too often my clients (even some without mental illness) have memory/concentration problems which are best supported with a tangible document which can be reviewed as needed.

There are many accommodations which can support a client (including but not limited to):

* Flexible work schedules
* Telework
* Noise cancelling headphones/devices
* Private spaces with doors that close
* Rest periods/breaks

However, the key is always finding the appropriate fit between the needs of the client, the needs of the employing organization, and what a manager is willing to do. Too often I see conflict because the client has not been appropriately educated about appropriate accommodations and the manager has not been educated about the interactive process and therefore encouraged to enter in a discussion rather than just saying "no."

**Kevin Stansbury**

I don't seem to think much about giving positive feedback as a separate process.  I am coming from a view that naturally focuses on the strengths of the people I am working with. Whenever I notice that they already have a good understanding about a particular part of the job search process or that they are coming into a new level of awareness I spontaneously acknowledge their inherent wisdom or their areas of growth.  As I'm sure many of you know, probably better than me since I'm new to this job, one of the biggest barriers that comes up with nearly everyone I work with is lack of confidence; pervasive self-doubt.  That being the case, I find that it is critical that I do whatever I can to help foster a deeper sense of confidence.  I always let them know what they are doing well and what could be improved upon. I focus on locating and enhancing strengths instead of criticizing weaknesses.  If I notice weaknesses that need to be addressed I make sure to use skillful, respectful communication when talking with them about things they can do to improve their chances of being received well by potential employers.   
  
The first person I worked with was not part of the regular job development program that we have here at MHALA. We typically don't disclose.  In this particular situation we were setting up a "we-pay" program where we come to an agreement with an employer out in the community in which a member can work a handful of hours per week in their business and we will pay the member minimum wage.  The employer basically gets free labor and the member gets an opportunity to gain work experience.  This particular member initially needed a lot of on-the-job support because he has had difficulty maintaining employment in the past.  We provided support to him while he was working, helping him stay focused.  After a few weeks he started getting into the routine and now he hardly needs any support.  This is the longest he has worked in years and he is still doing a great job.  We continue checking in with him, keeping a line of communication open, letting him know that he can always talk to us about any anxiety that might come up on the job and he is grateful.

**Nicole De La Loza Rivera**

To give positive feedback to a job seeker, it is important to first listen to and acknowledge concerns, anxieties, fears, and barriers, and validate those feelings. Once we demonstrate honesty, empathy, and an understanding of these challenges, I think the job seeker is more likely to really take in encouragement and positive feedback, and develop a sense of confidence. It is important to highlight all of the accomplishments and milestones each job seeker faces, whether it's attending a workshop or class, keeping an appointment, or filling out a first job application.

Accommodations that would support a job seeker at work are ones that not only make it physically possible to do the work, but that can help create a safer experience for someone dealing with disabilities. When I think of some our job seekers who have mental illness, I think that having a distraction free job if needed, being able to take a walk when overwhelmed, wearing headphones or listening to music, and being able to ask for things to be repeated – could all be beneficial accommodations.

**Maria Garritt**

1.  I believe that the most important aspect of giving feedback to a job seeker is to understand him/her as a unique individual.  The vocational counselor needs to be empathic; first to the person and his/her needs and reality and later to the job seeking process. Job seeking is much more than just landing a job, it is a personal journey.  It is important to remember that job seeking can be a very scary and challenging process and that it can trigger negative and damaging emotions/feelings/memories in the client.  It is to the role of the vocational counselor to support in a positive way this process by focusing on the positive aspects, with respect and without a "patronizing" attitude.  I believe that honesty and positive feedback can very well be combined.

2. Good accommodations that would support job seekers are those that foster the best development of an effective working environment.  Good accommodations "inspire" and foster productive and satisfactory work.  Good job accommodations adapt both to the needs of the workers as to the needs of the place of work.  Job accommodations must be designed taking into consideration the individual and the job objective and it is best if these accommodations include the input of the employer and the employee.  Depending on the individual disability some examples of good accommodations are:

a) Frequent short rest periods (for individuals who present anxiety or hyperkinesia)

b) Soothing music (to help concentration and reduce anxiety and stress)

c) Written instructions (for individuals with memory impediments)

d) Flexible hours (for individuals with sleep disorders)

**Aaron Fernandez**

In my experience, it’s not uncommon to find young persons with severe long term mental illnesses who are surprised that they just like every other person their age, can and should pursue vocational and/or education goals. This is not surprising given that mental health care providers themselves are seen to be ambivalent about whether such persons with these conditions should or can pursue work. I give positive feedback to job seekers as below:

- Let them know that a growing number of persons with similar health problems are employed and are satisfied

- Even people without mental health problems don’t necessarily land a job the first interview. Securing a job that you want usually involves a number of interviews until a good job match. The key here is preparing well for an interview and going for a number of them. Praise effort. Some good accommodation practices include the following:

            - Allowing hourly short breaks (instead of a long lunch hour) to help cope with the reduced attention

            - Break down instructions to bite sized chunks and in media/material of choice to facilitate understanding of the same

            - Open channels for clear bidirectional communication are available

            - Vocational advisor and Managers being easily accessible to each other for consultation

            - Provision of time off for mental health appointments

**Nicole De La Loza Rivera**

I completely agree that giving the perspective that it is normal for all job seekers - whether or not they have been unemployed, are dealing with mental illness, etc. - to interview several times before landing a job, to feel nervous or scared, etc. many of our job seekers feel so alone in their anxieties and fears.

**Thomas Schlitt**

We serve a woman who suffers from Bipolar Disorder.  She taught English in the Ukraine before her symptoms arrived, so she had some experience teaching.  When I sat down with her, I asked her what she was passionate about, and it became clear that she was passionate about education.  A way to give a job seeker positive feedback is by emphasizing their strengths, and it was clear that one of this woman's strengths was her desire to help others learn.  Just by pointing out that I could see that she was passionate about education, her motivation for finding a job where she could teach increased. This woman became a substitute teacher in our county, and she could not be happier.  She able to educate students, and if she cannot get out of bed because of her depression, she can pass on teaching that day. Being able to accept or decline teaching opportunities has been a good accommodation for her, and because its part-time work, she has been able to keep her benefits as well.

**Elizabeth Miller**

1. I would give positive feedback by using clear objective terms when giving praise so the job seeker receives important information on how to actively improve.  Use positive, direct descriptions.  Center myself and focus on what they feel they have done positively and what they would like to improve on to create motivating goals.  Reflect on how they are feeling and stay in a positive and motivating light.

2. Good accommodation includes discussion with employer about ways to be flexible regarding certain needs job seekers may have and keep employer agreeable at the same time.  This could include taking into account surrounding environment and coping skills that job seeker may need to utilize appropriately, allowing certain amounts or length of breaks.  In addition accommodation could be assisting client in researching bus route or how they plan to get to and from job safely and timely or coming up with/coaching/teaching alternative ways to complete more difficult tasks in the work place.

**Amy D'Antonio**

I never tell a job seeker that they did something "wrong". My approach is to suggest they try it another way & see how it feels to them; or to suggest that the employer might respond positively if they approach the employer in a certain way.

Accommodations:  Headphones to manage internal voices; build a cubicle with cabinets or boxes to manage visual distractions.

**Alice Bilodeau**

Positive feedback should include:  regular praise in person; keep feedback simple, realistic; and specific; change up the wording do not always give the same praise; make sure body language matches, smiling and remain positive even when providing criticism.

Good accommodations:  Adjusting work schedule to allow for appointment. Flexible break times instead of set times, flexible supportive supervision, reducing distracting noise providing provide space/dividers lowering radio/loud speakers; providing equipment devices to assist with performing job duties.

**Robin Crawford**

1. I can give positive feedback to a job seeker by giving praise and positive feedback when he/she shows improvement in with any learned skill.  When a job seeker has questions that raise doubt/lack confidence I would provide information, answer all questions clearly so they can comprehend, feel at ease and comfortable. Most of all I would encourage client with positive words that focus on their strengths and abilities.

2. Examples of good accommodations that would support job seekers when they go to work are the following:

- Discussion with the employer in advance adaptable equipment that is not expensive for client in order him or her to be successful at the job site.  For example, job seeker may need his or her desk set up in a certain way in terms of seating or telephone arrangement.

- The Job Specialist could provide short cuts or modifications of the tasks needed to complete the job in a way that is easier for the job seeker.

- Flexible scheduling: Job Specialist will go over transportation logistics in terms of time, and distance of bus stop from house to job: how to travel to and from. Job Specialist could do practice runs (ride on bus and follow bus in car ) with client in terms of orienting until he/she is confident to do alone.

**Melissa Marien**

I provide positive feedback to a job seeker when they review their employment plan with me and the steps they have taken.  I encourage the job seeker to make a plan and break it into steps and provide positive feedback as they work on their goal of employment.  Even if they did not complete a step I review the positives and provide suggestions on ways to continue with their plan and move on to the next step or try a new technique.  I let the job seeker know that it is important to remain positive and that challenges can occur so it is important to be flexible and find a solution to what they feel is negative or what they feel they failed at.

For accommodations I have assisted individuals with reviewing their coping strategies and helping them identify if they would need to utilize them at work.  I assisted a woman with rehearsing before she spoke to her boss about her break schedule. She wanted to split her break so she could take a walk to help reduce her anxiety.  Her supervisor was fine with this because her work was not impacted. I have not had to assist many individuals with requesting accommodations but I know I can utilize resources to educate individuals about their rights. I have assisted students with connecting with ADA services on campus to request additional test time and to obtain technology tools, which would help job seekers.

**Jessica Vaz**

1. In my peer-led program, we hold three Employment Preparation Workshops a week and offer individual services as well. A section of our curriculum focuses on interviewing, where we conduct mock interviews with the consumers. This is a structured time where group facilitators and other participants may offer positive feedback to the consumer, as we always ask what the consumer did well before discussing what could be improved on.

2. Several of our job seekers are easily affected by external distractions. A reasonable accommodation for them would be to request that they are able to wear headphones, or to work in a space where there are limited distractions.

**Jennifer Caputo**

1. How can you give positive feedback to a job seeker?

I try to provide positive feedback for job seekers by helping them set goals and help them accurately track their progress so they have something to look back on when they are feeling like they are getting nothing accomplished.

2.  While the accommodation must be tailored to the specific person and disability, a good example of one with a physical disability would be to allow that person to sit while doing their job.  If a person returning to work has an intellectual disability, laminated note cards with instructions for jobs can be helpful.

**Joseph Hvorecky**

1. I find the best way of providing positive feedback to a job seeker is to establish specific target goals with the individual seeker.  I then attempt to funnel all my feedback to the individual in a constructive way based on those target goals.  If, for example, an individual desires to apply on line to a various job opening and then follow that process up with a phone call a few days later to the appropriate point of contact for the job opening, I simply set a time to discuss the process outcomes with the individual.  I think rewarding the effort is the best way of providing positive feedback, and if the action(s) do not provide immediate successful results, I attempt to help the individual understand the merit in the job seeking effort itself.  Writing down those goals is very critical to a positive feedback mechanism.

2. From an employer standpoint, I find the best accommodation for those with a mental disability to be the "flexible work schedule," usually presenting in allowing someone to arrive for work within a two hour window in the morning and working a range of hours during the week best suited toward the individual’s tolerance level.

**Melissa Kruise**

1. How can you give positive feedback to a job seeker?

How I give positive feedback to a job seeker is by keeping them involved with their job development. When I first meet with a person I get to know them by finding out what things they like to do and what type of employment they are interested in seeking. Once they decided what jobs they would like to look for I work with them with putting in applications, making their resume and practicing interview prep. Once they have an interview I work with the person on making them feel comfortable with the interviewing process. After the interview I give positive feedback on the strengths the individual had during the interview. I continue the same process until employment is secured.

2. Give examples of good accommodation that would support the job seeker when they go to work. Well they most common type of accommodation is a job coach. The job coach assists the job seeker with learning their job and maintaining employment.

Another example I have is a women I was supporting who was working in a building that had doors all three the building that you had to but your badge up to get in. I worked with her for days on getting the badge in the right area to get the door to open. She was struggling with it. I put a dot on the back of her card which enable her to be able to place the card in the correct spot every time.

**Greg Baldwin**

Positive feedback: Encourage that person to share with you what their "true" working goals are. If the person was told all their lives that they would only be able to perform a certain position such as janitorial or dish washing, then that is the only thing they feel they can do. It is our job and responsibility to let that person know that they can do any type of job they want and give them full support and encouragement while seeking that position. Telling the person that they should not limit themselves to these types of tasks and have them open up to you what it is they really want to do. Encourage them to pursue that type of employment, but don't just tell them the "good parts" of the job, it is equally important that they understand the "down sides" to every job and let them make an informed decision.

Give examples of good accommodation that would support job seekers when they go to work.

Recently I have been supporting a gentleman who works at a local fast food restaurant. He is very good at what he does and receives nothing but praise from his manager and co-workers. Recently he has been missing some work. The manager stated that she was concerned as she likes him but does not want to see him have to be let go due to lack of attendance. She asked if he had had any changes in his life at home or health. After speaking with him and getting permission to speak to the employer, I informed her that recently he had had a medication change and this affects him once in a while. The manager stated that she will put that in his file so that when he calls of due to his medication it will not be looked at as a strike against him but rather an accommodation to ensure that he can continue to work and to also help him to get the increase in days and hours that he had requested.

**Lani Otto**

1. I believe that you first need to know your person and their history.  Any paper, face to face, ETS to family, counselors, friends, etc. then I believe you can begin with the positive feedback because you know "pieces" of that person and what they have done previously, even if they have just begun to seek employment and have never worked there are positives you can get from their information.  I would start with the things that someone has liked doing that has never had a paying job, (ex.) volunteering, being part of their Church Group, etc.  Of course with someone that had had job experience, I would pull all of their positives, (ex.) duration of the years they worked and what they did and if it was a job that had been phased out I would dig into what the person has liked doing maybe with volunteering that you could pull a job out of. I have said what else is there in your life that you have really enjoyed doing?

2. I had a person who could not tell time on an ordinary wall clock.  He also had a hard time reading the time on his phone. But there was a larger digital clock on the stove in the kitchen where he worked.  I drew a digital clock with the correct time to begin work and one when it was time to quit for the day but I also made pictures of the original clock with the hands pointing to the numbers when he would begin and quit.  We have also used alarms on watches that assist people in returning from their breaks on time.  I have used task cards to assist natural accommodations have been in place, colored dots.

**Charles Lansberry**

1. Giving positive feedback to a job seeker varies depending on the culture and disability. Although I completely understand the suggestion of eye contact and body language being used, I find that not to be effective with some folks with dual diagnosis; especially with Autism.  Getting to know the job seeker, reminding the seeker they are part of the community, explain the pro’s and con’s, explain all persons are unique (have strengths/weaknesses), encourage the idea of employment, explain success stories, explain accommodations, and be reminding of the fact they are not unemployable.

2. Give examples of good accommodation that would support job seekers when they go to work. Good accommodations that support job seekers when they go to work:

- definitely having an employment training specialist for assistance accessible for learning/relearning job duties; in the event of changes in health or job duties.

- flexible breaks

- ability to have adaptive technology

**Rita Reilly**

When individual is sharing their interests, their passions, their barriers, it is really helpful to use the positive and negative lists to show where their strengths are and how to build on them.  Then take the negatives and help them see what options they have to reduce the strength of them.  Is there some way to "accentuate the positive" and "reduce the negative"?  There is a tendency to "accentuate the negative" due to low self-esteem and self-confidence.  Feelings of ability to perform come with praises of abilities.

I think one of the best "good accommodations" I heard, wish I could say I did, was an individual who needed prompters to get to work on time and return to work following breaks and lunch.  The individual was given the device necessary to give a verbal prompt when it was near time to go back and the only way she would listen is if it was "her" voice that told her to do it.  The employer assisted with seeing that this was put into place and was instrumental in seeing that it was used.  Another example did involve me, and it was a young man who wanted to answer phones for a business, however the individual had a severe speech impediment that did not allow him to be understood on the phone.  The employer utilized his desire to interact with others to call patients to come back from the waiting room and see that the answering machine messages were delivered to the staff.

**Elizabeth Atwood**

Positive feedback: As one works with the job seeker there are many opportunities to give positive feedback.  Acknowledging efforts and milestones can assist the job seeker to stay motivated.  The feedback can be specific and communicated verbally, through body language (smiling, nodding) or written (an email).

Examples of good accommodations that would support job seekers when they go to work include possible use of a job coach, changes to the physical work environment (lighting, noise and interruption control, or use of music), memory aids and changes to work schedule to allow for breaks or medical appointments.

**Kristi Noble**

1. Positive feedback can be given to a job seeker to emphasize the person's strengths in the job process and conveys an optimistic attitude.  By acknowledging the positive steps a person is taking towards employment/recovery, this can help enhance the person's hopefulness, confidence, and beliefs.

2. Some examples of good accommodations to support job seekers would be flexible work hours such as allowing more sick days per month. Thus, if symptoms start to arise that will affect his or her work performance, the individual can feel comfortable calling in and the supervisor will understand the reasoning behind calling in, granted the client chose to disclose about their disability to employer. Accommodations should differ based upon the needs of the specific person; the principles of supported employment stress the importance of individualized employment plans. Another example of an accommodation could be a personal assistant or a co-worker/mentor that helps with job duties, work routines, provides training and support.

**Sharon Roberson**

I always talk to my job seekers to gather a profile on them. Even more than the skills they may have, I ask them about their interest or what they like to do. I remind them that things that we like to do for fun can also become jobs and careers. Most importantly, I remind them that they life is their life! It gives them a sense of worth and power again. Last but not least, I always praise them and let them know how proud I am of their hard work, whether it be job seeking/interviews or job skill building.

**Kimberly Gregg**

Giving positive feedback is one of the most important parts of an Employment Specialist working with MH individuals in my opinion. When spending even a small amount of time with an individual with MH issues and their family and/or friends it is easy to see that the majority of feedback they receive is negative, sometimes to the point of keeping that person from pursuing even the most modest goals. Helping someone see/notice/realize they have positive attributes can make a major impact on someone who is consistently surrounded by negativity. In another post it was brought up that giving negative feedback in a positive way can also be helpful, and I agree. If you can teach someone about how to conquer something that may currently be negative that can further instill positivity in that individuals life while showing that they are indeed capable of many things that they may not have realized yet.

One way to give positive feedback is to focus on positives in a person’s personality such as the person is very amiable, or a diligent worker, and trying to not only bring it up, but to build on that with other attributes that come from that, such as a diligent worker would also be a reliable person.

An example from my office of assistance in accommodating for an individual in order to work would be medication adjustment. One of my consumers was having a difficult time staying focused after lunch and it turns out that he had to take one of his meds midday that was making him sleepy. We got together with his physician and changed that medication to later in the day after he was finished with work and he no longer had a problem with his afternoon duties.

**Judith Halloran**

Positive feedback can range from encouragement, to reflective listening, to motivational interviewing, to name a few. Depending on the stage the job seeker is at, it should be used to help motivate, support, and redefine goals as they relate to employment. It's opposite, negative feedback, is rampant in the employment world so offering positive feedback as an employment specialist is a keystone to the work we do.

Good accommodations are those that are a win-win for both the employer and employee. Oftentimes my clients have a long laundry list of 'wishes' that would suit their fancy but accommodating all of these presents a burden to any employer. One must narrow down what is truly a disability that needs accommodation for successful employment outcomes rather than a desire that's going to irritate the employer. An employment specialist must partner with his/her job seeker in creating a reasonable proposal that any given employer would find feasible without compromising his/her bottom line.

**Arletta Holman**

I once had a person with a mental health disability, who had a slight intellectual disability, as well.  The agency I worked for helped her to get a job at McDonalds as a person who cleans tables and keeps condiment bars filled.  She was a great worker who loved having a job.  Her shifts were 5 hours, no break.  She would work at top speed for about 2 hours, then the energy would drop and she would be dragging.  I talked with her about it and discovered that she was also diabetic. (Information I had not been given as the job coach.)  She was eating at 7 AM, 12 noon and then worked from 3-8 and eating afterwards.  Once I learned this,  I asked her if she minded if I spoke to the manager, disclosed the information as to her medical condition and asked if she could come in 15 minutes earlier and then take a break for 15 minutes after 2 hours to have a sandwich and drink.  She thought that would be great.  The manager said that it was fine.  Everyone was happy, as the worker felt much better after eating and was then able to work much better for the employer.

Also providing a checklist where each task is checked off once it is completed can be very helpful for someone with OCD. I think that when giving positive feedback, it is essential to be genuine.  Many times the people I work with do not have an idea of their own positive skills/attributes.  Something as small as having someone try to do something that they are not certain they can do, could be cause for some great feedback.  One could say something like "Someone else might not even have attempted what you tried, but you said, "I think I can do it" and you did it. Great job! ”

**Kelly Nelson**

1. When working with individuals who are pursuing employment, I try to approach vocation from a recreation/interest approach.  Delving into someone's interests usually relieves anxiety and increases his/her self-esteem, as individuals usually like activities in which they thrive and thrive in activities they like.  When discussing interests/recreational activities with individuals, positive feedback can be given regarding their unique strengths and talents.  When individuals enjoy their work (or the idea of their future work), they are more likely to be motivated to pursue the job as well as keep it.

2. On our ACT Team, the clients experience symptoms associated with psychosis.  When managing positive symptoms of psychosis (auditory/visual hallucinations), it can be helpful to ask employers--depending on work environment--to allow individuals to play their favorite music via headphones.  Many of our job seekers experience difficulties with concentration and short-term memory during high-stress situations.  It can be helpful to request that these workers receive a more consistent workload as opposed to extreme fluctuations in workload.  Meeting briefly with supervisors once a week to discuss workload issues could increase communication between the worker and those in authority. Workplace communication is often a significant, yet easily accommodated challenge.

**Leonard Suits**

Once disclosure has taking place and reasonable accommodations have been requested and can be provided by the employer. There can be any number of accommodations put in place for the employee, to become or remain successful on the job, such as, the employee may have a sleep disturbance. The request could be for the employee to have a more flexible start time and /or to be allowed to take one long break instead of short breaks. If the employee has memory issues, accommodations could be for the person to have a job coach, allow more time for training, have a checklist or a step by step list made up for the employee to be able to look at and to follow to complete his/her job tasks.

Positive verbal feedback will be the most effective method of giving feedback to the job seeker. You will verbally point out to the job seeker all the positive things that you and/or others have observed the job seeker doing in order to be more marketable in the job market. We have learned with the job seeker’s permission. You may also have to give, in a non-judgmental way, negative feedback in a positive and supportive way, that will give the job seeker an opportunity to refine his/her job seeking skills, if need be.

**Jeff Sidders**

1. Giving Positive Feedback: Use of affirming and validating statements (within context of motivational interviewing techniques) is an effective vehicle in my experience. It is important to project enthusiasm and express yourself in a positive way while conveying the comments. I always try to affirm even the smallest of efforts initially, while trying to build an alliance, since as other participants have keenly noted, job seekers often have high anxiety/fear barriers, and can become easily overwhelmed--> which can rapidly lead to return to pre-contemplation, and disengagement. Having the job seeker self-evaluate after completing an activity promotes self-empowerment (as Units 2 & 3 highlighted), and gauges his/her insight into vocational strengths, challenges, and barriers, which can then better inform/refine the employment specialist's approach toward connecting with that person, and guiding him/her toward positive outcomes.

2. Good accommodation(s) that support success at work: I have on several occasions, whether or not the job seeker has disclosed up front (is easier when disclosure has previously occurred), met with the employer and negotiated accommodations to the training routines and schedules. As some workers have cognitive processing limitations, or experience in Mental Health symptoms when learning a new job. It has on occasion been advantageous to request that pace of training be slowed down, and/or that tasks and routines be introduced in smaller segments. Another idea is having a job coach can be on site to assist with training (which is a benefit that we all can offer employers anyway when developing job opportunities). The most common requested accommodation that promotes positive adjustment for our job seekers when initially returning to work is flexibility of work schedule--> to preserve SSA benefits, not overwhelm stamina, facilitate maintenance of contacts with clinical supports, etc.

**Lisa Wool**

One individual that I worked with in the past had memory difficulties - they could not recall who co-workers were or if the co-worker was in a position to give them directions / job tasks.  To assist the individual, all of the co-workers and supervisors granted me permission to take their photograph and create a flip file for the individual that had a photograph, person’s name and their job listed, also supervisors were identified.  The individual found the file to be very helpful and the co-workers also indicated that understanding his difficulties and need helped them to better understand some of the individuals’ difficulties and they took extra measures to assist the individual in the future when they noticed him having difficulties.

Providing positive feedback to an individual that you are working with to find employment or to keep / grow within their position is important whether there is a disability or not. Feedback allows / helps each and every one of us to learn and grow.  It lets us know what we are doing well, helps us build on that skill / talent and inspirers confidence in our own ability. Even if there is something that the individual needs to "change" in what they are doing, how it is presented is the key.   Tell the individual that you like / appreciate their work, identify what needs to change and give a reason for it (for example - easier to track data). Just be honest, but also it wouldn’t hurt to know why they did the task the way they did.

**Shawn Hughes**

1.  Validate the job seeker's feelings of anxiety, let them know that they are likely not the only one that goes through these emotions when starting to look for a job.  Commend them for having the courage to take the next step in accomplishing their goals, highlighting their strengths.  Reassure the job seeker that we can work at a pace they are comfortable with.

 2.  Examples of accommodations:  Negotiating a flexible work schedule with the employer to allow for client to maintain regular appointments with clinicians and service providers; plan 1 hour weekly (or every other week) meetings with an employer, the job seeker and vocational counselor in the beginning stages of the job to discuss/problem solve on-the-job situations that come up until no longer needed with the agreement that we can plan meetings on an as needed basis.

**Fran Granaham**

My feeling is that the more you are able to have a person see their importance as an employee and tax payer within the community, the more a person will feel like a valuable part of their community.  Talking with a person about the benefits of work and what attributes they can contribute to the world of work, goes a long way.  Letting them know that it is ok to feel nervous, because everyone does when looking for a job.  Asking them why they want to work, and validating their responses.

 I was working with an individual who had trouble with his feet.  He would frequently need to take his shoes off and stretch his toes. In talking with the employer, the employer agreed to lessen this person's shift (PT rather than FT) and allow him to take 5-10 min breaks every hour to be able to do so.  This individual was a good worker and did his job very well.  Employer allowed for accommodation.

**John Floeser**

In your first statement it reminded me of individuals who have shared how good they feel to be a "part of society" and that it has increased their self-esteem.

1. Start the initial meeting with someone by giving positive praise in the goals they have achieved so far.

2. I suggest budgeting and benefits planning, so they are able to manage their changes of income.

**Hildegunn Rodrick**

The fact that a person is seeking work is an occasion for giving them positive feedback in itself: it takes courage and action just to start the process of finding work if you are out of the workforce.

Everyone has some talent. The key is matching an individual's talent to job. Then highlight how the talent can be used in the specific job situation.

**Wesley Baker**

1.  Giving positive feedback to a job seeker can be done by focusing on their strengths, treating them as a job seeker instead of a patient, and by pointing out professional behavior seen both verbally and non-verbally.

2.  Good examples of reasonable accommodation include asking for a job seeker to have a secluded space in order to conduct their work.  This accommodation can increase efficiency and productivity as well as make the job seeker feel more at ease.  Another example of reasonable accommodation would be asking for the job seeker to be able to have a small snack drawer in order to take their medication as prescribed (if the medication required food).  Finally, another reasonable accommodation would be to ask for the consumer to be able to miss large meetings and instead be required to read meeting notes as meetings cause great anxiety for the job seeker.

**John Floeser**

I would be concerned that some of the examples mentioned in Q.2 would be examples of exclusion and lead or perpetuate stigmatizing in the workforce. I understand where the thinking comes from but it also work to the new employees disadvantage, as in they are not seen and accepted as a member of the rest of the work group. If it's what it takes to get and keep the job for an individual then more power to them.

*Comment: Let’s keep in mind that sometimes accommodations are requested after the person had been on the job for a while and has had a chance to learn what s/he needs. Also we don’t want to over emphasize “accommodation for the disabled” when it can be couched in terms of a simple adjustment to the workplace. Many employees ask for adjustments to the workplace, their hours, their tasks etc. and they are not all due to disability.*

**Philip Maranon**

Effectively engaging with people provides the foundation to successfully support people affected by mental illness. When excellent rapport or mutual trust is established people engage and participate in activities, and when people feel respected and understood, they are more willing to engage in an open and honest manner to work collaboratively with their vocational counselors or placement specialist and work towards recovery.

**Kathleen Wallace**

Always talk about the job seeker's strengths.  Since strengths and areas for improvement run along a continuum; when you accent the strength you can then suggest using that identified strength to work on the area for improvement. If a job seeker hears voices, a reasonable accommodation may be to have a radio on at a quiet level. If a job seeker is easily distracted it may be beneficial to have this person sit within partitions. Emphasize that job seekers should take their breaks, giving themselves a little rest and rejuvenation.

**Sean Murphy**

Positive Feedback: I have worked over 20 years in the mental health field and I found 'Hope' to be one of the strongest motivators. Many people suffering from a mental health difficulty lose hope. Hope for the future, job, partner, children and don't see their goals as being attainable. When I meet with my clients, I like to get to know them and they get to know me. I explore what interests them and what their goals are. We discuss previous work, volunteer, school and general life experiences. I listen to what went well and where they might have learned from an experience. We discuss what they want to do and how we can work together to get there. When a person loses hope, it is difficult to see the positives. It sometimes takes some exploring, but I found that there have always been some positives in a person’s past. When discussing their interests and experiences you find strengths and we should point them out. When we point out strengths and skills we help give the person hope. Hope to get a job and hope to attain their goals.

Accommodation: I recently had a client ask me about getting accommodations. They didn't ask out right "I need accommodations?" They said, "I am having trouble at my new job." I asked what was going on. This person explained they have a learning disability and they are having trouble learning the computer system. We discussed what training was given, what training is needed and how to approach the employer about it. This individual needed one-on-one training and more time. Another client had to do testing on a computer. This individual has literacy issues, so they could not read the questions and then write out the answers. I called and spoke to the employer and they allowed me to assist with the test. The client received certificates for the completion.

I have found many of my clients do not want to disclose their disability. We discuss what the benefits would be in discussing it with the employer. Is it needed? Do they need to disclose their disability? What happens if they don't disclose? It is a discussion that needs to happen. Hopefully before it is too late and a person loses their job due to not having the necessary accommodations met.

**Nancy Gagnon**

1. Prior to the interview, a preference would be if there would be a time period of building a rapport and having time to prepare. Following the interview we would review how the interview transpired, how they think they did at the interview, was there any feedback from the employer, what was the job seekers expectation from the interview compared to the outcome? My role at this point is to listen, to pick up on body language and emotions from the interview process. If there were fears going into the interview, what are the emotions following the interview?

I usually remind the job seeker that going for a job interview is about getting to know each other. The employer is looking to see if you are a good fit and get to know a bit about you, but also you have an opportunity to see if this job is a good fit for you. It’s like a relationship - you both get to find out if it is a good match. If it did not feel successful, I will ask how you would do it differently, we would review the interview questions, impressions. We would talk about the gains made, however small. Find the positive part of the experience and accentuate the skills, they have and how well they did in this area.

2. Accommodations: Flexible work schedule/ adjustment of the work schedule, clear instruction according to their work style i.e. hands on, visual, instructional; make a co-worker connection to have a work buddy or mentor at work, how to manage distractions(use a headset or listen to music), review trainings or attend a second time if able to; work from home or partially change how the work gets done; a place for medication/quiet place/self-care; look at ways to get the job/task done but find a way that works best for the job seeker.

**James Schiesz**

1. Giving positive feedback**:**  I try to normalize a lot of aspects of the job search process with my clients and make sure they know that they are ultimately responsible for their progress; that I am just their helper.  I think this gives them confidence and the ability to take ownership.

Many of our clients have a lower self-confidence due to the stigma and struggles with their mental health.   I often remind them that the job market is tough for everybody and not to get too discouraged when they are having trouble getting results.  I also remind them that most people are nervous in interviews – that they are not alone in those feelings – and tell them that an interview is an opportunity to see if the company is a right fit for them, not just to see if they are qualified for the job.  I think many people go into an interview thinking it is a one-way judgment of the interviewer toward the interviewee.  Reminding the client that it is a two-way meeting and they are also judging whether or not the company is a right fit for them gives them power and control over the meeting.

Of course, all of these ideas should be coupled with an ongoing conversation with your client where you are reinforcing their strengths and giving them helpful techniques to confront each specific job search technique.

2. Accommodations: Being able to take a break when work situations are getting too stressful would be a good accommodation.  An employer who is willing to be flexible for doctor’s appointments or hospitalizations would be beneficial.  Overall, an employer who appreciates the skills a particular worker brings to the workplace and is willing to have open lines of communication with the worker directly, or in certain circumstances (when there is a signed consent for confidentiality) with the worker’s counselor, is going to make for a supportive work environment.

**Kati Flanagan**

Positive feedback is one of the key strategies I find myself using on a day-to-day basis with clients. Being able to recognize the small successes or better help the job seeker to recognize their own achievements is of great value. If the client or job seeker is willing to participate in active listening/receiving feedback I can usually tap into the positives in the situation. If the client has seen their outcome as a failure, it is even more important to capture those things that bode well for them.

For example if a client had gone to an interview and came back feeling they had "blown" the interview, after I ask them to explore what they felt went well in their own eyes, I will bring to light the fact that they were granted an interview in itself is a success, they have this experience to be able to take with them to the next interview and that this is a great learning opportunity to figure out what answers you feel you could prepare better for.

Speak to the client about how they performed, providing information directly from the activity itself, using things that can be directly linked back to them and their efforts. Provide praise but not in a way that will be false or is just used to "boost their ego". Speak directly to the facts of the activity such as the skills they used or learned, the courage it can take to make the steps they have taken, or how well "put together" they looked for an interview, to help promote self-confidence.

An accommodation that seems to be one of the most highly requested by the population I serve seems to be that of a flexible schedule. Client's would like to know that while in the process of their recovery they will not have to halt all the programming, or services they have put in place for themselves by taking on a role or position that is unwilling to meet their scheduling needs. For some it can be a matter of needing a certain afternoon each week that can then be replaced by other hours to make up the time, or an abbreviated schedule that allows for the job seeker to attend to their needs.

For others it can simply be a matter of requesting a different scheduling of the "breaks" offered in a shift, or an extra break in order to allow for clients to get the rest, or food, or "downtime" required to continue to work efficiently on the shift.

Another accommodation that I have several clients question about is requiring extra time for training purposes. Many feel that the pace can be too quick, that the employer "expects" them to pick up quickly on the tasks, and that they are just not processing all the information required of them. This accommodation can take on several forms, such as (but not limited to); having written instruction for those who respond well to this medium, having job coaching from their employment specialist should they choose to disclose, speaking with the manager or training staff to request a few more shifts of training, the use of note taking or recorded device if possible during training and using peers or co-workers to assist the job seeker further on past the allotted training time.

**Crystal Dainard**

1. Upon establishing a relationship with a client, I feel it is important to give positive and constructive feedback to a client/job seeker.  It helps to keep them on point, reinforce and validate their skill set as well as helping to maintain their self-esteem.  I usually give feedback using the "sandwich technique": stating something positive, something that could be done differently and then ending with something positive.  An example: I went with a client yesterday on an interview as support.  She did really well.  As we were debriefing, after I asked her how she thought it went, I gave her the following feedback.  "That interview went really well!  You were clear and concise when answering her questions.  Next time it would be good to remember to smile - I know you were nervous but it lights up your face and shows that you are engaged.  I also enjoyed how well you used the skill of eye contact."

2. There are several ways to provide accommodation to job seekers when they go to work, depending on what their needs are.  One way is to provide on the job coaching - learning and observing side by side with the new employee to see how they learn and what areas they could need help in.  I feel it is important to validate their feelings when starting a new job - dealing with any anxieties or helping with interpersonal skills could be helpful as well. Here are some ideas: Working with an employer/manager, being an advocate for the job seeker with regards to accommodations such as work hours, length of shifts, supports required to learn effectively, additional training and flexible schedules.

**Anthony Sirignano**

1. When giving positive feedback to a job seeker I first develop a level of trust and rapport that creates a mutually respectful relationship. It is within this context that I explain my role and expectations and also give the job seeker an opportunity to comment on his/her role and expectations as we begin our journey. I emphasize that I will always be truthful with the individual. In short we develop a "mission statement" that keeps us focused and motivated. When providing feedback, I ask the job seeker how they think they did. I then use their response to provide feedback and always take a constructive, non-judgmental approach. I often ask "How would you have answered that question another way?' or "What are ways in which you can make a positive first impression?"

2. Good accommodations in the work place may include, flexible work hours, creating a distraction free work environment (cubicle, headphones), instructions provided in a way that best meet the workers learning style (visual, experiential), providing a work mentor that will be available to the individual if difficulty is experienced on the job and to acclimate to the work culture.

**Cheryl McLaughlin**

1. Creating and connecting a positive relationship is the first step in giving positive feedback. We have to be aware of both our verbal and nonverbal behavior. Listening to what the job seeker has to say and letting them talk without interruption is a big step in obtaining that first connection. Be empathic to their fears and reflect back to what they are saying. Ask a lot of questions so you can get an idea of what their employment barriers are, this shows that you are willing to help them in all aspects of their job search and landing that job. Find out from them exactly what their expectations are from you. Some people come thinking we are a job bank, and that is just not so. Both sides should define their roles. Be honest with them about their qualifications and involve them in the decision making process. To do this use open ended questions so the job seeker can elaborate on their goals and not just let you point things out to them. Together, set a timeline so both parties know where the process is going and what to expect and when to expect it.

2. Give examples of good accommodation that would support job seekers when they go to work:

* Setting a later start time and later dismissal if there are morning side effects to medication
* Setting a later start time and later dismissal if the job seeker uses public transportation and has some social anxiety and they would rather travel on the bus when there are less people
* If during the winter the shorter days have an effect on their mood, ask for a seasonal light to be placed at their desk. These run about $50 and can be very successful for improving moods, and productivity
* Asking for a certain time of the year to have their vacation if their condition tends to be cyclic

**Irene Sng**

1. It would be helpful when giving feedback to the job seeker, any critique on the tasks or the behavior to be done objectively without judgment, offending or making the person feel like being blamed. Essentially, feedback is a learning opportunity to explore into things that went well and alternative or area of improvement to do things better in the future.

This includes giving feedback by engaging job seeker with step-by-step approach:

* Ask permission whether the job seeker desires feedback.
* Invite the job seeker to give him/her feedback first. Ask what part or role did the individual play in it?
* Provides the job seeker the relevant and essential information of how he or she performed in the activity assigned.
* Explore into at least two things that he or she did well.
* Ask what else he/she might have been done better or need improvement.
* Explore in partnership with the job seeker in the areas of improvement or modify specific directions to improve his or her performance in descriptive, balanced and objective manner.
* Summarize understanding.

It is important that during the feedback session, the partnering relationship with the job seekers includes clarifying with the job seekers and provide words of encouragement by giving praises in their efforts and accomplishments.

2. Some of good accommodations that generally accepted by employers who are our community partners to support job seekers include:

Adjusting work schedules

* Employers allowing time off for therapy or psychiatric appointments or schedule off day or adjust the working hours that would support someone with a psychiatric disability on appointment day.
* Flexible hours for job seekers to work at later time for part time job scheduling their working hours with our community partners from 11am to 4pm or 4pm to 9pm (This refer to retail, food and beverage, hospitality, cleaning services, community hospitals, nursing homes and manufacturing sectors). There are job seekers that our community partners accommodated regular fix afternoon shift for those in the health care industry.

Flexible leave

* To have a win-win situation, some of our community partners are willing to provide extended leave without pay due to job seeker’s hospitalization. This accommodation on a case by case basis is extended to individuals helping them to manage their wellness in situation of grief or changing of psychiatric medication. We have employers who accommodated clients holding position of administrative assistant, service crew and retail assistant with a graduated return to work. The employees were allowed reverting to part time until he or she was ready to move to full time employment.

Flexible employment service contract

* To increase the likelihood of job seekers’ employability, employment specialists negotiate with the consent of the individual to enter into contract of service agreement for a stipulated period of 1 to 3 months before converting to contract for service agreement that is covered under the Singapore Employment Act.

Provide Staff Support

* Providing co-worker assistance to act as mentor or a buddy to job seeker.  A few of our community partners provide intensive supports to the extent of holding regular meeting with department’s supervisor, human resource officer, mentor, buddy and mental health ambassador.
* Community partners’ mental health trainers working alongside with our occupational therapist and employment specialist to provide a structured training as part of their organization orientation program for job seekers first month at work.

Allowing time to learn job tasks

* Some job seekers have not been employed for as long as 10 years or they might be anxious when starting new job. Usually we would advocate for accommodation to allow more time to accomplish tasks specified in the job description from single task and gradually increased over a period.  There were situations where employment specialist discussed with the human resource staff to modify the job description tasks and breakdown with few smaller task steps to justify a single task.

Modified job duties

* A good example of accommodating job seeker with one of our community partners is a fast food chain. Job seeker employed with Subway engaged in a modified staff development program where the individual starts with the easier task at the first station or the last station. For some who aspire for job progression to be a Sandwich Artist, the individual would have to take three tests to proceed to the next stage.  In total the task is breakdown into six theory and three practice tests with reward at each test completion.
* Another modified job duties provided by accounting firm has accommodated for our clients to build up their capability and capacity gradually by increasing job tasks and work hours proportionately.

Work site within close proximity

* Job seekers were placed in work site within walking distance or 2km from their home. This is helpful type of accommodation for persons coping with anxiety who are trying to avoid overcrowded mass transit railway transportation affecting their daily commute to work.

With more employers having the awareness of reasonable accommodation, hiring of persons with psychiatric disabilities to achieve their successful employment, workplace can be more conductive with assigned space near to the worksite to support panic condition, flexible scheduling of 3 breaks a day including before and after lunch and providing more supervision hours allowing time to adjust to change of supervisor or management.

**Barbara Oliver**

1. I work with youth so providing ongoing feedback feels really important to establishing rapport and keeping them engaged / motivated.  They often feel like they're so far behind that small gains don't matter, but I like to recognize ANY step forward, no matter how small.  Sometimes the job specialist is the only one who is in a position to notice these advances so they end up advocating for the client to parents and other supports.

For example, I have a client who still hasn't found the right job after a relatively long time working with me.  He still struggles with giving appropriate & clear answers in interviews.  BUT when we first started he wouldn't do anything on his own as a result of feeling anxious and overwhelmed.  Now he feels confident to go into an interview and speak for himself.  His answers may not be perfect but his confidence has grown and he has actually received some positive feedback from interviewers.  We focus on this gain because it would've seemed impossible when he started.  When he gets discouraged, I acknowledge that negative feeling but remind him of how far he has come.

2. I have not had the opportunity negotiate many accommodations because I find many of my youth don't agree to disclose their struggles to an employer.  However some accommodations that my clients and I have discussed are: set work schedules (instead of shift work), shorter work shifts, more training, me being present for training, and modified uniforms (this is a big one with some people!)

We also try to negotiate for me to present in some interviews, but I find that hiring managers seem concerned that this will give my clients an unfair advantage.  I have to help them understand that what it actually does is "level the playing field," and at times I have had to reference the fact that the employer markets themselves as an equal opportunity employer and supported interviews are a way to prove that!

**Ellen Shaffer**

I would ensure that the job seeker and I have had a chance to meet once or twice so that the person feels comfortable. The environment of our meetings is important also. For example someone may feel distracted in a coffee shop and would feel safer in a quieter spot like a library or my workplace. Every individual of course has different needs around this. Before giving my feedback I would ask the person if they would like my suggestions about what we are working on. It is important with anyone to give positive feedback first and what I see as the person's strengths. Then I can make suggestions for approaching something in perhaps a different way to improve the outcome. I would also ask the person for their suggestions as to what might work well for them.

Accommodation examples:

1. A quieter work space could be requested if required
2. Flexible breaks can sometimes be allowed so that the person can take breaks as needed, rather than at scheduled times
3. Longer training time or written instructions may be helpful depending on the learning style of the person

**Damian Hudson**

One of the most creative accommodations I can recognize for job seekers that have auditory hallucinations, is the freedom to wear headphones with music if that helps. Also, many peers need a certain amount of break time to regain focus on the job. This I believe is reasonable to maintain an employee that does the essentials of the job. I think positive feedback to a job seeker is important in each step they make towards employment. The feedback shows accomplishment and validates the determination the person has no matter how much it is.

**Barbara Oliver**

I agree that several of our clients do better when they are allowed to wear headphones / listen to music at work.  This has the added benefit of providing a familiar coping skill when they feel stressed out on the job.

If we are requesting additional small breaks as an accommodation for a job seeker, we could even use the music to "time" the break.  For example they might be allowed to go into a quiet room every 2 hours and listen to 2 songs.  This helps remove confusion about the length of time allowed for the job seeker, and assures the employer that they aren't spending excessive amounts of time on break.

**Sylvie Cleroux**

1. Feedback is highly beneficial for both the job seeker and the job developer.  I agree that it is very important to request feedback from the job seeker before ending a meeting. This gives the job developer insights and helps the job developer know if the person is integrating the shared information, lessons and discussions.

The best feedback I can offer my clientele is my knowledge regarding trends about resume writing, interviewing and hiring.  I speak the job seeker about the job market, the labor market.  I give them job search related resources that builds their self-confidence and self-efficacy.  We go through all basic and behavioral base interview questions and I explain to them what the employer is looking for when asking these questions. I praise their success and encourage them to step out of their comfort zone to address their fears.  I acknowledge their fears, respecting where they are at on the continuum of change.  The best feedback I can offer any job seeker is to listen, acknowledge and ask them what their expectations are.

I use FEAR and FAIL as acronyms and my clients are so empowered by these to acronyms.

**F=false  E=evaluation   A=anticipated   R=results F=first   A=attempt   I=in   L=learning**

2. Accommodations: Adjusted schedule if medications side effects cause the person to have difficulties waking up in the morning. Time sharing, if a have more than one person with the same job focus on a part time basis but 1 full time position available. Discuss the possibility that the employee might work from home, if possible, when his/her symptoms make it difficult for him/her to go in to work on these days.

**Karen Kuah**

Thanks Sylvie for your sharing! I wonder if this discussion allows questions as I am new to this online course. If it is ok, could you share more on how you use this acronym with the job seeker?

As for me, I have the same thoughts about the positive feedback that I have given to job seekers has been through working with them in their resume writing. I ask them questions to help them reflect what they have done well and differently in their previous jobs.

I also encourage them to use "action verbs" to demonstrate their abilities, rather than merely state what they did. One recalled that he received a letter of compliment from a member of public for good customer service and he did not think it was a "big deal", so we asked him to describe that experience to include it as one of his achievements. His confidence increased which affirmed him to focus his job search in customer service jobs.

Working through with them back-and-forth a few times to improve their resume has yielded some positive results, especially with one that he was so proud of his improved resume that on his own initiative, he took a recent photo of himself on his "good day". What a difference a good photo makes!

When I work with community partners in Singapore (i.e. employers who are aware of job seekers with a mental health condition), I try to facilitate a conversation where I sit in with the employer and employee on what areas they have done well and any areas of improvement.

As for good accommodations, the shorter and/or later working hours have been most important to help them to sustain employment. Also, taking time off for medical appointments is helpful.

**Sylvie Cleroux**

Hi Karen, I use the trans-theoretical model of change with my client. I have a chart I created; it is simple and it explains the different stages of change; the \*Yes buts\* and the reasons why they have these fears etc.  Once I’ve explained the stages of change and tell them that it’s ok for them to be where they are at, then we start addressing those fears and it is usually at that time that I include the acronyms. Thank you for your feedback Karen!

**Beatriz Lomas**

In order to provide positive feedback to participants preparing for job interviews, I have created a document which addresses such things as grooming, attire, hand shaking and most importantly how the questions were answered.  I have found that interviewees will not stick to responding to the question or will get off track. I also have found that they have no idea on how to respond to the ever so popular "tell me a little about yourself" question.  After the mock interview review the feedback form with the participant and provide constructive criticism on how to answer the questions.

As far as examples of good accommodations that would support a job seeker, I usually discuss their needs with them and talk to them about how they can go about requesting those accommodations at work.  I also let them know what some of the accommodations that they can request are as headphones, trackballs, Dragon or specific work hours.

**Sue Fitzgerald**

I agree Beatriz that doing a mock interview is a valuable way for an individual to gain insight on their performance and that includes feedback from the staff person but I also supply them with a debriefing or self-reflection tool which is then discussed before the Job search begins with the Job Developer. As a Job Coach, I notice that folks can be their worst critic & sometimes nothing is "good enough". When I notice the self-criticism creeping in, I remind them of all the positive steps they are taking in moving forward in their job search.  Self-care is huge during this process & the tailored sessions really encourage individuals to work at a pace that makes the most sense for them.

As for possible accommodations, you listed some excellent ones. The possibilities are many. What I have found useful is working with individuals in developing assertive responses. This way the conversations around disclosure & accommodations can occur with the individual feeling in control, whether that conversation happens at the interview or after they start work. We let them know we are always available to support them behind the scenes or in speaking with their supervisor about how to create a positive work environment.

**Barbara Oliver**

Yes Beatriz, I think one of the hardest questions to answer appropriately is the vague "tell me about yourself". I find it best to make a really brief script so job seekers know which topics they want to mention strategically, and have a general idea of how to say it. If they're really struggling in the moment, I would encourage them to ask for clarification like, "I'd love to tell you a bit about myself. What type of information are you looking for?" Hopefully the employer will answer if it is hobbies, personality, work goals, etc.

**Stephanie Hancock**

1. As I work with youth I think they are some additional struggles with trying to establish a rapport. Most of my appointments are in the community in a place that the youth feels comfortable, and this really helps with that initial relationship. Once we get started and look at the goals of the client it is important for them to be able to see the positives they bring to an employer as then this is easily brought out in an interview. During building a resume I go through their skills, and things they enjoy and pull skills from there. As they have very little experience and education, this is the key to their resume. Most youth hear all the negatives all the time, it is great to go through their skills, and find things that they are proud of. It is a great feeling when you take a youth that has nothing to put on a resume and you are able to fill an entire page of skills, and experience with them.

2. Accommodations that I have worked on with youth in the past would be listening to music while on shift, moving break times, starting later, or doing shorter shifts. I have also put together crisis plans with both the employee, and employer. I find that this is very dependent on the individual.

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| **M2 Discussion**  **Review Cultural Principles of Rehabilitation developed by the United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association and select at least one principle you find most challenging to incorporate in your practice and explain why it is challenging.**  [**http://www.uspra.org/principles-multicultural-psychiatric-rehabilitation-services**](http://www.uspra.org/principles-multicultural-psychiatric-rehabilitation-services) |

***Instructor’s Comments: I found it interesting that the discussions included issues about awareness and understanding of one’s own culture, the culture of others – usually related to race, ethnicity, or class but then moved to the discrimination of persons with disabilities and specifically mental illness. There are situations in which a person with a disability is part of a subculture, for example, we talk about the culture of unemployment or we recognize the subcultures of various veterans according to their military services. The PRA principles help us to think through some of our relationships and helping practices in the context of culture.***

**Pauline Banducci**

Principle 2: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners study, understand, accept, and appreciate their own cultures as a basis for relating to the cultures of others. Continuously I need to look at my own culture and how it interacts in the workplace and with clients. It is difficult for me to see my own culture. I am white, female and educated. But I grew up in an alcoholic family, lower middle class, and attended college on scholarship. During my early marriage we were on food stamps and SSI. With some clients I encourage them by sharing my past, mentioning that I found my favorite job after researching my favorite fields of fascination/values and skills. With others I notice they are not motivated, having come from wealthy families and I discount their challenges because they have monetary resources. I think having good supervision from my clinical director, being completely honest when I am challenged by a client and continuously working on me is the most important thing we can do as practitioners. Noticing my reactions, which is usually cultural from my upbringing, is the best thing I can do for myself and my clients. Each client has a background of culture, and it affects our feelings, our reactions and our ability to connect to others. Being aware of this helps me to be open to others who are very different from me.

**Nicole De La Loza Rivera**

Principle 4**:** Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that thought patterns and behaviors are influenced by a person’s worldview, ethnicity and culture of which there are many. Each worldview is valid and influences how people perceive and define problems; perceive and judge the nature of help given; choose goals; and develop or support alternative solutions to identified problems.

Principle 4 is so important to building trust with and really understanding clients, and to helping clients not be ashamed of the circumstances that make them who they are as they pursue employment. I work with homeless women, and we are very aware of the cultural differences between the environment on the streets and what we are asking of them in order be employable. The challenge I encounter in implementing this principle, though, is in actually training our staff, volunteers, and interns implementing counseling and programming to understand this approach to acknowledge the cultural difference and feel competent in addressing it. We are good at telling the women what the workplace culture is and what to expect, but I think it takes a higher level of skill and experience also facilitate the conversation of what it means to be bicultural between work and home, and what feelings our job training environment brings up. I will be reviewing this handout with my staff as I think it is a great training tool!

**Christina Finamore**

Principle 5 states that rehab practitioners recognize that discrimination and oppression exist within society and that we are responsible for "mitigating the effects of discrimination associated with these barriers."

We have the responsibility of advocating for people with mental illness because the stigma associated with people with mental illness is still very prevalent. It seems that everyone has at least one person in their own family that suffers from a mental illness whether it would be depression or whatever so the general consensus that people with mental illness are violent or lazy seems absurd. Why are we as a society so afraid that people with mental illness might hurt us? People with mental illness are more likely to hurt themselves than anyone else. It's like we aren't talking about it enough so change is slow. We need to work on focusing on people's strengths and talents and stop discriminating against people because they have a twitch or seem a little different. We are all different and that’s the beauty of it! We need to work on being patient and we need to be OK with explaining how a task needs to be completed 5 times instead of 2...what's the rush? But most importantly we must continue to work with people with mental illness and encourage advocacy. Barriers aren't broken down by themselves and we have broken down barriers of gender, race and sexual orientation. Now it’s time to remove the stigma from mental illness.

**Sarah Espinoza**

Principle 3: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners engage in the development of ongoing cultural competency, in order to increase their awareness and knowledge, and to develop the skills necessary for appropriate, effective cross-cultural interventions.

I choose Principle 3, because I find engaging in the development of ongoing cultural competency is another full-time job in itself. I work with homeless or low income transient population, and it's tough to keep on top of their entire individual cultural competency to help increase their awareness. At times, I will begin researching opportunities for one individual, then before you know it they leave, and I have another one with completely different needs at my door. My goal is to keep them engaged, although many do not have contact information (phone, address, email, etc.).

**Cheryl Nicholas**

I am very interested in this topic. I don't think I can become culturally competent in a culture other than my own...I can certainly become culturally aware and culturally responsible. I believe I can be respectful, ask questions and embrace that culture for and with the client. It's developing enough of a relationship built on trust to venture into new areas of people's lives.

**Pauline Banducci**

I liked what Cheryl said: culturally competent vs culturally aware.  I feel aware of many Asian cultures because I lived in Asia for two years and had students stay in my home for another 7 on and off. However I am culturally aware, like you said, I still make mistakes so I guess I am not fully competent. Nice point!

**Aaron Fernandez**

Principle 5: “Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners play an active role and are responsible for mitigating the effects of discrimination associated with these barriers and must advocate, not only for access to opportunities and resources, but also for the elimination of all barriers that promote prejudice and discrimination…”

I live and work as a government psychiatrist and lecturer in Malaysia, a South-East Asian country just south of Thailand. The most problematic discrimination I encounter on a day to day basis is that towards people with disabilities, especially psychiatric ones. While Malaysia is a signatory to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the employment and retention of persons with disabilities remains an underdeveloped area.

This is glaringly so when it comes to persons with mental illnesses. On numerous times I had to field a recurring question from this subpopulation: do we or don’t we declare that we have a mental illness? Unlike in America where the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) is in force, the potential job seeker is not left with an option to declare or not his/her disability at time of interview/hiring etc.

Many job-seekers with psychiatric disabilities and who are conscientious about filling pre-employment forms accurately (which specifically ask whether or not they have any medical/psychiatric disorder) do so at the inevitability of never getting an interview. Even though Malaysia has a Disability Act (2008), it direly lacks the necessarily enforcement and affirmative governmental policies.  And while employers, both in the public and private sectors, are somewhat sympathetic to persons in their employment who suffer from dysfunction and disabilities as a result of psychiatric illness, those who are in the transitional age group do very poorly at securing employment in the first place. Most of these populations end up unemployed or underemployed at best, working in odd jobs for meals or at rates way below competitive rates. That this is the status quo is in fact not surprising as the common notion or public perception is that people with mental illnesses can’t work. This stigma is prevalent even among mental health workers who tend to project the attitude to people they serve. In the end, this very attitude gets internalized by people with mental illness, as evidenced by their somewhat surprised and incredulous affect when asked if they’re employed. This for me is challenging as it means that a large number of the population I work with need preparation in developing readiness for work.

**Pauline Banducci**

Having traveled in Malaysia long ago I appreciate your challenges! Culturally this must be difficult. I have a question: does every job have that question on their application? Are there particular jobs that do not require a written application? There must be some in the food industry in a huge city like Kuala Lumpur. Often I suggest a client obtain a volunteer job, which does not require a written application just a face to face interview or a referral from someone. I have many clients who begin as a volunteer in an organization they like. Later when a job opens the employer is more apt to hire a dedicated and reliable volunteer than someone they do not know who applies. Examples where this has been successful are: a museum, a regional protected area (park), the arts (volunteer usher), etc. Are there any plant nurseries, orchid gardens, museums (small ones), theatres where they need volunteer ushers. This can be very successful if the mindset of the mental health workers becomes more creative. I have also found that SMALL organizations/companies are more open minded about volunteers because they don't have enough help.

**Kevin Stansbury**

Principle 5: Responsible for mitigating the effects of discrimination associated with barriers and must advocate, not only for access to opportunities and resources, but also for the elimination of all barriers that promote prejudice and discrimination.

One of the biggest problems I have encountered so far is helping an individual successfully get the type of job that they want when they have a criminal record.  Sometimes the offense was so long ago but it just haunts them for decades.  Thankfully, I recently learned a lot more about the expunging (of criminal offense from their record) process so I can point people in the right direction, but it still doesn't eliminate the problem, especially if the offense was recent.  Not only is there a stigma around mental illness, but there is also a huge stigma applied to those who have committed crimes.  It breaks my heart when I see someone who is really trying to change the course of their life after being raised in difficult circumstances, but they can't because the system and culture is set up in such a way as to continuously punish those who have made mistakes in the eyes of the law.  I want the people I'm working with to get jobs that they are actually interested in keeping, but the restrictions placed on people who have been convicted of a crime often put them in a situation where they have to take a job that they really have no interest in.  Since we don't disclose to employers about member's mental health issues that is typically a non-issue, but the criminal record is rarely overlooked.

**Pauline Banducci**

I have helped a client get her record expunged. Currently she finished school and is working successfully. It’s amazing. It was a long process and we worked on it for a long time. She was a person of color, so she was able to get an attorney who was interested in helping her, in California. But the process is difficult. You must write ALOT about the incident, how you have changed and your future plans. She may not have finished it, if I hadn't met with her weekly and kept copies of what was going on. I would have needed the same support in filling out all the paperwork - so I just put myself in their shoes and I can relate.

One other thing: If I assist someone and they have a criminal record, we do have a way to talk to the employer ahead of time if we feel they are an excellent candidate for the job. The clients sign a HIPPA waiver so we can do this. We actually call the potential employer, let them know the CORI will come up as an issue, let them know the person was experiencing symptoms at the time and that they are stable currently and for x amount of months, or years. We have someone currently working with the elderly on their bill paying and income taxes and he had a bad CORI. In this instance we called the potential employer. This man is working and feels great about what he is doing.

**Cheryl Nicholas**

My issue is with substance abuse clients. They have difficult behaviors in their past. Now they have gone to treatment, are working recovery principles and trying to regain self-respect, relationships, meaning and purpose and they really want to work. Many can pass drug tests. BUT....employers seem to always think 'I can't take a risk on this person because they might use again’. Maybe true, but they take risks on people who have had diabetes and might have a relapse with their sugar. It’s hard to sell with the stigma of drugs.

**Teri Sauve**

Principle 1:Culture is Central not Peripheral to recovery.

This has been a challenge to me on more than one occasion. I work with youth who have a mental illness that come from a variety of cultures. Muslim, Aboriginal, Pilipino, German, African, Lebanese, and Chinese are to name a few. It’s not just about working with the individual it’s about involving the whole family in order to understand their cultural roles, communication styles and traditions, as well as to support consistency at home and when working with the employment specialist and the employer. The employment specialist must be knowledgeable about the culture of the family in order to be effective when helping to secure employment as this is the "center" of their lifestyle and it is imperative to work around their values as a whole unit so the job seeker will be more successful in maintaining employment. At times I can overlook this very important factor, because my own values or lack of cultural understanding happens as innocent as it may be. It is so important to take the time to work with the individual and their family/extended family to learn about their culture and their roles and what that entails in order to accomplish the goals within the living, learning, working and socializing environments.

**Linda Schroeder**

Principle 5:Responsible for mitigating the effects of discrimination associated with barriers and must advocate, not only for access to opportunities and resources, but also for the elimination of all barriers that promote prejudice and discrimination.

So often in life, when a person does something hurtful, or causes injury or breaks the law, it often comes back filtered through the media that the person who committed the crime was "mentally ill". This has created a huge stigma on the society in which I live in and around the country. How does one break down those barriers that are associated with mental illness - the fear, lack of opportunity within society for those that are receiving help for their illness. The discrimination that comes with being mentally ill: crazy, out of one' mind, sociopath, stupid, pathetic, scary. It's a constant struggle to break down the barriers to the stigma of mental illness. I find this a huge challenge.

**Irina Markovich**

Principle 8: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners accept that solutions to any problem are to be sought within individuals, their families (however they define them), and their culture. The person using psychiatric rehabilitation services and his/her family are source of expanding the practitioner‘s knowledge about the culture, how to interpret behaviors, and how to integrate these cultural prospective into rehabilitation /recovery plan. Alternatives identified by service providers are offered as supplementary or educational, rather than compulsory.

Although  natural system of supports considered  to  be a prime  mechanisms  of support  for  individuals,  I noticed that in some cases family,  cultural community, or church  could  be counterproductive.  If their  relationship with an individual  is based on  lack of information  about  his /her conditions,  stigmatizing or denying  those conditions,  even if they are supportive , they might  add  extra pressure to the individual   to perform or meet  certain socio-economical expectation.  This may affect person mental health in a negative way.  As an example   we support individuals with Learning Disabilities and in some cases logical reasoning and comprehension can be a challenge. Individual may be happier in a simple part time job, which provides structure, clarity and is not physically and mentally demanding. However, family and /or close community push the individual for   “full time supervisor role.” Being overwhelmed with this type of job individual is continuously fired and therefore stressed and traumatized. The alternative identified by service provider though is not compulsory, might be more beneficial for an individual to reach optimum quality of life. Another example is that many cultural communities are very enclosed and consider mental health issues as a weakness that should be hidden. Therefore, individuals can get little or no support at all.   Although  we engage the family in our work  with  individuals , I believe  that it is important to  encourage individuals to develop  skills  that allows them to set and achieve  personal  goals within a culture where he/she belongs.  It is important to understand individuals' family, community and cultural perspective, but helping him /her to develop social skills and healthy boundaries might help individual to reach balance in his life.

**Maria Garritt**

Principle 8: "Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners accept that solutions to any problem are to be sought within individuals, their families (however they define them), and their cultures. The person using psychiatric rehabilitation services and his/her family are sources of expanding the practitioner’s knowledge about that culture, how to interpret behaviors, and how to integrate these cultural perspectives into a rehabilitation/recovery plan. Alternatives identified by service providers are offered as supplementary or educational, rather than compulsory."

In my opinion this is the most challenging principle as it supposes that all individuals on psychiatric rehabilitation have the support of their families and their cultures. I have encountered many cases where clients lack natural systems. They feel some support only from their therapy team. Sometimes, clients have not worked long enough with their therapy teams to build enough trust and feel fully supported. I believe that it is very important to encourage clients to develop social skills to improve their interpersonal abilities and be able to establish healthy relationships that would allow them to build support systems.

**Thomas Schlitt**

Principle 10: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners are responsible for actively promoting positive inter-group relations, particularly between the people who attend their programs and with the larger community.

This principle is the most difficult for me currently. I work in rural communities and in these communities; there are strong stigmas about the mentally ill. I struggle with promoting relationships between our clients and the larger community when our clients are afraid to let others know that they have a mental illness.

**Elizabeth Miller**

Principal 8 explains accepting the solutions to issues are to be sought within the individuals and their natural supports.  I find that in some cases this can be extremely helpful and appropriate however many of the persons served that I work with do not have natural supports that would always be appropriate.  Persons who have complicated relationships with their supports for example if a person served initially agree to releases of information (allowed communication) between the team and family members/support as well as conducting a family meeting and treatment goals they may change this decision and rescind the release that allows this communication making it impossible to communicate with that vital support who may be a source of assistance for successful treatment for the person served as well as inconsistent communication with a support who may know when person served is making decisions that may be harmful to themselves or others.

In addition, another example I have encountered may include the person's served family/support to be unstable in their psychiatric or physical health that may stop the availability of their support or input.  Also supports may struggle with addiction causing added stressors to the scenario, support/family may be taking advantage of or physically/verbally aggressive or abusive, persons served may have made decisions or took actions that severely stressed the relationship between them and their support, language and customs can also be a barrier if the head of the household does not allow a certain gender to be involved in the treatment of the client.  Persons served in the population I work with often face many of these barriers which make it difficult to rely on their support systems consistently.  We actively involve family/natural supports into treatment of the person served as often as possible but many times this can be challenging due to the specific scenarios of each different person.  I hope that as I continue my work with the persons served I can advance my relationships with them and their support to assist in the success of this principal.

**Amy D'Antonio**

Principle 10: This principle is very personal to me right now. Our program (Occupations Inc. in Rhinebeck, NY in Dutchess County) is being targeted by the local community. We are located right in the village of Rhinebeck and our clients are avid consumers in the community. Although we have been in this location since 1975 as a County agency, in April 2012 Dutchess County gave the license to Occupations. And the local Rhinebeck community has been "up in arms" ever since! They even filed a "cease and desist order" in August 2013.

We have always tried to be good neighbors, but things happen! We are always very responsive to community needs or complaints, have a very good relationship with the village police department, and between staff and clients - we spend a lot of money in the community. So we are working toward more education in the community and hope the tide changes back in our favor…

**Alice Bilodeau**

Principle 8: I find this principle difficult to put into practice as most of my clients have no family/long term friends support.  Their families are frequently not in the picture or have been worn out by issues the client clients have had over the years. This hinders knowing the background of the client/relevant information I am attempting to find employment for. I also do not know any triggers/trauma they may have and this has at times cause loss of a job because, the issues present while on the job. It has been very helpful when I do have family/close friends involved in providing important background information so a treatment plan can be developed that is specific for the client needs, supports and training.

**Robin Crawford**

Principle 1:  Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that culture is central, not peripheral, to recovery, as culture is the context that shapes and defines all human activity.

Culture has to do with customs, beliefs and traditions commonly shared by a group of people, for example, a holiday tradition or a spiritual belief.  An individual's culture strongly influences his or her behavior, attitudes and values.  We all have an understanding and can identify with our own present day beliefs and behaviors in what we learned growing up in our own particular culture.  Each person's recovery process is unique and impacted by cultural beliefs and traditions.  A person's cultural experience often shapes the recovery path that is right for him or her.  As a mental health professional this is a challenge.  As I have talked with many clients and have seen the effect it has had on their recovery. This is because the individuals state they don't like the changes with themselves and change in their cultural identity.  I find that being supportive and understanding the needs, strengths, goals, health attitudes, behaviors and expectations for their recovery are important.  The pathway for recovery is personal as it is a positive process for change that permits the individuals to make healthy choices to improve the quality of his or her life.

**Jennifer Caputo**

Principle 3: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners engage in the development of ongoing cultural competency, in order to increase their awareness and knowledge, and to develop the skills necessary for appropriate, effective cross-cultural interventions.

I have a past work experience as a county child protective services caseworker.  Cultural difference is evident even in the care of children by people with different backgrounds.  I once had a case that involved an Amish family and I will forever use this as a reference when working with others who aren't "the same" as me or my peers.  It is easy to slip into that 'status quo' thinking and I try to reference these past experiences to remind myself that just because I don't do something a certain way does not make it 'right' or 'wrong'.  Educating the public about this is a big help but there will always be close minded individuals that can't process that type of learning or understand underlying cultural differences.

**Lani Otto**

Principle 4: I recently began to work with an individual that found employment on their own.  When I got the information about the background it was to check with the employer and see how the job was going, observation.  I first met with the individual and found out during the conversation that this person did not understand how to comprehend some of the things the employer would say.  The individual would end up going home and staying away the whole night, fuming over what they thought was something negative.  I asked the individual if they minded me speaking to the employer.  They gave me permission.  I then made an appointment and found out that this employer was really working hard and trying to break down barriers with the individual.  I then told the employer that the individual did not know how to take comments, such as "try harder the next time" or one occasion that food was put into a take-out container, the employer laughed and told the individual that they had closed the container upside down, it leaked and it was a good thing that it was the owner’s wife".  I stressed to the employer that the individual did not know how to take the comment and felt as if they were being laughed at.  Also another topic during the conversation was the individual's uniform and how they wanted them to get it laundered more often, even going as far to talk the individual into calling their landlord and finding out about laundry hook-up.  I jumped on this one!  The individual called me because they did not want to make the call for fear of making the landlord mad at them. I then called the employer and nonchalantly asked how things were going and they brought up the "laundry hook-up" and I asked if there was a problem with how the individual was coming dressed into work; clean or needing spruced up.  The employer said they did ask the individual to ask about laundry hook-ups.  The solution to helping this person so that they are not afraid to speak to the landlord is that I said that I would be there to look around and see if there were any hookups in the apartment, assist in making the call to find out if there is anything in the basement but also called another support to have the peer support take this person to the Laundromat on a weekly basis.  I then spoke with the employer and told him that we would nip it in the bud, one way or the other.

**Joseph Hvorecky**

Principle 5:I would like to comment briefly on Principle 5 of the Cultural Principles of Rehabilitation -- i.e. "Recognizing that discrimination and oppression exist within society...and that PRP's must play an active role and are responsible for mitigating the effects of discrimination associated with all barriers must advocate not only for access to opportunities and resources but also for the elimination of all barriers that promote discrimination."

I find this to be a most challenging principle, an extremely "tall order," given discrimination is so pervasive in many organizational systems as well as individual mind-sets.  Ordinarily, I like to be very straightforward in my discourse with prospective employers and other community members, but find myself having to alter my verbal explanations because of the instinctual perception arising in many people's minds when they hear the word "disability."  For instance, just the other day when I was assisting one of my clients in his apartment hunting efforts, one of the potential landlords interrogated me on the phone as to who I was supporting, whether he was from a program, received assistance, etc.  I found this verbal attack to be very intimidating for me, let alone if my client were to have to field such questions.  I was able to craft what I felt were appropriate responses, but the inability to prove instant honest responses makes support efforts challenging.  However, I was able to use the experience as a teaching lesson for my client, and I intend to follow up with this particular landlord to educate that person better as well.  I find the best approach of late to this challenging principle to utilize the skill of listening to a greater degree -- i.e. listening both to understand the underlying concerns based on the bias presented and to understand how the one conveying prejudice has arrived at that particular cultural perspective.  However, given active listening requires a great deal of effort and time, this adds another challenging layer to this Principle 5.

**Melissa Kruise**

Principle 8**:** I find principle 8 to be the most challenging. When I assist individuals with looking for jobs, I tend to meet with just the individual and might not meet there family. From experience I believe that we should strive as services providers to meet the family especially if they are really involved in their loved one life. From meeting the family and getting to know them I have found that they are able to relate important information about the persons I am supporting culture. For example, recently I have been working with an individual that is employed that has been dealing with some separation anxiety issues. When I was working with this individual in job development I had no idea that the person had a hard time separating from her family. If I had got to know the family sooner, I would have learned this before finding a job and I could have come up with a plan to provide her support.

**Melissa Marien**

Principle 4: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that thought patterns and behaviors are influenced by a person’s worldview, ethnicity and culture of which there are many. Each worldview is valid and influences how people perceive and define problems; perceive and judge the nature of help given; choose goals; and develop or support alternative solutions to identified problems.

Principle 4 is the most challenging for me to incorporate when I am working with members at the clubhouse, because in the assessments that I use there is no section on exploring someone's worldview.  The focus is on getting information on individual’s employment goals which focus on job interest and skills but not how they connect to the person’s culture.  I feel that I can add this when meeting with members to focus on the bi culture stance when reviewing jobs.  I have just been focused on goal development around employment in a structured sense and with handouts which do not explore the culture influences behind someone's response.  I know that I can improve this by asking members about their culture and what is important from their culture to add to their job search.  I have worked with many members for years, so I know them well but I need to add this question "what is an important part of your culture that you would like to incorporate in your job search or have present in your work environment” so that I can help them achieve their employment goal.

**Charles Lansberry**

Principle 9: I worked in a variety of levels of human services.  I have also worked in and around a wide range of populations.  Supporting people that have a variation of racial, ethnic and cultural factors (or have mixed of 2 or more), always seem to be under thought. I myself am comfortable supporting someone with any or some of these backgrounds due to my own and past work history.  I find challenging, educating others to support and/or create the bridge for said groups.  I think education is needed to support staff, of people’s various backgrounds (not just the disability) so that they understand the differences and be able to better support.  It is important to grasp that even though someone may have a disability of any kind their backgrounds and beliefs are very much real and as important to them as the supports staff and ANYONE they work with once employed.

**Greg Baldwin**

Principle 5: “Responsible for mitigating the effects of discrimination associated with barriers and must advocate, not only for access to opportunities and resources, but also for the elimination of all barriers that promote prejudice and discrimination.”

Stigma of someone with a disability is something that we have to deal with and over come every day. Most of the individuals we serve have moderate to severe disabilities anything from MR to MH and also physical limitations. Employers see these people as someone that they would have to go out of their way to accommodate and make special arrangements for in order to employ them. What the employer often over looks is the fact that, most of the time, the Employment Specialist will be the one to come up with the accommodation in order for that person to be able to perform a specific task. Employers may also have a fear of hiring someone with a disability that, in the event that that person would have to be released from employment, they may have to face sanctions of discrimination. This is not always the case. If the person, using the reasonable accommodations that were made by the employer and the Employment Specialist is still unable to meet the performance goals, modifications can be made first and if the employer is still not satisfied with the results then they have the right to terminate employment.

**Kristi Noble**

Principle 3: I consider this principle to be the most challenging because often times I find there is a lack of ongoing cultural competency trainings and a focus on other topics even though culture differences are inevitable in every situation that arise in this field. Every practitioner realizes that the people who they interact with on an everyday basis have not encountered the same experiences as themselves; however, the extent that one truly knows how certain events impacted a person can't always be easily understood. Often times, we learn about a person's past experiences from reading their charts. However, that doesn't portray exactly how this affected the person emotionally, physically, or mentally. Therefore, it's important to develop a trusting relationship with that person. Having a better in-depth understanding of one's culture can greatly increase a practitioner's chances of developing a good relationship.

**Rita Reilly**

Principle 2: For a couple of reasons I believe to be an effective Practitioner you really need to understand your own culture as a basis for relating to the cultures of others.  First due to my own age, I come from a different cultural thought process.  I am not young.  I have to keep in mind that this in itself sometimes causes especially the younger individuals to question my understanding of where they are at today.  But also my background is mostly rural or urban.  This is critical with understanding cultural influences in larger areas.  Once I understand that these influences along with the size of family I grew up in (8 children), the religious affiliation I had, but most importantly how that gave me the philosophies I come to the table with, then I can concentrate on listening to and addressing the issues expressed by the individual I am working with.  It is like the philosophy - you have to love yourself before you can truly love another.  Once you understand what influenced you and made you what you are, you will open up the eye to see what makes others "them" and open their eyes to their possibilities.  I find it challenging not to presuppose all will come with the same drive I put on myself and to accept where they are coming from.

**Kristi Noble**

RE: Principle 2: It is like the philosophy - you have to love yourself before you can truly love another.  Once you understand what influenced you and made you what you are, you will open up the eye to see what makes others "them" and open their eyes to their possibilities.  I find it challenging not to presuppose all will come with the same drive I put on myself and to accept where they are coming from." I completely agree with this statement. Sometimes we expect individuals to want to change and go about discovering themselves just as we have throughout our life. However, this is not always the case which is why it's important to accept and meet that person wherever they are in their path towards recovery and not to push them into your driving motivators.

**Sharon Roberson**

For me, the most challenging principle is the language issues with the individuals in the community that only speak Spanish, and little or no English.  I wish I knew Spanish so I could communicate with them better. This is the hardest challenge for me.

**John Floeser**

Diversity and acceptance of all: As important as the understanding and acceptance of diversity is, it is equally as important for the job seeker to also demonstrate the same.  The customers and coworkers they encounter may be of diverse backgrounds also. How they react to these customers can have great bearing on whether they retain their employment.

**Hildegunn Rodrick**

Principle 10: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners are responsible for actively promoting positive inter-group relations, particularly between the people who attend their programs and with the larger community.

Although I see the value and benefit for both consumers and community when positive inter-group relations are developed I find this to be challenging. As an employment specialist many job-seekers do not desire to be recognized as people in recovery in the work place. Even for those who are recognized as needing accommodation by an employer or supervisor, vis-à-vis with coworkers they would like to be "invisible". I have seen examples of successful partnerships between programs and community groups, but in my particular practice I have not found a way to integrate it as of yet.

**Arletta Holman**

Principle 8: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners accept that solutions to any problem are to be sought within individuals, their families (however they define them), and their cultures. The person using psychiatric rehabilitation services and his/her family are sources of expanding the practitioner’s knowledge about that culture, how to interpret behaviors, and how to integrate these cultural perspectives into a rehabilitation/recovery plan.

Alternatives identified by service providers are offered as supplementary or educational, rather than compulsory. I have found that this is sometimes hard for me especially when I believe that the family of the person I am working with seems to be working against having the person grow and expand their horizons.   I have run into this from different fronts: One being where parents or relatives are very overprotective because they want to keep the person from experiencing distress.  I understand this, but also feel strongly that a person with a disability has the right to try something they want to do even if they may not be successful.  I am a real believer in the dignity of risk and have a hard time when people don't want to risk anything.  I have a sign on my door that says: " The three C's:  You must make a choice to take a chance or your life will never change. Secondly, I have also worked with individuals where the families are depending on the person with the disability's SSI or SSDI and other benefits to support the family.  One in particular where the person worked under the table for money for anything he wanted.  His parents took his full SSI check and said it was their pay for keeping him at their house.  He would also have to use his money he earned for food and medical expenses the Medicaid would not pay, like cab rides to urgent care etc..  These things are something with which I personally struggle.

**Judith Halloran**

A cultural principle of rehabilitation I find challenging is Principle 7; accepting cultural values/beliefs that emphasize process or product, as well as harmony or achievement. The US, as well as our Supported Employment program at Mental Health Partners, often talks about success on an outcome basis. We track and record employment outcomes and celebrate when someone gets a job or is a closure with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It's hard not to emphasize achievement by outcome especially when our program's 'effectiveness' is often talked about in terms of employment rate. It's a good reminder to celebrate the process as well. It makes me think about goal planning (which is a requirement at our agency) and to not assume the client has a goal to 'get a job'! Perhaps, for now, they simply want to engage in some of our classes and 'explore the possibility of getting a job'. Achieving this goal is fundamental to them being prepared to step up the next goal to ‘get a job’.

**Kelly Nelson**

Principle 7: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners show respect towards others by accepting cultural values and beliefs that emphasize process or product, as well as harmony or achievement. They demonstrate that respect by appreciating cultural preferences that value relationships and interdependence, in addition to individuality and independence.

I find it difficult to incorporate the part of Principle 7 that underlines valuing interdependence.  I often work individuals whose families have varied perspectives of people with disabilities being able to pursue work.  I realize this may partially be related to the families' lack of psych education around their family members' disabilities and competencies.  I also recognize these views may stem from the families' cultural differences regarding interdependence.

I also recognize cultural interdependence playing a role in my clients' choice to continue living in their families' homes.  I need to realize it is possible that my definition of "independent living" is different from my clients' due to their unique cultural background.  Continuing to live with parents/grandparents/aunts and uncles may be seen as their duty to their family, and it is important for me to inquire about my clients' preferences and the importance of living with family members.  Asking for clarification would allow me to gain better cultural insight and maintain a better relationship with the individuals I serve.

**Leonard Suits**

Principle 9:I have chosen principle 9 to be my most challenging principle. I would like to talk about the language barriers that can become an obstacle between the practitioner and the consumer and/or the consumer’s family. Of course I always respect the consumer for wanting to maintain his/her native language. My own grandmother and grandfather who emigrated from Poland and lived in the United States for over 50 years, spoke very little English, they found that it was not necessary due to living in Utica, New York and always living within the Polish community there. Within our psychiatric system they have developed a translator service, if you have the time to utilize it. If the family is a good support, there is usually a family member that can translate at times for you. When speaking to a consumer and there is that language issue, I do attempt to convey to the consumer the likely hood that if he/she was able to communicate better in their new countries language, that it would most likely open more opportunities for them in the job market. So bridging the gap between good communication and bad/ lack of communication can be challenging.

**Jeff Sidders**

Principle 3: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners engage in the development of ongoing cultural competency, in order to increase their awareness and knowledge, and to develop the skills necessary for appropriate, effective cross-cultural interventions.

This goal seems particularly challenging to me. While I want my supported employment practices to be well informed and aware of cultural factors, I now realize that I haven't always probed below the surface to uncover all of the various cultural perspectives that have likely influenced the outlook, behavior, and participation of our job seekers. While there have certainly been occasions when understanding cultural dynamics has been pivotal for connecting with a client, or preventing cultural misunderstanding in the workplace (e.g. expectation of discrimination; bridging differences in communication style based on education/socioeconomic status), more often the client him/herself has driven those discussions and emphasized the importance of culture in shaping expectations or identity. Or, the cultural impact has been readily obvious (e.g. feelings of past oppression at work or within society in general).

The point is that I have not consistently and intentionally individualized my engagement efforts around discerning and incorporating cultural perspectives into my partnership efforts with clients. Thus, internal re-emphasis on framing cultural awareness as a key element of my relationship building with clients is, for me, a great first step. Second, while our agency is very culturally sensitive, as am I (I think fear of offending has certainly contributed to my reticence around asking about cultural topics in some instances), I also haven't focused as attentively as I would have liked in retrospect on actively building multicultural knowledge and skill sets on-the-job--> beyond my college/grad school studies, and outside of agency-sponsored trainings or agency-dispersed materials (2-3 specific events over course of my 3-years of employment; occasional bulletins and articles of interest). Thus, by probing more specifically for cultural perspectives and identities, I'll have greater opportunities to not only learn directly from (and better serve) my job seekers, but also generate a reference listing of cultural topics that can guide new learning and further professional development. I will also more readily seek out collaboration around managing cultural issues with my colleagues.

**Sandra Swegryzynowicz**

Principle 5: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that discrimination and oppression exits within society/even though this is the most difficult and challenging within our society and community.

Awareness is still a huge factor in our society and most communities. I feel that our society and community is not opened minded enough with recognizing discrimination and it is set aside as though it is not important in this day and age of our diversity. The level of awareness of discrimination is very low and it needs to be at a higher level throughout our society. We must comprehend our unique cultural needs and strengths regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class disability, age, and/or religion, especially physical characteristics.

**Fran Granaham**

Principle 9: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners provide interventions that are culturally syntonic, and accommodate culturally determined strengths, needs, beliefs, values, traditions, and behaviors.

The basis for the challenge would be that in our particular area of Northeast Pennsylvania for individuals who are looking for services, we do not find a large population differing from the typical American white Caucasian population.  With this in mind, when an individual from a different ethnicity would like to utilize services, we do not have the staff or experts within the area with varied backgrounds to fully understand the culture with which an individual may come. This would be in regard to health care professionals, vocational rehabilitation staff, supported employment providers, counselors, therapists, etc....    Although we try very hard to incorporate people's different background, we certainly are not experts with different cultures.  We do not have a high population of ethnic backgrounds in our services; therefore, when we find ourselves working with an individual from a different cultural background , language, beliefs, values and traditions may be obstacles due to the lack of expertise culturally that we may be exposed to. This, at times, does make it very difficult to maximize services.

**Wesley Baker**

Principle 9: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners provide interventions that are culturally syntonic, and accommodate culturally determined strengths, needs, beliefs, values, traditions, and behaviors.

The key words in this principle are being "culturally syntonic". It is difficult to have advanced cultural empathy when a practitioner has little experience with that culture.  To do so a practitioner must be multi-culturally aware of nuances of societal beliefs values, traditions, gender roles, religious norms, subcultures etc.  Some of these nuances can take years in order to be aware of and might not be taught in a class.  A good example of the difficulty of being culturally syntonic is when the identified client is from a blended cultural family whose values and traditions are also blended. In this case, the practitioner cannot assume which value would be dominant. A practitioner can be aware enough to act culturally syntonic only by getting to know the client as an individual over time.

**Shawn Hughes**

Principle 10:  Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners are responsible for actively promoting positive inter-group relations, particularly between the people who attend their programs and with the larger community.

I work in an outpatient clinic that just so happens to be attached to the governing inpatient psychiatric facility, which also has a community residence attached to it.  The culture here can be difficult because a number of the clients who receive services here at the clinic are still in some way 'attached' to the inpatient facility either physically, emotionally or mentally.  These clients can often be resistive to referrals/suggestions for participation in resources (employment and social) in the local community.  It should also be noted that some of these clients were formerly inpatients for a considerable amount of time and have gotten used to things being provided for them through the facility.  Our waiting room here at the clinic often becomes a meeting point where clients come and socialize for a majority of their day.  When their community residence reopens they return there early in the afternoon and some do not venture out into the extended community.

Due to some of these circumstances the culture here can be difficult.  A majority of the clients I work with seem to think that I have a grab bag of jobs that I can put them in.  I spend a majority of my time explaining my true role as a vocational rehabilitation counselor.  In addition, some of these clients realistically may have many challenges in obtaining community integrated employment and the push to close 'sheltered' workshops, where a majority of our clients have been satisfied/content over the years are set to close in the future.  Trying to explain the reality of this and focusing these clients attention on community based employment will be challenging.

**Lisa Wool**

Principle 9: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners provide interventions that are culturally syntonic, and accommodate culturally determined strengths, needs, beliefs, values, traditions, and behaviors.

Providing interventions to accommodate cultural "differences" tends to be the area most challenging within the population that I work with.  Many of the individuals will recognize that their belief system / values / behaviors are "different" from the co-workers in fields that they are pursuing, however want or need to fit in is so strong that they will fight to change themselves rather than acknowledge that those differences are part of who they are and find a way to incorporate them into the work environment.

**Kathleen Wallace**

Principle 4: I was struck by principle 4 in so much as a white person I filter the world from the point of privilege; yet it is my ancestral heritage that as an Irish descendant I was victimized by the ruling class.  In my cells and thought patterns I see both cultures.  I work with the marginally housed, dual-diagnosed men and women.  There is this woman I work with in a crochet group and she is pretty good at crocheting.  So, I said if you make some hats, we can sell them.  Over the course of a weekend, she made 4 or 5 hats and wanted to be paid for them. I hadn't been clear or detailed enough, but those hats were to be sold at a Christmas event.  She uses drugs and was whipping up those hats to partake.  How can I honor her point of view and needs and offer her the experience of employment?  That is my challenge! It has been a few hours since I wrote this post. I spoke to the woman mentioned and we decided to go to a 12-step meeting.  So I have discovered the answer to my challenge:  RELATIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP, and RELATIONSHIP.  I have to develop trust with this person.  Our policy on the job is harm reduction, so I can help support her best efforts.  One foot in front of the other!  She used to be homeless, she has made great strides and together we can continue to grow and change.

**Philip Maranon**

Principle 4: This principle can relate to the assertion of some disability advocates that only people with disabilities (as practitioners) can truly understand and serve people with disabilities. It is a struggle sometimes working with different population from different backgrounds (race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, etc.) and having to "prove" that you do understand their struggles and background despite not growing up from that background.

**Barbara Oliver**

Principle 2: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners study, understand, accept, and appreciate their own cultures as a basis for relating to the cultures of others.

I chose to focus on this principle as a challenge because I believe that I tend to focus so heavily on the cultures / experiences / needs of my clients that it can be easy to forget that I am part of the equation as well, and that I bring my own complex culture with me into every interaction I have with clients, employers, and other community agencies. It was surprising to realize that I am lacking in this area, as I do find it personally interesting and rewarding to think introspectively about my culture.  However I feel that in the field of social work we place so much emphasis on understanding our clients that sometimes hardly any attention at all is paid to our own role.  Any cultural competency training that I have attended has focused on the types of clients I may encounter, and to my memory has not included activities designed to encourage reflection on my culture.  I believe that I am an "invisible cultural minority" as an American living in Canada - many people assume I am Canadian because I have no accent and easily blend into the dominant culture in my area of Ontario.  This also contributes to me forgetting that I may come with experiences, values, and ideas that are uniquely American.

The idea of "self-care" is well known in the field of social work, and refers to practices that holistically benefit social workers, who may become drained by working with challenging clients or situations at work.  I believe that the core idea of Principle #2, that we should have a strong understanding of our own culture, can find a place in self-care practices.  This allows the social worker to benefit from increased understanding of them and why they feel / respond the way they do, or even why certain situations may seem particularly frustrating or "triggering," as well as bringing the benefit to the clients with whom they interact. I have tried to think of a way that I can incorporate this Principle better into my work as an Employment Specialist.  I am a member of the Wellness Committee at my agency and we frequently discuss ways to improve self-care practices among staff members.  I will bring this idea to the next meeting and see if there is a way that we can encourage all of our Employment Specialists & Vocational Support Workers to reflect on their culture and perhaps share their thoughts with coworkers.

**Crystal Dainard**

Principle 3: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners engage in the development of ongoing cultural competency, in order to increase their awareness and knowledge, and to develop the skills necessary for appropriate, effective cross-cultural interventions.

I find the above principle the one with the most common sense but also the most difficult to put into practice. In Canada, we pride ourselves on being culturally diverse and "accepting" of other cultures, but I believe it has a lot to do with each individual's experience growing up as well as their interactions with other people.

I grew up in a very "white" neighborhood and in fact, still live in a very "white" neighborhood. As a Caucasian woman myself, I know that I hold certain expectations of how people are to act, based on my experiences growing up. As a trained SSW however, I recognize that cultural competence is integral to not only connect with your clients but to be able to help support them through their job search and other life challenges. However, with limited "life and cultural" experiences, how can I go about doing this? Currently, all but one person on my caseload is Caucasian, thereby making it very easy for me to relate to them. My one client who is not Caucasian has been open sharing what working and having a mental health issue means in his country. As I was unaware, I asked him and happily he complied with educating me.

In moving forward with my practice as an employment specialist and someone in the social work profession, it is my duty and responsibility to seek out training opportunities within my community that will enable me to learn the skills needed to be culturally competent. This can be achieved not only through training at work opportunities, but expanding my own horizons by seeking out people of other cultures through community events, readings and conversations.

I feel that it would be impossible to be fluent in all aspects of cultural diversity as everyone defines their culture differently. It is important to start where I am at, what is important to me and how clients may see me and my position. It is my responsibility to become aware of how my upbringing and/or biases can affect relationships not only with clients but with my colleagues as well. As a side note, I think there is a tremendous opportunity to be partner with other local organizations (such as newcomer services) as a learning opportunity and to be able to extend our services there as well.

**Barbara Oliver**

RE: Principle 3: Thanks for sharing your experience, Crystal!  You make some really good points in this post.  I agree that connecting with other agencies, like newcomer support programs, would be a good way to involve job seekers who may come from a different culture & may be struggling with employment.

**James Schiesz**

Principle 5: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that discrimination and oppression exits within society/even though this is the most difficult and challenging within our society and community.

I find this principle a hard one to fully comprehend. While we all know discrimination in hiring practices is illegal and that there are laws backing this up, I think that it is hard for society to monitor such cases. If an employer is discriminating candidates based on sex, race, class, etc., I don't think it would be done so in an obvious way and may be very hard to determine. The clients that I work with have diagnosed mental illnesses. They can choose whether or not they want to disclose their illness to an employer. I always tell them that it is up to them, and there is no right or wrong answer. I prepare them by saying that there are laws against discrimination, but that doesn't necessarily always prevent an employer from discriminating anyway. Because of their mental illness though, they also usually have a spotty work history, or bad references. There is sometimes nothing to be done about this, and a prospective employer is well within their rights to pass on a candidate that does not have the required experience or skill sets. We want to give everyone an equal playing field, but even with that, the people who have had more barriers to overcome will still be at a disadvantage.

I have an issue with anyone receiving special treatment over another person, whether they deserve it or not, but sometimes our clients need a helping hand in order to overcome some of their barriers (i.e. work subsidies, special programs, etc.). Because of equal opportunity laws, when I make contacts with employers on my clients' behalf, I sometimes get the sense that they feel like they have to go out of their way to accommodate this person, or that there is no way they could ever fire them if they needed to, once they are hired. I try to dispel this feeling with employers by telling them that the person they are thinking about hiring should be hired or not based on their competency. If they are hired, they are expected to perform at the level the job requires. If they do not, it is not illegal/bad if that employer fires them. Of course, we also offer our counseling services to the employer and employee to try to prevent that from happening. But I think the thing employers forget in the whole discrimination discussion is that once the person is hired, they have a fair chance of being fired if they don't fulfill the duties they were hired for - just like anyone else.

**Barbara Oliver**

That's a good point that we try to approach the hiring process as though everyone starts off on an "equal playing field," but in reality people do not start off with the same advantages /disadvantages.

**Sean Murphy**

Principle 5: It is challenging to incorporate this principle into my practice. I work with people who suffer from mental health difficulties. They often do not want employers to know of their disability. The stigma and decimation I am faced with concerning mental health difficulties is a challenge and at times frustrating. My clients usually have more success when not disclosing their difficulties. I have sat in networking functions and discussed the stigma surrounding hiring people with mental health difficulties. When I tell people what I do, some things that are often said are, "How can you do that for a living?" or "You must be patient." I often respond with "I enjoy what I do. Most of the people I work with, you would never know they had a mental health difficulty. Almost everybody goes through some tough times in their lives. The people I work with have gotten the help and support they need. They are able and want to go back to work."

I often question my own thoughts on stigma and discrimination and when I do it myself. I find it important to question yourself and your own preconceived thoughts on disability, race, class, age, sexual identity, gender, religion and culture.

I work in a very diverse region and addressing stigma and discrimination is an important part of who we should strive to be in our work and personal lives.  I find by educating myself and asking my clients about their cultures and experiences with discrimination that I receive tools in which to advocate for my clients and provide a better service.

**Anthony Sirignano**

I find Principle 5 to be the most challenging because it reflects a more systemic issue that at times I feel I have no ability to control. In spite of the work I am doing together with a person, I often find that societal views and discriminatory practices present barriers and obstacles that repeatedly put my client back to square one. I feel my response is reactionary rather than proactive.

**Kati Flanagan**

Principle 10: It was difficult to choose a Principle as I would hope as a Social Worker I am adhering to all of them, but to be a human I have to be aware that of course there are challenges that face every one of us even on a subconscious level. I ended up evaluating myself more closely and chose Principle 10 as one that could pose to be a challenge to me.

Principle 10 states that "Psychiatric Rehabilitation practitioners are responsible for actively promoting positive inter-group relations, particularly between the people who attend their programs and with the larger community." The reason I did chose this principle relies mostly on the fact that I partner with other Employment Service agencies, helping supports such as food banks or clothing donations, and other services that pertain to their whole mental wellbeing, however I do not have personal close relations with the family members or personal supports that my clients have around them. This has never been a component of our Employment Program itself, however is integral to many of our other Agency frameworks such as our early intervention team. As an Employment Specialist I had never been guided to make those connections or rather personal connections with clients. I ask who they feel their supports are and will even help them to create or investigate who may be their personal supports.

I have an awareness of the need or the importance of those supports but have never formally established or "gone out of my way" to make those personal connections. We have consents for our clients or Job Seekers to sign for us to be able to speak openly with anyone they desire us to speak with and I have spoken to clients to let them know that in some cases being able to connect with other supports can help provide them with Best Practices in their success. For example if I have information I can provide to another service provider about a client's condition, ADL's or goals they may be able to work alongside or enhance what we have been working together towards and vice/versa.

I can see the importance of reaching further into their support network for those that feel they have none. It would be helpful to use the information we gather about where they spend time, or whom they spend their days with in order to use these as potential support network and use their expertise on my client to again provide the best service to my client and get to understand them and build that relationship as their Employment Support Worker.

**Beatriz Lomas**

Principle 10: Positively promote inter group relations with people who attend programs and with the larger community.

As a counselor who did not enlist in the military, I find it somewhat difficult to understand the culture of the veterans I serve.  As a vocational counselor, it is my job to assist veteran’s transition into a job in the community however, in reality; it is not only assisting them to transition into a job but also into civilian life.  Because I did not serve in the military, I find it challenging to understand their way of thinking. Most of the veterans want to secure a job in the VA as this is where they feel at home and less anxious. However, in reality not enough jobs exist within the VA so, community employment must be considered.  Unfortunately, I am finding that most veterans will not apply to community jobs and even if an interview is lined up or they do attend then they won't follow through when offered a position. I have learned to be patient and to wait for the veterans to act when they are ready however it is extremely difficult to stand by and see opportunities in the community pass them by because they are too anxious/ symptomatic to move forward.  I have found that connecting them with community resources which work with veterans does help but, I just wish I could do more.

**Ellen Shaffer**

Principle 4: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that thought patterns and behaviors are influenced by a person’s worldview, ethnicity and culture of which there are many.

Each worldview is valid and influences how people perceive and define problems; perceive and judge the nature of collapse. I find that in my work, people I support each have a unique cultural outlook and worldview. When I find myself challenged by someone's behavior and /or choices regarding employment, I find it helps to step back, review the person's background, culture and experience as I understand them and then ask the person to correct any misperceptions or misunderstandings that I might have. Often this exercise will reveal to me reasons why people are making their choices, help me to accept them as valid and work to support the person towards their goals in a way that is truly and uniquely supportive and respectful.

**Cheryl McLaughlin**

Principle 5**:** Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners recognize that discrimination and oppression exits within society/even though this is the most difficult and challenging within our society and community.

It is our job as Rehabilitation Counselors to play an active role in lessening the effects of discrimination that are associated with many barriers our clients may face. These barriers can be minimal for some and extensive for others.  While all of our clients suffer from some sort of mental health problems we are noticing many are now seeking our services with other barriers. With an increase in immigration in our province from other countries, language is a huge barrier. I had a client that I could not communicate with and needed the use of an interpreter.

Unless funding from a local Multicultural Organization can cover the cost of an interpreter, this can be a huge expense. It is very difficult to assist a person with a language barrier to find employment. Employers are hesitant to hire someone they cannot communicate with. We then have to find resources to provide English and or French classes for the person seeking employment. This too can be costly and hard to find.

Gender Identity is another area that can be very challenging. I am currently working with a person who is transgender (female to male).  He has legally changed his name so therefore had no employment references. All his previous employers knew him as a female with a different name. He did not wish for his gender change to follow him into the workplace.  After consultation he did agree that the Supervisor could know, but did not want other employees to know.  I was able to consult with someone in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender community to get a list of employers that were sensitive to his plight.  On top of mental health issues, we had to work with this barrier to employment.  An even greater challenge with someone who is transgender is someone who has not legally changed their name but wants to be referred by a new name because they do not identify with the gender they were born with. How does Alice, who now wants to be known as Albert, but does not have the documentation of legally being Albert, go about applying for work when all their identification states "Alice"?  Gender identity is not largely understood and has a huge stigma attached to it.

I have found these two particular barriers the most challenging in my work.

**Irene Sng**

Principle 3**:** Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners engage in the development of ongoing cultural competency, in order to increase their awareness and knowledge, and to develop the skills necessary for appropriate, effective cross-cultural interventions.

Singapore is a multicultural country. Our city has a fascinating mix of cultures. Singapore is known as the largest Chinese city outside of China since 76% of its peoples trace their heritage back to the mainland. Other major ethnic groups include the Malay, 14% (500,000), the country’s second largest ethnic group and Indian, 7%. Singapore is also a multi-religious country. More than 40% of Singaporeans practice Buddhism (from the Chinese influence), about 15% practice Christianity (mostly Chinese and Indians), and 15% profess no religion.

The Singapore government has established a religious harmony law with recommendations on how different faiths should interact and how they ought to be separate from politics. The law doesn’t prohibit proclaiming the gospel to the Muslim peoples but it does discourage it. The fear is that there would be a public outcry within the community and from the surrounding nations if evangelism was encouraged. Being working in a Christian faith organization, this posed a great challenge working with our Muslim community could easily become an unreachable people group (through restrictions and their own indecision).

Challenge for efforts at community engagement surrounds the inclusion of Muslim community providing them with a platform to participate in all aspects of Islamic life. Adaptations may be made for prayer, Islamic resources have been made available in alternative forms, and many different Islamic resources are available to help. Most Singapore Malays in Singapore are Sunni Muslims who follow Islam as their religion. They pray to God five times a day, eat only halal (means any foods that are allowed to be eaten according to Islamic Sharia law). In situation of community integration event such as our monthly peer support group meeting, we would usually accommodate ordering of refreshment or meals that of non-pork items. Other challenge includes the Muslim job seekers requested particularly to work in food and beverage industries that serve only “halal” food and have only “halal” kitchen. This posed a barrier to limit employment opportunities with such specific inclusion. As such, priority has to be given to job seekers belonging to the Muslim ethnic group the opportunity to work in “halal” restaurant. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, Muslims with disabilities often feel marginalized and disengaged from Muslim community life.

**Nancy Gagnon**

Principle 8: Psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners accept that solutions to any problem are to be sought within individuals, their families (however they define them), and their cultures. The person using psychiatric rehabilitation services and his/her family are sources of expanding the practice.

We cannot possibly remain a constant, lifetime support for our clients, so we must rely on their natural systems of support to be an ongoing and active component of their rehabilitation, recovery and ultimately their support through their employment. Our view or interpretation of how we feel the natural support system should look, stems from our person culture and doesn't necessarily make it an ideal culture. However, if we feel it worked for us, we tend to feel that our system or support is the best. We have to listen and reflect with the client on their family, friends and support system, what works and what doesn't work for them. Some clients will tell us the "parts" that they don't want to repeat in their life, but I like to remind them that this is part of their heritage, their culture they were raised with and it is a part of who they are. How they want to live their life is their choice and up to them. I like to use the line "we all have one life to live and we have to decide how we want to live it".

What I find most challenging is the job seeker whose support network is only their therapy team. I like to look at delving into their community and other possible social networks to open that circle of support, introducing groups to gain social skills and improve interpersonal ability and build their own support systems. This often creates awareness that they do have some sort of other options other than their therapy team. I gently will remind them that paid staffs are not people who will be with them forever and gaining some other networks is a natural support team which we all need to go through life. I like to look at their perspective and see where that is coming from. Setting someone up with a peer for employment support can offer a chance to work through some similar challenges together, gain perspective of another persons' culture, in preparation for working with co-workers and understanding various culture in the workplace. I have supported a few job seekers who have had socio-economical expectations to meet or perform as in past family employment, but with mental health problems, they are aware that they are unable to carry on the family business or mainstream into the same line of work. The client becomes overwhelmed and stress and anxiety increase as he/she speaks about this expectation of family. It can be challenging to alter the way of thinking to support the person is identifying personal goals, reaching a balance and creating healthy boundaries with family. Our agency has a Family Education Group which is a useful resource to help family members identify how their cultural expectations affect a person’s mental health. Some families are unaware and learn techniques to reduce stress and anxiety of their family member.

When meeting with employers, finding out the work culture and identifying these expectations with the job seekers helps to figure out a suitable job fit as well as educating the job seekers about the various cultural differences in the workplace. Identifying these differences and discussing how to best make it work, gives the job seeker heads up on what they may need to accommodate to fit in at the workplace as well as educating the employer on making accommodations for the job seeker. Understanding each other’s cultural differences and how and why we got to where we are in our thinking, I believe can create a workplace where people can be together with an understanding of the diversity needed in the workplace. We all come from different cultures – no two people are the same.

**Damian Hudson**

RE: Principle 5: I think discrimination and oppression are very significant in our society and one needs to be sensitive to others belief systems, especially in the practitioners role where people come seeking help. The challenge that I've seen often get presented with is when it comes to a helpers own personal spiritual convictions. Though supporters can accept where someone else is in life, it should not be assumed the practitioner does not have personal beliefs. I think stigma and rejection play an ever changing role in society and the geniuses is a strong benefit to the human race. As professionals, it is good to know the current "hot buttons" and set personal boundaries in the partnering stage of the relationship that are inviting to the person first and secondly welcoming of CHOICE.

**Sue Fitzgerald**

RE: Principle 5: Well-spoken Damian! I especially liked the part about assuming that Career professionals don’t have any specific beliefs. As if we all need to be neutral in order to best serve the clients we work with. I found Principle #8 to be a little over zealous in assuming solutions to any problem are to be sought within individuals, their families & their cultures. Many issues are heightened or exasperated because of volatile dynamics within families, communities & places of worship. Because of this kind of trauma, it can take longer or alternative tactics to move a person forward in achieving successful employment.

**Sylvie Cleroux**

Principal 5: From my experience, stigma is the client’s biggest barrier to employment. A lot of people that come through our doors for employment related services have had past negative experiences dealing with employers or HR.  They do not wish to disclose, and we must respect their wish not to do so.  It is, nonetheless, our job to educate them about the pros and cons of disclosure; to have that important discussion about what accommodations they need; how it needs to be set up for them so that they are able to do their job the same way a person without barriers to employment does.  Once they have that information, then if they still choose not to disclose, it becomes an informed choice instead of a decision taken in fear and self-doubt.  If a client chooses to disclose, then at that point our job is to determine if the client is able to self-advocate and if they are, then we help them learn how to be their best self-advocate.  If they prefer that we advocate for them, then we work together towards that goal.  I always tell my clients that knowledge is power and the more information they have about their needs the better then can present themselves with assurance, confidence and assertiveness.

Employers and stigma: As much as we wished that the work world was an idealist environment, it is not and it and will never be.  It’s why it’s called the work culture.  Why do people with a psychiatric disability find it so difficult to stay employed?  First, their accommodations needs are unique, their symptoms are cyclic, and they can be symptom free for a long period of time.  Second, a psychiatric disability is invisible. Combine this with an employer who is uneducated about psychiatric disabilities and has a preconceived opinion about psychiatric disability that is not based on reason or actual facts.  Many employers are afraid when an employee tells them that they have a psychiatric disability because they don’t know how to deal with it, or they might have been burnt in the past.

As a Job Developer, it is my job to give a prospective employer as much information as possible regarding psychiatric disability, giving them stats, facts and assurance. It is very important to explain to them that accommodations can be simple and low cost.  Being creative at this stage can make the difference between a closed door or an open door to a possible placement for the client. I find this principle to be the most difficult one for me to work around because it is often beyond our control for the most part.  We are meeting a person (employer) and we are unaware of their values, perceptions, experiences and needs.  Thus, the employer becomes our second client.

**Karen Kuah**

Principle 8: The challenges I face with this is often that some clients do not want caregivers to be involved in their recovery journey. Also, some caregivers do not like to meet case managers because of caregiver stress, burnout or other factors unknown to us.It does take more time & effort to work with various stakeholders to even get to meet up with caregivers.

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| **Module 3:**  **Develop an initial pitch to use with some members of your personal network. Practice it with at least 2 people, revise and practice on another 2 people. Write down a script or “bullets” of your final version and what reaction you received when you gave it.** |

***Instructor’s Comments: There are some good pitch examples here, but unfortunately many had to be eliminated because the authors did not understand what a pitch was. If you review the beginning of this document, you will remember that the PITCH is NOT for employers, it is largely meant to be used in a one minute or less story to friends, neighbors, family and people you know unrelated to your work like a health club employee, a postman etc. PITCH is for the community at large. It is not the time to talk about your services. It is really to get leads to other people.***

**Sarah Espinoza**

Pitch to friends, neighbors, and members of the community: Answer to "How are you?"

I'm grateful with no complaints. I'm really enjoying my job working to help qualified individuals reach their employment goals. Within this last month, I've helped two ladies that out of work for several years get a promising job with one of our supporting partners, Groundworks Coffee. It's exciting to be able find job opportunities for the people in our community. Do you know of any?

**Kevin Stansbury**

If I see an opportunity to tell a personal story to someone in my personal network,  
  
"I recently was working with someone who had limited experience in the field he was interested in breaking into.  He was able to get a few interviews here and there, but was never offered a position.  Working together we were able to secure him a position in his field of interest as well as fill a need for the company that hired him.  Now their company has a hard worker as part of their family and the person I was working with has a stable job.”

**Maria Garritt**

At the supermarket while waiting in line at the cash register.

Maria:  It sure is getting cold in Buffalo.

Other Customer: I know... summer is too short, and winter is way too long.

Maria: I'm glad I have the perfect job to keep my heart warm.

Other Customer:  What do you do?

Maria: I work linking employers with outstanding individuals. So far it has been a complete success as good employers are matched with good employees.  It's a "win-win situation."

Other Customer: Sounds interesting...

Maria: Do you know of any good employers that are in search of great people?  I have individuals that are very good at what they do: cooks, cleaners, retail, and office work.  And some of them are even bilingual, which is a plus in today's diverse economy.

Other Customer: Maybe they are hiring in the place my husband works.  Do you have a card?

Maria: Sure!  Do you mind if I take your phone number just to follow up?

Other Customer: OK

Maria:  When is best to call you?

Other Customer:  After 6 tomorrow, so I have time to ask my husband.

Maria: Thanks a lot!  It was a pleasure talking to you!

Other Customer: You're welcome.  It was interesting.

This was a one minute conversation. In Buffalo, we are always interested in talking about the weather, so I used this topic as an opening.  :)

I called the "other customer" and her husband who works for Panera Bread at a close by shopping center.  I will stop by to talk to him further.

**Teri Sauve**

John: Hi Teri! Great to see you, it's been a while.

Teri: Yes, it has. it's great to be back. I have been busy. I have helped 5 people get jobs and another 3 people set up in volunteer positions within the past month. They are working or volunteering within hospitality, childcare, pet care, retail and grocery industries.

John: Sounds like you have been run off your feet!

Teri: Oh yes, but it's very exciting for me and I have connected with some great employers.

John: You might also want approach Safeway Canada. That employer has a great reputation for hiring a diverse population of employees.

Teri: Great! Thanks for the tip John. I will follow up. There is a Safeway in my community.

Reaction: I felt that John was genuinely interested in hearing about what I was busy doing the time I was away from the meeting. He congratulated me on my efforts and successes in helping people find employment as well as offering another lead. In turn, it is helping me continue with motivation to network within the community.

The entire conversation was about 1 minute.

**Robin Crawford**

**Version 1:**

Bank Teller: Hi Robin. How are you? I haven’t seen you in a while. How are things going?

Robin: I'm fine thanks for asking. I've been having great success with placing people to work at the local community manufacturing company "The Gap". The Gap has been a major contributor with job placement. It's rewarding to see people gain employment.

**The Final Version:**

Bank Teller: Hi Robin. How are you? I haven't seen you in a while. How is everything?

Robin Employment Specialist: I'm fine thanks for asking.

* I've been successful with finding people work at the manufacturing company "The Gap".
* The Gap is a major contributor for employment our community.
* It’s rewarding to see individuals gain employment especially around this time of year (Holiday’s).

**Melissa Marien**

Hi Melissa, how is your new job?

I am enjoying my job and I have met many incredible people. Let me tell you about someone I supported with their employment. They started at a temp agency to get some current work experience and a reference. They continued to job search while working and their perseverance paid off! They began working an entry level job at a grocery store. The grocery store has a great manager who appreciates the job coaching and support from me so they can get more work done.

**Rita Reilly**

Hey Rita how are you doing?

I am really great - I just placed a lady I am working with in a Doctor's office filing Health Information for clients into their files.  She has not worked for many years so this is particularly rewarding for both her and me. It is somewhat difficult to place people part time in these positions so I am open to hearing of all things available.

The result: People wanted to know more about her and how I accomplished this. There were two suggestions of other places. They thought Health Information filing positions and some other types of part time jobs.

**Shawn Hughes**

The pitch I used when visiting with family and friends recently.

One of my friends says to me 'I hear you just started a new job. What do you do?'

My response: I now work helping people who have identified an interest in going back to work.  Some have not worked in a while because of various reasons, but are very motivated, highly skilled in various areas and have much to offer to prospective employers.

Friend’s response: That must be challenging.

My response:  Yes, it can be, but it can also be rewarding to see their reaction when they start to believe that they can be successful in the workplace.  I recently assisted one client find a job who hadn't worked in years primarily because he didn't think he could ever work again because of his condition.  He has been working for the past 3 months and has been doing very well. Friend’s response:  That's great. I'll keep this in mind...

**Kimberly Gregg**

Q.: What do you do now?

A: I love my job...

* I get to help people who are ready to move forward and be more active in their community with finding employment. I help find the perfect fit between my job seekers and an employer who needs them. I get to help businesses find their perfect employees through my client list of highly qualified individuals who are suited for the job.
* I work in the community to help employers make great decisions on their hiring practices through education, showing through actions rather than words how great it is to work with individuals they may not have considered in the past.

I usually then have their attention and let them know more.

**Hildegunn Rodrick**

When someone asks me what I do:

I work as an employment specialist helping people who have been out of the workforce get back into it. Some people I work with have had successful careers that were interrupted by a disability; others are people who have never worked in a "real" job while others again are young people looking for their first job.

**Leonard Suits**

Hi, my name is Len. My job is to assist job seekers in finding job leads and employment opportunities. I have a wide range of people I work for. It always makes me feel great when I can help people make a good match.

*I used this pitch with some of my family members and to a manager for a rent to own business. I must say that I used it as a basic foundation. I may not have said it word for word each time. When I used this pitch, the people I spoke to become more interested in hearing more about the job seekers.*

**Wesley Baker**

During a recent evening, I was out with my girlfriend getting ice cream. I struck up a conversation with a stranger who seemed to be eavesdropping on our conversation about my day at work.  Without drawing attention to this I asked the stranger what she did for a living and asked follow up questions to get her engaged and comfortable.  I then followed up with my pitch for my program which leads to a possible trial work experience for someone to work at a small restaurant.

I was talking about my excitement for my successful placements and the satisfaction of helping to get someone out of poverty and begin to gain independence in the community. After discussing the stranger's situation, I found out that she was a local business manager at a Fast food restaurant. I mentioned labor market trends in the fast food industry and alluded to the fact that it is difficult to keep good, dependable employees in that field. I also mentioned another client that I had that is seeking to work in the fast food industry part time and had been very dependable in keeping their appointments with me and seemed to be passionate about customer service and staying on task.  This was a very strengths oriented pitch. I closed with leaving my card and mentioning that the manager could call me if she would like to learn more details about our program.

As a result the client got an interview with the manager and we have a potential long-term connection with this business leader in the community.

**Jeff Sidders**

How’s it going?

I've been finding a lot of success helping qualified people from our program both find and keep jobs, which has been really rewarding! For instance, I recently helped a young lady get a satisfying job at Panera Bread Restaurant that is providing her with a chance to pursue her passion for becoming a Baker. Her supervisors have noted that she has quickly become one of their most reliable, enthusiastic and valued employees. Another worker will soon be celebrating his 3-year anniversary in Dietary Services- which is a tremendous accomplishment for him as he had not worked for 10-years prior! Both businesses have been excellent employers, and I'm spending lots of time right now trying to meet with other employers to learn about their needs and interests, and hopefully create more successful partnerships.'

When I am within my "friend and Colleague" network, my approach like this:

Hi \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, how are you..... How is work going? (Spend some time finding out more about them). If asked how I’m doing, I will usually stay brief about myself, but then be more detailed around my work. For example:

Work has been going great!  I'm lucky to be working with some really interesting people that come from a wide range of skilled professions.  I love their eagerness to return to work.  We've had a successful year in supporting people back to work but we're always looking for employers who are hiring or if we can work with them to create a job. It’s amazing what a difference I see in clients when they are working - it’s that "meaningful activity" in life that we all need!

**Kati Flanagan**

My current pitch (and I am sure it will grow, develop or evolve) is this:

How are things? Things are going great! Word must be getting out about our service because we had such success last year. We are very busy, but it's great that we have so many skilled people to work with and are finding them the right fit for work. I love getting to learn myself as well about everyone's varied work histories and strengths they have to offer to new employers. My newest job seeker is going back in PSW work and from getting to know her and hearing her passion for people, I can see how she is the perfect fit for this line of work.

**James Schiesz**

How’s it going with your job these days, James?

"Things are really picking up at work now that it’s spring.  One of my job seekers just got employed at Computers for Schools.  Two of my former job seekers were hired there in the past and I’ve just had a meeting with them about this new guy and they tell me he is working out great too.  They’ve really been a great resource and I’ve been able to supply them with some top talent.  I’ve already made some other connections through our company’s Twitter and Facebook accounts, and I’m excited to have Computers for Schools in my business network as well."

My initial rough draft of my pitch included the social networking sites and the employer, but I left out the part about having other successful clients.  After I revised it and fleshed out the story to include the other clients at the company it was received a little better.

**Damian Hudson**

How are you doing?

I'm doing great things?

What is it that you do?

I help people find jobs by using strengths they forgot they had and I feel rewarded when they get the jobs they want. What are your thoughts on the job market?

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| **M4 Discussion:**  **Please complete at least two presentations and/or proposals to an employer (preferably more) and post your comments, experiences and findings.**  **1. What do you think went well from your presentation or proposal?**  **2. What might you have changed?** |

***Instructor’s Comments: Some good work done here. The biggest problem I saw was that some folks jumped right in with their presentation about who they were, what they did, who they served etc. In the course we stress that the first thing to be done is LISTENING to the employer, asking open ended questions, and then it is time to present your services. Also it is not the time to dive into disability issues. This is really about employment and not about mental illness. There is some confusion still about the presentation and the proposal. These are two different parts of the process.***

**Christina Finamore**

I find that cold calls help give me confidence and quick experience/practice so that when I go to give my "presentation " in person I am more comfortable with what I have to say and much more relaxed. It seems my message is better received and is more likely considered when I am easy going and listen more than I chat.

**Kevin Stansbury**

1.After doing several presentations and proposals I feel like my enthusiasm for our program and for the services that we provide comes out clearly.  I presented much of the pertinent information to the employers and gave them enough space so that they would know I was truly listening to their wants and needs.

2. What I need to work on is presenting on the services we provide in an organized fashion.  Sometimes I get kind of flustered talking to employers and I forget to say something that I meant to say.  I think it will just take building more experience with doing presentations and proposals.

**Aaron Fernandez** *(Hopefully this is after listening carefully to the employer’s needs).*

Presentation to Sime Darby Automobiles:

Thank you for this time you and your committee have so kindly agreed to grant me. Let me introduce myself. My name is Aaron and I’m a job specialist at HKL. As a job specialist, my role is that of providing a link between persons who are very much interested in securing a job with employers who are looking for good, honest and hardworking employees. I’m privileged to know a number of persons from the community I work with who are both capable and interested in securing employment. As a job specialist, it is my role to introduce such persons who are ready for work to employment opportunities in and around the community and support both them and their employers after employment is secured.

The services I provide are: I interview prospective job seekers and find out what their areas of interest and goals are as well as their strengths and resources. I also contact and meet potential employers and learn about their business model, the areas of need especially manpower needs and types of career opportunities available. Using the knowledge gathered, I try to match job seekers with employment opportunities which best fit. If employment successfully takes place, I will continue to support the employee in the role which he will now work in as well as the employer in training and developing the employee’s potential.

It really is a win-win situation for both parties. The job seeker is confident that the employment opportunity is based on his strengths and skills which have been identified by the job specialist who will then continue to work with him to develop his career. The employer is spared from conducting interviews with candidates who may have paper qualifications but have not been screened for suitability for the job. This saves considerable time and expenses for the company’s human resource department. Having employees who are highly motivated to work and eager to learn contributes to the productivity of the company too. The company also develops its reputation as an equal opportunity employer as well as obtaining tax rebates and government incentives.

*Follow-up with* ***proposal*** *of suitable candidate for position of sales advisor*:

Allow me to thank you once again for your valuable time to hear my presentation the other day. As a follow up on what we discussed, please allow me to introduce to you a candidate that I’m most certainly fulfill your requirements for the position of sales advisor. My candidate is a 38yr old Malay gentleman who I have known for the past 2 years. He previously worked in UMW Toyota for 3 years in a similar capacity successfully before he was retrenched and as you will see in his CV is highly recommended by his previous supervisor. He is very passionate about all things mechanical especially cars and bikes and seems to be able to enthuse others with this passion. He thinks the Land Rovers are the best off-road vehicles ever built and is thrilled to hear that your company markets them for Malaysia.

I think that this is a great match for the both of you as I’m certain your company would benefit from a charismatic person like him as a sales advisor. He communicates well with people and combined with his love for cars makes for an irresistible candidate. All he is asking for is a chance at doing what he does best. I’m quite positive that in addition to moving cars off the showroom floor, his enthusiasm with each and every potential customer will highlight your company’s commitment to excellent and personalized service. In addition, his presence will fortify the image of your company as a company that walks its talk on equal employment in the industry.

*I think that in retrospect, the presentation was adequately concise so as to hold the attention of the company’s HR personnel. However, I think I should have improved on some of the details in the presentation.*

*Comment: Aaron thought maybe he should explain more about psychiatric disability, but I would say the opposite. He has made a strong statement about abilities, there is no need to go into disability at this time and in fact no need to discuss it unless he is hired and needs accommodations.*

**Linda Schroeder**

I had read in the newspaper that the Holiday Inn Express was looking for front end staff members.  I approached the staff at the front desk and asked if a manager was available as I had a few questions regarding the position.  The manager told me he had just finished doing some interviewing and was no longer considering individuals. I still asked if I could have a moment of his time and asked him several questions regarding his hiring practices, what type of employee he looks for and the qualities he was looking for. I asked him if he would be willing to look at a resume to see if that resume had been submitted on time. Would he have considered it?  He looked at in and he said "most likely not. He then gave me a few pointers on the resume - things that would have made it a toss from the start; not consistent dates - should have month and year, not just year, he said details were important, and suggested listing the individuals skills and abilities that match the job description - it's a quick way to view whether or not the individuals has the skills needed. I thanked him for his time and expertise and then left.  I sent him a thank you note when I got back to the office.

Even though I didn't get to present anything, I found it so helpful to have the resume reviewed.

The other presentation is for a person whom is interested in doing some job shadowing as he is interested in possibly going into the CNA field.  I contacted several assisted living homes and a home care office.  They were all receptive to having the individual apply as a volunteer due to the HIPPA laws.  The final details are being worked out and he will have 2 places to go in the month of January.  I chose to contact the agencies instead of client as he is soft spoken and has some response latency issues.  I have been cleared to attend the initial training of the 'volunteer' trainings to make sure he gets successfully started.  I thought this approach went well and that this individual will have different options.

**Pauline Banducci**

As I said in my previous post, I am not an employment specialist, so my post may be confusing.

I often wish it was much easier to find mock interviewers. Although I am enthusiastic and encouraging, many employers are overwhelmed and don't have the time to participate. The employers who participate respond very positively. For the past 7 years we have used the same offices for our mock interview process; they have many separate offices we are welcome to use. All the job seekers arrive together; it feels supportive. The job seekers are not acquainted with the interviewers; it feels very real. I call afterwards and receive A LOT of feedback over the phone. I type it up and give it verbally to the job seekers.

After the feedback some have decided they want to get a job differently. They may want to begin volunteering first, so the employer can get to know them before they apply for an open position. This is because they have a great work ethic, but may have a flat affect. Some have decided they want to go back to school; they aren't as knowledgeable as they would like to be.  Some have asked me to set up another mock interview with even harder questions; they want to gain more confidence.

The interviewers feel connected to the job seeker; and have given me networking connections to use in the future. At least three employers (mock interviewers) have wanted to employ the interviewee when they are ready for a paying job. This was gratifying.

*Comment: Thanks for this posting and there is something valuable here even though you are not an Employment Specialist per se, you are tuning into some of the needs of the job seekers. It is very useful to get feedback for the job seekers about their interview behavior which they often don’t get in a real life interview. Some programs use video of the informational interview and then critique it with the person.*

**Teri Sauve**

Just recently I was out and about in my community. I noticed a couple of "Help Wanted" signs posted at the entrance to the business. I was not familiar with one of the businesses, so I sat in my car and observed the people coming in and out of the business, (a very diverse group of people). I watched and made note of where people were getting on and off the public transportation. After a few minutes I went in and observed the entrance environment and saw that it was a main reception area that had 3 receptionists and perhaps 2 other administrative employees. Another office door said "mail room" another said "photocopy room". I asked what type of business it was and the receptionist said that is was a recycling/janitorial paper supply warehouse. I then asked what the 2 job postings were for. The receptionist said one was for reception (answering phones) and the other was for the mail room, (sorting and delivering mail within the warehouse). I asked if I could possibly speak to the person in charge of hiring. When the gentleman came out, I introduced myself and said that I was aware of the two job postings that he had advertised and asked if he could tell me about the company and give me some detail regarding the skill requirements and type of person that would be a good fit for each of the jobs. After he finished explaining about the vacant positions, I elaborated about what I do and that I work with people who have barriers to employment but with the right supports these people can be quality employees I said I could be helpful to him in filling these two positions, and that we can create a great partnership. He was very receptive to my presentation and could see that I was very passionate about my work. We then set a meeting date to meet the job seekers that I had in mind that would be a good fit for his business.

What went well?

I think that I because I took the extra time to observe the people (diversity), there was a variety of cultures and people that looked like they had a support person of some kind with them, as well as bus route for ease of transportation and crossing lights at the busy intersection. He spoke openly of hiring people with barriers and that giving a chance to everyone are some of his values. I went in with the confidence I needed in order to have a great conversation with the perspective employer.

What would I have changed? I made an assumption about "looked like they had a support person of some kind with them" before I got all the information about the company and business, even though what I observed was correct. I don't think I would have changed anything else. It was a successful presentation.

**Maria Garritt**

I am a Rehabilitation Specialist and my interest in taking this course is to help clients link with employment opportunities that allow them to improve their recovery process.  In my program, we have an employment specialist.  This is a new position. She only works 2 days a week and it has been difficult for our clients to establish a solid relationship with her.   I want to have a broader view of the vocational placement aspect of rehabilitation, but at the same time I don’t want to “step on her toes.”  So I wasn’t able to practice the presentations/proposals with employers directly connected with the program, but I practiced with employers in the community in hopes of furthering our employment specialist’s network.I was able to find out very useful general and specific information about the places of work and the employers themselves by using the suggested open questions.  It was interesting to notice that employers welcomed the questions and were willing to talk about their needs and expectations.

Another interesting aspect is that I found more useful to talk about symptoms vs. diagnostic.  It was easier for me, and for the employer to talk about people dealing with anxiety and stress related characteristics than “labeling” the job seekers as suffering from Major Depression, Schizophrenia or Bipolar Disorder.  My reasoning for using this approach is that most of the general population does not know the definitions and/or characteristics of mental illness diagnosis, and it is easier to understand “feeling nervous in crowded spaces” than “Anxiety Disorder.”

*Comment: You made some good points about getting to know the employer and avoiding labeling of any kind. I like to use the term “functional issues” rather than symptoms because symptoms still imply the medical model rather than the rehabilitation model. So we talk about a functioning problem like focusing and then a solution to that problem for the employee.*

**Irina Markovich**

Presentation 1: I explained the services and benefits of working with our organization. I also explained services that we provide to the job seeker (off the job coaching) and how it would benefit the employer (improved job retention, quicker adaptation, opportunity to work out problems along the way and the like). I explained how employer will benefit from hiring my candidate emphasizing skill set, abilities, job retention ( people with disabilities tend to stay in the job  longer and, employer will save on training) , motivation as well how our service can help with accommodations. Employer was interested in cooperation and wanted to move to the next step of the hiring process. **(Proposal)** I practiced proposal with two different employers recently. Client number one had a physical disability (mobility restriction and visual impairment). Employer wanted to interview him first and then meet with me. Client disclosed his disability over the phone. Interview went well, however employer did not make a decision at the spot. I felt that making proposal in the situation was easier as employer knew individual’s strengths.

*I liked that I was able to build the conversation around client’s strengths, good match, mutual collaborations and how it will benefit employer. It was good that I was able to prepare client well for the interview and convinced him to disclose his limitation a head time. It worked very well for me that client already disclosed and I had his permission to discuss disclosure and accommodation ahead of time. If I might change anything I would prefer presenting to employer prior client’s interview, as this might support client if he would not do well in the interview.*

Presentation 2: I primarily focused on our services, benefits for employer and benefits to work with Employment Ontario because the employer was new and had no experience with such services like ours. Employer had very little knowledge of what mental health condition could be but was stigmatized about mental health.  I explained that majority of individuals we serve deal with such conditions like stress, anxiety and learning disabilities. I avoid discussing specific diagnosis or disorders, but focused on common challenges. I emphasized that we would like to set individual for success, therefore we would assess the job opportunity carefully and would make sure that this would be a good match. This discussion reassured the employer that I would not recommend anybody who would not be able to do the job. Employer agreed to interview two suggested candidates.

*I was glad that I had opportunity to address employer stigma. I wished he would ask more questions and voiced more concerns so I could address them. I was glad that I was able to focus the employer on benefits that he will get by hiring individuals I support. I still would prefer to have better established relationship with employer prior discussing mental health even in general. I prefer to be more generic about my clients’ condition and focus on their strengths and abilities until employer interviews them.*

*Comment: I hope that before giving the Presentation, you had a lot of open ended questions for the employer about his/her needs as that is the first focus of the Presentation. This should always happen before giving any information about services, partnership etc. It creates the bond with the employer if s/he thinks you are listening. Second is the discussion about your services and job seekers.*

**Thomas Schlitt**

In my Presentation I was able to primarily focus on what the employer needed and jobs that were difficult to keep filled.  One of the employers talked about the dish washing position.  This position does not have much face time with customers, so it would be really great with a client that values working alone.  This is a lead that we are still cultivating.

The employer did ask who we serve.  He knew that I worked with a mental health agency before I met with him because of the title of the organization.  I told him that we work with clients that have substance use and mental health challenges.  This lead to a good conversation, but I wish that I had been able to discuss employment without disclosing about our clients.

*Comment: When you have automatic disclosure as in your case, your can answer questions and use generic terms like people with barriers to employment or respond with just the amount of information suitable to the employer situation. Most of the education about who your serve will come on a case by case basis and the employer meets your candidates. Then you can speak about their strengths and “Oh, by the way, he will need help with xxxx functional problem.” In other words, speak “EMPLOYER” rather than psychiatry. Good job!*

**Amy D'Antonio**

1. I gave my presentation to a local restaurant which did not need any help right now but would be hiring kitchen help in the spring. The manager was very receptive and we exchanged business cards. She asked me to contact her again in another month to discuss interview times.

I could have asked for an informational interview for my clients who were interested to have a clear understanding of the job expectations.

2. I gave my presentation to a local factory which makes chimes and musical instruments. They did not quite understand at first why I was there and not the applicant - but we were able to get through that hurdle with further clarification. The manager was not looking to hire currently but perhaps they could use some extra help in the summer months. He usually hires “college kids” and would consider an applicant who had the skills to perform factory work. I went there cold and it seems I would have been better received if I had called and made an appointment first.

*Comment: A good observation!*

**Elizabeth Miller**

1. I traveled to a local business that was suggested by the local clubhouse Vocational Specialist, that I work closely with because we share a few of the same persons served.  Upon giving a short presentation to the manager present seemed to be open to the support given to the persons served by myself and invited the client I focused on to come in to complete an application and interview.  The proposal was short, but detailed including the client's resume and a short cover letter that I left with the manager.  I also mentioned the clubhouse specialist that I work closely with, that has already formed a relationship with the manager, which I thought gave the manager a good impression of the work I was doing to help their establishment.  The manager also explained the hours expected for the part time position as well as benefits and base pay.  Therefore I was able to discuss this with the client prior to their application/interview process began.

2. I would have broadened my proposal to fit for more than one match and attempted to make position available to more than one of the persons served.

**Joseph Hvorecky**

Below is my feedback related to two presentations with prospective employers:

Family Dollar Store

What went well with presentation:  the presentation was concise and to the point and emphasized the value the job seekers I was advocating for would bring to the organization; the manager of the store was both responsive (agreed to a scheduled meeting and did not cancel) and receptive (asked some clarifying questions and was open to interviewing a couple members of my transitional program); the manager wanted me to provide the same presentation to some of his other current team leaders and supervisors at future point.

What could have gone better:  I would have liked to have concluded the presentation with some type of commitment from the store manager on a trial work period for some of my transitional program's members; I would have liked to identify more some of the specific skill sets the manager felt were most critical for available vacancies and which skill sets he valued the most; I would have liked to have walked away with additional employer leads this manager might have been aware of.

Rite Aid Pharmacy

What went well with the presentation:  the presentation highlighted some of the recent successes our transitional program members have had; one of the program members contributed to the presentation itself; the store supervisor provided some constructive criticism on how the presentation could be tailored better to a pharmacy type job from a customer service standpoint.

What could have gone better:  I should have researched Rite Aid more prior to the presentation to understand their recent hiring trends and overall mission statement; I could have engaged in more proactive communication with the store supervisor in question as the presentation had to be rescheduled several times because of scheduling conflicts on both our ends; I should have agreed to a specific follow up timeline and follow up actions at the conclusion of the presentation as there was no clear future direction following the presentation.

*Comment: This is a thoughtful self-examination and I commend Joe for his insight. It is always worth the time to do the homework on the company in advance when possible and to listen carefully to the employer responses to your open ended questions in the “getting to know you” first part of the interview. Well done!*

**Jessica Vaz**

Presentation with Marshalls:

1. What went well is that I was able to get an appointment with the Hiring Manager after a lot of enthusiasm from the District Manager. They work with hiring from several organizations so they were receptive of the **Presentation.** I scheduled a follow up appointment to meet with the Hiring Manager, who was able to give me a lot of good information.

2. What could have gone better was that when waiting for the Hiring Manager, I waited about an hour for our appointment. He was able to tell me how they work with organizations like mine, but because they work with so many they go down their list when there is an opening. With little openings, not all organizations get reached out to. I was able to leave my card, but scheduling a follow up appointment was difficult.

*Comment: It is true that The TX Corp. that owns Marshalls, TJ Maxx, Home Goods etc. is known nationally for its commitment to working with organizations that support persons with disabilities and other barriers to employment, so it can get confusing with them about who they are dealing with. There are some disability collaborative as mentioned in the course where Employment Specialists from many agencies meet and share their job openings and also have lead persons handling accounts for the bigger companies. This is a model to consider, but takes time to build the trust.*

Presentation with Danice (a local clothing chain):

Immediately after the presentation, the Store Manager stated an immediate need for a Sales Floor person. With someone to fill the position, I asked when I could come back with this person for her to interview. She asked that we come back the next day with the applicant and her resume.

What could have gone better was that upon returning the next day, the Store Manager was not there as scheduled. Instead, we had to leave the resume with a different manager who had no idea why we were there. We had a contact number for the Store Manager to follow up, but were unsuccessful in ever reaching her.

*Comment: Given that there seemed to be interest on the first day, it might have been worthwhile to find out from the manager of the second day how to get in touch with the first one, by phone or in person. Sometimes it is difficult to track down the right person but stick with it.*

**Alice Bilodeau**

I went into a local business I frequent and asked to speak with then owner. I explained who I was and what I wanted to discuss with her; hiring of persons with disabilities. I detailed the benefits of hiring the disabled and the prevocational training and continued support I would provide to anyone she hired. I left her with information in regard to our program.

The presentation went well. She was receptive and scheduled another appointment. I will in the future ask permission from other agencies in the community that have employed our clients if I could use them as an example and as a contact for the business I am wanting to bring on board.

*Comment: When you talk about your Presentation, always consider first: ‘Getting to Know You’ session in which you ask the employer a series of open ended questions. This really must come first before you talk about what you do and how your services are set up. Also, I strongly suggest that your presentation focus on people with barriers to employment rather than people with disabilities to avoid any stereotyping. When you get to the proposal stage, then the employer gets the idea of who you serve. Some may disagree with this, but I am following the experts on this.*

**Melissa Marien**

I start by researching the employer and finding out what jobs they have posted and the mission of the employer so I have information to talk about when I meet with them. I call to find out when the hiring manager is in and when they are available to meet with me. I also try to match someone to the position and ask them if I can bring their resume to the employer.

1. From presentations that I have done, I bring information about our program and I make sure to explain my role as the employment specialist. I also discuss the ways I can support the employee at work and how that benefits the employer. If the employer has additional time I will present an individual that I am supporting who would be a great fit for the job. I follow up a few days after by phone to discuss job positions.

I connected with the Salvation Army. I have worked with them in the past for the seasonal bell ringer positions. We were able to coordinate a group presentation and interview with their hiring manager. They continue to work with our agency because of the job coaching and we refer individuals that are qualified for the position and they hire individuals that have worked the previous year.  After the seasonal positions, they encourage individuals to apply for other job postings and for us to let them know when someone has completed an application.

2. What has helped to maintain a relationship with this employer is that we refer individuals so they do not have to post the job for long, we offer job coaching and if someone does not work out we are able to refer someone else. When I have presented what I have changed is having someone to refer for the position. I have found that it is easier to make a connection if I am someone going to immediately benefit the employer.

*Comment: Be sure to start* ***all*** *Presentations with the listening session vs. the telling session. The open ended questions are what establish the bond with the employer not the information you share.*

**Lani Otto**

When I contact a company, I normally make an appointment to do the presentation. Hello!  My name is Lani Otto and I work for -------.  I would like to know if I may be able to explain our Employment Services to you.  The presentation does not take long and I have information to leave with you, afterwards you can ask questions or you can get in touch with me if you have any further questions afterwards.  When I go for the presentation I then make introductions again, have a folder ready with all of the material and the laptop with the presentation.  I show the company or HR person the packet and then walk through the presentation.  Sometimes I answer any questions as we are walking through the presentation or after it has been viewed.

I have been in the situation where somebody has already secured their own employment and I go in to introduce myself and Employment Services along with a packet.  Then I explain the services to the manager and explain what I do as a service to them and for the employee.  When I have done this type of service I have explained to the manager that it is not going to cost them a cent for our services as my company is paying my wage.

One of the big factors when you go into speak to an employer is making sure that you let them know you are covered under a "liability" clause with your company when you are going to be training, if the person gets hired.  So many companies are worried about accidents and such.  I think it is wise to speak about that during your presentation also. And make sure and pass out your business cards.

*Comment: Your presentation should always begin with the series of open ended questions to the employer to find out what they need. The listening time is probably more important than your presenting information about what you do. This is critical!*

**Robin Crawford**

I went to a local nursing home and spoke to the Department Head of Recreation. I have two clients that are interested and ready to volunteer to help the elderly.

Hi my name is Robin Crawford and I'm a placement specialist here in the Brewster, Carmel, and Patterson community, I provide support to individuals who are seeking employment and volunteering. I assist with resume development, filling out applications and preparing for interviews. Does the nursing home have any opportunities for volunteers? I have two individuals that are willing to spend their time volunteering and they will do great here. One person has a love for music and he is prepared to have a selection of music that is enjoyable and entertaining. The other individual is willing to engage the residents in diverse activities and wants overall help out when needed.

1. The presentation went well. The Department Head of Recreation was excited and gave me applications as she explained the entire process (immunizations are required). She thanked me for coming in and looked forward to working with me. She also mentioned that if she likes the music/entertainment she would hire him to work per diem.

2. There is nothing I would have changed. I thought it went well maybe because I presented volunteer work and not employment. Hopefully I will have the same experience with proposals for employment.

*Comment: Always begin with asking the employer open ended questions and showing your high level of interest in what they need. This must be done before you introduce your information. This is where the bond begins.*

**Melissa Kruise**

1. Hello, My name is Melissa Kruise. I work at Skills Employment Services where we assist individuals with looking for employment by filling out applications, developing resumes and interview prep. We work with a variety of people that have different interest and strengths. What type of employment is open within your company?

What went well? We discussed positions that they hire for.

What didn't go well? I could have an individual in my mind for the position.

2. I went to an interview with a person I support. During the interview I explained services and explained the individual great work history. The interviewer really liked the individual and said they could tell that he was really eager to work.

What went well? They saw his potential.

What didn't go well? He was not offered the job.

*Comment: If you did everything right and the person did not get the job; do not consider that as a negative on your part. Competition today is fierce so getting the person in the door should be considered an important milestone. Good for you. Always be careful in the Presentation NOT to start out telling what you do, but start out finding about the employer’s needs and wants.*

**Charles Lansberry**

1. Hello! My name is Charles and I supervise a program with Skills called employment services.  We assist individuals to become part of their community through employment. I'd like to discuss with you how our services work. We assess people’s strengths with various jobs in the community. Once we figure out what jobs the individual enjoys we speak with employers like yourself to see if this individual would benefit you with their employment.

What went well: Creating a conversation through wording that benefits the employer.

What I may change: Giving a more personalized history of a person I support.

2. Hello, I noticed you opened a new bike store in Bedford.  This town is historic and the architecture is gorgeous for a bike ride to enjoy the scenery.  Are you from this town originally? (Yes!) Fantastic!  I work for a company called Skills.  We just started services in the past year. We are actually a few blocks down the street.  Skills many programs, however I work for employment services, which assists individuals locate jobs in their community.  I actually wanted to speak with you on behalf of one gentleman that I work with that enjoys biking and has several years’ experience working on the mechanics of mountain bikes.  He has over 15 years’ experience replacing breaks, peddles, and tires for the neighbor children.  He is actually known as the “bike guy.”   Oh you have heard him?  Great!  He would like to meet with you and discuss his knowledge and history with bikes.  Is this something that you would be interested in?

What I went well? Praising the town and connecting the owner’s history and the person I support.

What I may have changed? I don’t think I would have changed anything from that conversation, as it worked well in that setting.

*Comment: Nice connection with the town comments. Make certain that you always begin with open ended questions to the employer about their needs vs. your presentation of services and who you serve. This begins to build the bond. People like to be heard.*

**Greg Baldwin**

1. Recently I assisted an individual in filling out an application to a local restaurant. Upon turning in the application to the establishment the manager had asked to speak with me. I explained our services in detail from the direct training; learning the job alongside the individual to be able to come back at any time, free to the company, if the individual needed to be retrained or trained on a new position. I then explained the fading from the job site only when the individual and employer are comfortable with the time frame to stopping every day the individual works, to stopping once a week when the individual is working any shift at any time, and then eventually to once a month and that I could be called upon at any time to increase the frequency of the visits if the individual would need it. The manager then asked to have the individual come in for an interview the following day. The individual did interview, and did well, but the restaurant was not hiring at the time.

I would have changed the conversation to ask if there was any position at the restaurant that could have been customized to ensure that the individual would have received a position whether they were hiring for the specific position or not.

2. I accompanied an individual to a hiring event. The event had two parts one was a skill test the other was a written portion. I explained to the people conducting the event of the services that my company provides using the same as written above. I was allowed to assist the individual with both parts of the event after explaining that this is a reasonable accommodation. The company did allow me to help the individual with minor prompts and some assistance with the written portion. I explained the training for the job and how the ETS would be able to assist with everything and how the ETS could act as an additional trainer that they would not have to pay as I am paid by my company to be there. The individual completed as much on their own as they could and I assisted as much as possible without doing everything for them to show their independence and learning capability.

I would have changed my approach to the event and completed more of a demonstration of how the ETS would have conducted the hands on training.

**Rita Reilly**

I made an appointment with a gentleman who had a child care program.  Thanked him for taking the time to see me.  Requested information on any employment requirements he had for the persons he hired.  He informed me he had many levels, due to the fact that he had to follow licensing needs and background checks, dealing with children.  When I enquired about the qualifications for aids or individuals that did cleaning, etc. he informed me he still had to be particular with these individuals due specifically to the fact that he was dealing with children.  I enquired if there was a special training needed by nonprofessional assistance and he said there were two ways to get this training.  One is school and the other is "on the job training" with close supervision.  He preferred if they came already trained as it was expensive to train and then lose them if it did not work out.  I asked him if he had an opportunity to look at the material I had left for him when I made the appointment and he admitted he only glanced at it.  I asked if I could review this information and clarify what I did and how I could be of help to his business.  I made sure he could feel better about me taking some of the training expense from him by having a job coach work with an individual if he wanted to give someone a try.

I explained that I had a person who I thought would be a good fit for his business and that she had been observed in an area of our agency interacting with children.  We had the opportunity to see her in a volunteer situation and felt she would be a potentially good employee for him. I asked if I could have her come to his program and let her volunteer at least one time to let him observe for himself how she interacted with young children.  I was very interested in this approach, especially since he would not have to put out a great deal of expense before he felt comfortable.  I made an appointment with him for this to happen and thanked him for his time.  I followed up the meeting with a note confirming the date and time of the individual’s volunteer appointment.

*I thought this went well and I could see the relief on the face of the employer when he thought I was not just there to put someone in a position without the concern of whether it would work out.  He appeared to feel less fearful of hiring someone with a disability and not knowing what to expect*.

I had an employer that I had approached in the past to participate in a Supported Employment placement and at that time she did not need anyone, and was a little reluctant about hiring anyone with a SMI diagnoses.  I left her with information and my contact information.  At that time I was with a Transitional Employment program rather than Supported Employment.  She contacted me stating she had been speaking with a fellow business person who advised her to give me a try again as she had a need for someone who could work only about 8 to 10 hours per week, sometimes less, and not necessarily on the same day of the week .  I proposed an individual to her who fit the need she had which was shredding confidential papers.  I assured her the person was flexible with days and hours as long as it did not run over the 10 hours per week.  If it did it was important that the following week be less so overall hours every month were closely watched.  I reassured her that our job coach would be there with the individual to assist them understand all that was expected of them and what to do if they had concerns.  I made an appointment for them to meet and ask the individual any questions, get an application filled out and arrange for completion of their required pre hire needs, for example drug screening.  At present they are in process of completing what the employer wants, she was pleased with the person I recommended and appears comfortable with giving them a try.

*I appreciate the information from the module regarding the steps that should be taken - presentation and what made up the presentation and then the proposal, either at that time or a follow up call or appointment.  I think at times I was trying to "cram it all in" and sometimes a little patience is necessary.  This is sometimes difficult as you have that individual that WANTS to work now. Patience for them, patience for the employer and patience for me as the Supported Employment Program Coordinator.*

**Arletta Holman**

I talked with a perspective employer while having lunch one day.  I explained a little about what I did and asked if he would consider accepting a person as a mentee for Disability Mentoring Day.  He said that he would be happy to be a mentor for a day, as long as he had plenty of advance notice, so as to arrange his schedule.  He gave me his card and asked for a minimum of a three week notice to schedule for the mentoring event.

*What went well: The whole thing was very informal and relaxed.  There was no pressure and the manager was very receptive to participating in the mentoring process.*

*What I might have changed:  I had not really planned to discuss the event with the manager.  He just happened to stop by the table and ask if we were enjoying our meal and service.  I took the opportunity to do a little blurb. I would like to have left a brochure, but had nothing with me to show him.*

**Arletta Holman**

I called an employer with whom my agency had previously facilitated the hire and supplied ongoing job supports for a consumer.  The person had done very well, felt he no longer needed support and had left the SE program. (Unknown to me and/or anyone in my agency was the fact that the person had spiraled downward after leaving the SE program and had been let go.)  Fortunately, the employer stated that he liked my enthusiasm and that although the previous employee did not work out in the long run, he was not going to hold that against me and he invited me to bring my two candidates to meet with him for an interview.  He had four positions to fill, as he had just received a contract to clean a Catholic School after hours.  He had at least ten other applicants.   I had my candidates well prepared and each interviewed with confidence.  Both were hired for full-time positions.   A job coach was assigned to be with them for the first few days.  Both did an excellent job for the company.  Their first pay was the Thursday of the fourth week of work.  The one person called in the following day.  She returned the following Monday and continued doing an excellent job.  They were paid again two weeks later and she called in the following day again.  She again went back and worked another two weeks and the same thing happened.  She was let go after the third time. We discovered she was cashing her check Friday and then going out partying Friday night with her friends. The other person is currently one of the best employees the company has had and has been made a team leader.

*What went well: I think the proposal was positive and I believed in the people. I was requesting to be interviewed.  Obviously, the interviews went well and the immediate progress was good.*

*What I would have changed:   I would have never sent the second person to be interviewed, had I known she would call-in after every payday.  I needed to know more about this person’s work ethic.*

**Judith Halloran**

Proposals: My most recent job development was with a local hat manufacturer with whom we'd worked with previously but hadn't placed any candidates for over two years. The engagement has been consistent since with connections via LinkedIn but I hadn't made a proposal for quite some time due to lack of candidates. During our holiday thank you/gift giving to employers I stopped by this employer and caught up with him. There had been management changes and the original person I job developed with had been bought out by this man. Therefore my intention was to engage the new 'hiring manager' while also inquiring about possible placement opportunities. He was friendly and amenable and when it was clear we had established a relationship, I left him with my card and encouraged him to call me when/if he had openings. A month later I had a candidate who I thought would be perfect for this position. I emailed Scott a friendly intro (remember me) and some selling points about my candidate and why she'd be a perfect match for his company. He replied that he didn't have positions now but may in a month or two. I emailed him back wondering if my client and I could stop by to tour his facility and he said that would be great. We have a 'meet and greet' scheduled for next week and I am coaching my client as to how to dress, what to bring, and how to best respond to possible questions. I'm encouraging her to treat it like an interview. My intention with the meet and greet is for the employer to get to know my client and I'm confident that her presentation will please him. He is already familiar with the incentives involved in hiring from our program and I continually talk about his company's 'goodwill' in that they're a B-Corp; it's in their mission to help the community. I'm hoping that after our meeting Scott will put my client at the top of his list once positions open up.

*What has gone well: The relationship building seems key with this employer. He has a friendly, conversational style with me and seems to honestly want to work with our program. He also lights up when some of the financial incentives are reviewed. The fact that he is amenable to meet and greet is promising in terms of future employment. I don't think he'd take time out of his busy day otherwise.*

*What might I have changed? I try to not be too pushy or come off as a saleswoman. Who wants that? And yet, as a result, time often moves slowly with my method. I'll need to work on the proposal piece of JD and start feeling more comfortable with tying up loose ends by asking directive questions that produce results (i.e. When can she start? What's the next step in the hiring process?)*

**Shawn Hughes**

General script...

**Example 1:**  Presentation at AutoZone, after having set up a time to meet with a manager

Hello my name is SH, I am a VRC at ACSC.  I wanted to speak with you today to find out a little bit more about your company and what qualities you expect from potential job candidates.

I work with a few people who have education and work experience in the field of auto mechanics.  First off, what are some key qualities that you look for in a potential job candidate?  Is there any specific skill or trade that you feel an employee would have to possess in order to be successful in this job? What is important to know about the expectations of employees here?  Since your business is located on a bus line would they still need a driver’s license to perform any duties?

As I mentioned before, I am a VRC and my job is to match qualified individuals with appropriate employment opportunities and to support you in any way that I can.  Some of the support services that I can provide should an individual be considered for a position would be on the job support such as job coaching, accommodation planning if needed, help to solve problems that may arise on the job etc.

I know that if you will be very pleased with the level of motivation and work ethic that these individuals would bring to your company.  In addition, most of the people we serve are enrolled in the NYS Ticket to Work program and your company could benefit from certain NYS tax breaks.  We might even be able to pay the clients wages for the first 2 weeks of their employment as a ‘job tryout’ to ensure that you are satisfied with their work.

Does this sound like a resource that you might be interested in taking advantage of?  If so I would be happy to answer any more questions that you might have.

Here is my business card, feel free to contact me anytime.  I really think that your company and those I represent could all benefit from this opportunity and hope that we might be able to establish a network that we could utilize in the future as well.

**Example 2:**  Proposal for a job candidate at AutoZone after the client completed a resume, cover letter and on-line application with guidance of the VRC

Hello, thank you for taking the time to speak with me again.  I wanted to give you a little bit of information on an individual who continues to express interest and excitement in the potential opportunity to work for your company as a Parts Associate.  His name is John Doe, he has completed the on-line application, has updated his resume and cover letter and is looking forward to an interview with you if his application is considered.

From the conversations and meetings that I have personally had with John I can say that he is current with the knowledge and lingo of general auto mechanics/parts and truly loves working with cars/trucks.  He has worked other part time jobs on and off for the last few years and from what I understand from discussions I have had with former supervisors and co-workers he is very reliable, thorough, pays attention to detail, gets along well with others and is punctual.  If he were to get an opportunity to work for you and your company he would prove to be quite an asset for the services you provide for your customers.  These are only a few reasons why I feel this would be a good match for your company and John.

As I mentioned the last time I spoke with you John is enrolled in the NYS Ticket to Work program and should you consider hiring him for this position your company could qualify for certain benefits such as NYS tax breaks, paid job coach (if needed), and we might be able to arrange for his wages to be paid through us for the first 2 weeks of his employment as a ‘job tryout’ to give you the opportunity to see if this indeed would be a good fit for you and John.

If there is anything else I can do to assist you with this please do not hesitate to ask.

*What I think went well:  Generally received a positive response from the manager, I tried to keep it short and to the point, asked a few questions about the overall business and what kind of qualities they look for in an employee, he seemed impressed with some of the services we could offer (NYS Ticket to Work, possible paid wages for first 2 weeks as a job tryout), I tried to focus on the positive qualities of the job seeker and not on the disabilities.*

*What I would have changed:  Quicker follow up to the meetings, more practice of both the presentation and pitch prior to going in, maybe ask a few more questions about the nature of the business.*

**Lisa Wool**

Presentation: I have used friends and acquaintances that I know to learn the names of who should be contacted within a company.  Then either attempt a cold call or again arrange through friends / acquaintances a time to meet with the identified contact.  Present myself in a professional manner, and identify myself as an employment specialist who assists individuals and employers in coming together for the benefit of both.  I ask open ended questions to learn about the company from the inside as to needs / skills positions that they have difficulty filling or retaining someone in and the essential functions of those difficult positions.   I present a brief summary of how my client skills are assessed and matched, the ongoing supports that are offered and benefits available to the employer.  I end with asking for their email address so as to continue communication with the individual and be able to learn of future openings. At this point I conclude the meeting. There is 1/2 hour limit to meeting.

Proposal:  Remain in contact with the company's contact.  Watch for openings.  If/when something comes up that a client would be a good match for - complete the application, keep a copy of it and submit it via normal procedure.  Then I would make contact with my inside contact, set up a time to meet with them for the client to deliver a copy of the application, their resume and letters of reference to that contact.  (I would email all that to the individual if they preferred but would then ask that they meet with us for a brief 15 minute meeting just to introduce the client and present how the client would be a match to the position, benefits of hiring and highlight skills and attributes.

What goes well: Having highlights of job needs and client skills to show a good match and also having informal 1st contact between client and company before formal interview.

Changes: I would like to be more comfortable with identifying job carving opportunities.

**Jeff Sidders**

I use a 4-Step Plan for placing job seekers that was developed by Alan Andersen, an internationally known sales consultant who trained me through workshops paid for by my state's VR Department. The plan entails: Prospecting->Needs Analysis->Sales Presentation (includes candidate proposal and 'Needs-Benefits-Features-Evidence' proposal)->Follow-up (e.g. Servicing the Match and ensuring 'perceived' benefits from the deliverable are 'realized'). I use a specific hardcopy planner for each of my sales calls and also enter the data in a Google Docs Spreadsheet (we don't use a custom database like some larger agencies utilize) that is accessed and updated by all Supported Employment Staff at our agency. I only had time last week to perform one complete sales call.

Presentation: I am working with a client who has skills, interests, and strengths that are mostly a good match for Activities Assistant jobs at elder care facilities. However, an individualized placement approach (e.g. job carve) is necessary to accommodate physical limitations that have developed since she last competitively worked in this field.  I am fortunate to have a couple of long-term, established employer relationships with assisted living facilities in my job market, and turned to one of those employers with whom I have placed multiple candidates in Dietary Services, but never in the Activities Department. I initially met with the Human Resources Manager, with whom I had not spoken in a few months, to review our partnership and re-assess her level of satisfaction with the 'realized' benefits (including supports) of partnering with our program. This was a very positive, forward focused discussion and I used it as a segue to find out who the hiring agent was for the Activities Department. The HR Director gave me the name and placed a phone message to the individual on my behalf that I would be visiting her office.

I met with this manager a few minutes later and used an opening line that identified my role as a 'Job Specialist' who provides local employers with qualified job seekers at no cost, including several who have worked successfully in recent past at her facility but in a different department. She was generally aware of our program's presence at the facility, but did not know specifics.

Framed the intent for my sales call as wanting to introduce myself and request a brief meeting, today or in near future, to learn about her specific needs as an employer, and who she considers to be a good job candidate for her department.

She had time to meet on the spot, and was very friendly. Set the time limit for the meeting at 45 minutes to honor her schedule. She immediately informed me that she has a nephew with Schizophrenia, and wishes that he would seek support from a similar program as ours in the city where he lives. I then knew I had a very sympathetic hiring agent with 'Personal' as well as 'Business' needs. I would usually forestall a bit when introducing the mental health piece, as an introduction to the presentation, but in this case I went straight to the 'Needs Analysis.'

I asked targeted, open ended questions pulled from these categories: General (included if she has ever worked with a program like ours before, # of staff, positions she hires for, challenges retaining or hiring good workers)->Tasks (including priority tasks)->Skills-> Fitment issues (what enables a person to be successful in this job? what has caused someone to fail in the past?)-Logistics (including job carve possibilities and scheduling flexibility)->Priority Needs (2-3 things she cannot live without)-> Benefit to her of a hire working out successfully->Concerns she may have. I probably asked about 8-10 questions in total. I found out that the job is fast paced, and experience is strongly preferred; but more than anything, reliability and passion for resident care are the 'must haves.' Main benefit to manager, personally, of hiring successfully is 'continuity and longevity of staff (a position usually opens about once or twice per year),' which keeps team morale high and promotes resident satisfaction--> the manager is 'very picky' with candidate selections. In order for tasks to be carved out of the full set of job duties (especially in a paid employment capacity), she'd want to 'get to know' my candidate first and assess abilities via volunteering or other trial experience.

I then proposed my candidate to the manager by linking key skills, interests, and professional experience (including recent, very positive TE [transitional employment] job outcome that demonstrated reliability and excellent interpersonal skills; long tenure and loyalty at past jobs; key technical skills) with the manager's key stated priority needs and main benefits of a good hire. Since my candidate has the skills and qualifications, but lacks recent work history and needs physical accommodations to do parts of the job (and at slower pace than competitive standard), I proposed consideration of a 'Paid Work Experience.' I explained how this arrangement would benefit the manager with free labor + a stipend to help cover employer time and resources, and a possible candidate for hire when the need arises in the future. Also detailed how it would provide my candidate with crucial work experience and a means for proving herself. The manager was very open to this proposal. I advocated for an introductory meeting to present the candidate in-person, and a time line within the next two weeks was established. I also highlighted how the manager would be not only getting the candidate's skills and abilities, but a comprehensive support structure to ensure that the match would be 'win-win' for all involved, and highlighted the follow-along supports available to promote 'longevity' and retention- including how such has proven beneficial to the Dietary Services Managers over time.

What went well: I quickly established rapport and was much targeted in the information that I provided. The employer did most of the talking. I achieved an introductory meeting/interview, and possibility of developing a non-competitive/hidden market job opportunity (albeit down the road a bit), for a candidate who needs an individualized employment setting. I tapped into an existing employer, where selling the program and a candidate is much easier.

What could have gone better: I would have liked to spend more time on the job specifics, as I still am a bit unclear as to exactly what will need to be modified, and how that would look, in order for my candidate to successfully perform several key tasks. I may request a job shadow in advance of the introductory meeting.

**Wesley Baker**

Presentation:  During my presentation I went to a local restaurant chain after peak business times and introduced myself to the general manager as an employment specialist with a local non-profit organization.  I asked for a few minutes of her time to discuss what her business needs are for her particular location focusing on open ended questions including: what positions do you have trouble keeping filled and what are the current needs of your restaurant in order to meet the standards set for you by the corporate business plan.  I also researched specific questions related to the business that I acquired through searching the company website.  I then presented to the GM my role as an employment specialist in connecting job ready applicants to competitive businesses in the area in a way that is mutually beneficial.  I briefly explained the WOTC and bonding to the GM, asked if she had any questions and left her my card.

What went well during the proposal: I feel I looked and sounded professional in my inquiries.  I feel that my research and confidence and passion for what I do came across as impressive and were a good first step toward a successful partnership.

What I would have changed during my proposal: Toward the end of my proposal I began to realize that perhaps I had taken too much of the manager's time during her busy day so I would have acknowledged that and apologized and wrapped up the conversation quicker in order to facilitate trust and respect more quickly.

Proposal: Recently I have been working with an individual who is highly interested in Art and has been unemployed due to health problems and mental health problems for the last decade.  I set up a meeting between myself, the owner of a local art gallery and a DVR counselor in order to propose a trial work experience in order for the individual to get back into the work-force and reengage with his passion and turn it into his vocation.  The art gallery is a non-profit as well so I highlighted the similarities in the mission between our two organizations and proposed how the trial work experience would be a win-win; in this win-win situation I proposed that the individual would have the satisfaction of going back to work in his area of interest and the employer would receive free labor for a period of time while also receiving a stipend from DVR in order to cover the costs of helping to rehabilitate the individual.  The gallery owner was impressed with the presentation and we are currently in talks in order to finalize the trial work experience.

What went well: I think the presentation was professional, comprehensive and strengths based and created a positive business relationship with the gallery owner that could be long-term.

What I would change:  I think I would have brought the individual along to the meeting to help put a name to the face for the gallery owner to meet after the meeting.

**Sharon Roberson**

I understand that my comment is similar to my statement in the last discussion.

I always research and know about the companies that I approach about our program.

I inform them of my name, program I am with, and explain my job. I ask them about their company and company needs. I let them speak about their company the most. I inform them more about our program and how it could benefit whole our company and their company to work together. I always look for jobs, employers, and job opportunities that could become a great union between both parties involved.

In my experiences, the employers liked that I was interested in their company and their company's needs.  They could tell that I was not just "selling" our program but that it was important to me to unite the job seekers in our program with the needs of their company. The employers could also see and commented on the fact that I believe in our program, our job seekers, and the possibility of a wonderful work relationship.

**Sandra Swegryzynowicz**

Presentation: I introduce myself to the human resources employee, job recruiter, and manager. Proceed with introduction. I am with agency for employment services. I would like to introduce you to our Vocational Services & Supported employment Services. Our primary goal is to offer to our individuals associated with our Agency a greater number of career options. Present my client information, resume, include past accomplishments experience, skills and education and cover letter, recommendation letter from any past employers. Paper or online application filled out. Any references that are needed at present time.  This would give the potential employer. Our client is a potential candidate for position applying.

Proposal: I offer to the potential employer my information package, "Opening the Doors to independence and opportunity "which includes tax credit, on the job coaching to deliver to the employer the wants and needs for the position applying. If job coaching is necessary, I would indicate the benefit of shadowing (Job coaching) to the client.  I would indicate, I would like the client to succeed in his or her business and I would like to see our client to become asset to his or her business. If the employer’s protocol does not prefer job coaching, this is a preference to the employer. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns he or she may have. Hand my card with my information on it.

**Fran Granaham**

Presentation 1: As I began my job search for an Individual that I was working with, who had a diagnosis of Asperger's. I approached many local businesses in her area.  As I began to talk with the employers, I first inquired about any open positions that might be available in their business.  As the employers began to tell me of the open positions, I explained to them that I was from Step by Step and my job was as an Employment Specialist with the agency.  I began to tell them the nature of my work.  I work with individuals, helping them to obtain Competitive Employment within the community.  We provide services that allow the individual to learn a job, through the help of a job coach.  This coach will work side by side an individual, helping them learn the job and helping them to become independent on the job, so the need for supports will no longer be needed.  With this, an individual will learn the skills necessary to perform the job to the satisfaction to the employer.

There are many benefits for you as an employer to meet this individual.  As with a job coach, you as an employer would not need to take a person off of your staff to train this individual.  I will be there to help train her so that she would be able to accomplish tasks asked of her.  Also in hiring this individual, there are Federal tax credits that would be available to you as an employer.  The individuals that we support have very good attendance records.  They are very willing to work hard at what they do. We also provide job support service to individuals that qualify for this.  What this is, is that after a period of working with the individual 1:1, the individual would qualify for an extended period where the job coach would be able to come in to monitor the individual's progress on a monthly basis.  A job coach will also provide support to you as an employer, if there would be any reason to re-train this individual or add extra duties that she may need to learn.  The job coach would be the individual to be able to do this for you.  With all of these supports in place, a successful placement is achievable.

Proposal: After talking with the employer about our service, I began to explain to the employer that this particular individual would be a great fit for this job because she has had experience working in this type of work in the past.  She has a passion for this work (Dietary in a college environment).  She did attend this particular college for 2 semesters, but needed to end that due to financial reasons.  She enjoys being in the college environment, and would eventually like to re-enroll.  This particular individual also lives relatively close to college and is able to walk or conveniently get to and from work there.  I went on to say that she is a very good and hard worker.  She is a team-player and is willing to learn any aspect of the job that she may need to.  The individual has already submitted an application and is ready to interview ASAP!  I began telling the employer, that we do work with many colleges in the area, but because of her past affiliation with this particular institution, she would like this to be her place of employment.

The employer was very interested in both the individual and our program.  He asked a lot of questions and was excited to set up an interview to meet with this individual.  He thanked me for giving him a clear picture of what the program entails, and stated that it is wonderful that this type of support is out there for folks.  I ended on a very positive note, she was interviewed and hired!!  She has been there now for 1 1/2 years!!

I think it was very positive because I had the employer’s ear from the beginning.  I spoke to the correct person within the company and gave him a lot of useful information.  He had many questions and he learned a lot from the presentation.  In the proposal, I mentioned many of the skills and interests that this individual had to offer him.  I did not focus on the disability, but on her abilities and skill set.  I don't think that I would have changed much of anything, as it was a success.

**Karen Kuah**

Presentation 1: To an employer who has positions and already open to employing

I am Karen, in employment services to link potential candidates to your company. Thank you for this opportunity. We are aware of your current openings and we have a few candidates who have previous experience in these jobs. My clients are in the process of recovery of their mental health condition and as employment specialists, we are in frequent contact with them to support them in their work goals. We can send you their CV and arrange interviews with your HR, and if needed, we will be present in the interviews to discuss further.

Questions from HR/employer: Any behaviors we should take note of to help them, if necessary? Triggers, etc.

Presentation 2: To a job agent (on the phone)

Hi, my name is Karen and I see your job postings and checking if this opening is still open? I am an employment counselor assisting people in recovery from psychiatric conditions to return to the workforce. I have 1 suitable candidate who has previous experience and keen on this part-time position. He/she would like to try this part-time position first to ease himself back to the workforce. Could I meet up with you to discuss further?

I have not tried this presentation; however, we have many job agents/recruiters with a much wider job bank of part-time jobs and contract positions which some of our clients like to try, before going full-time.

**Anthony Sirignano**

I had an opportunity to be a guest speaker at the local chamber of commerce. I was invited by a board member who is familiar with our employment service and who also has a son with a disability who is working. It was extremely helpful to have this well respected sponsor introduce me to members of the chamber.

What went well:

* Providing employers with an overview of our service and our commitment to finding the right employee for their company.
* Giving specific examples of success stories
* Allowing time for chamber members to ask questions
* Getting business cards for future job development opportunities

What would I change:

I would bring along an employer who could speak about how we worked together to find an employee for their company.

**Kati Flanagan**

I did not get the chance to go a present to an employer or two for that matter. I feel that this will be my greatest struggle, as someone who is also shy and will require more than just a week of practice with myself and colleagues to be at a point where I can safely be comfortable with this. I understand full well that the Proposal is "the meat and potatoes" of this course and that in not having gone to employers will hinder my for this course thus far, but I believe with time, confidence and perhaps shadowing other Job Developers I will be able to present well and confidently. I believe in my clients, and I think that taking that with me to find the right job match will enable me to go forward in knowing that I am helping as the role I was meant to play.

That being said, at the end of May I was at a networking meeting with 5 employers, two from Good Will, one from Starbucks, one from the Region of York and one from Tim Horton's. I was able to go and represent my team in asking those employers each questions about what they look for in an employee, if they have ever "carved" positions for employees, and what they found was difficult in the hiring of person's with (all) disabilities. I was only one in the whole bunch of employment counselors who works with folks who live with psychiatric disabilities. I had many questions asked of me and my clients. Many liked the idea of having job coaching as a part of the role we can play, and they all "fessed" up to not having the education and information about mental health. I did mention to them that they likely had staff in their employ that already live with some form of a mental health difficulty and just haven't disclosed. I was asked about what kind of accommodation employees might require that would be different than other disabilities. I mentioned flexibility in time is a big factor for my clients, as they have doctor’s appointments or groups to attend, the other mostly around requiring a little extra training (and patience) to help them ease into a job a little longer than others perhaps. The other accommodation I mentioned that I have experienced clients requesting is simply for a few extra breaks, or more small breaks throughout the day to "chill out" for a bit on shift. Many clients have let me know, especially at the beginning of their tenure that the job and all they have to learn can be quite overwhelming.

It was a great experience to be able to get inside the heads of employers a bit, but my one issue with the event was that they were already an equal opportunity employer who had experience working with folks with disabilities. I need to get out and make connections with your everyday employer, and create those opportunities for my clients, on my own without an invite to a networking meeting.

**Crystal Dainard**

I am fairly new in my position and new to employment services in general.  That being said, I have had some experience dealing with employers, although I would not call it "job development" at this point.

I contacted a company on behalf of a client who was interested in a posting.  I spoke directly with the manager; let her know who I was (and she had heard of our organization yeah!) and that I would be interested in learning more about how her company worked and perhaps how I could help with some supported employment.  Most of the contact was either via email or phone.  My client was selected for an interview, and although my client did not get the job, we received constructive feedback to move forward.

On the other hand, I have found that reaching out to employers can be difficult doing "cold calls" as they are busy, don't contact me back nor are motivated by what I am "selling" I suppose.  I do think that with practice and more experience, the outcomes will be better as I move forward.

**Sean Murphy**

We haven’t done much Job developing and I found listening to the audio interviews and videos a really good start. In the past asking if a position was available too quickly was an issue and often lead to the conversation closing. I also found saying that I worked for a mental health organization also quickly closed doors.  It focused on a person preconceived conceptions on mental illness in the workplace. In a way it brought out the negative thought process from the prospective employer. I should have refined my presentation and will do so in the future. Also educating me on the employer and exploring needs would be a definite benefit.

Another organization that was working with my client had a contact for a large hard ware chain in my client’s area. My client volunteered at an event for them and had contact with one of the store managers. Writer got the worker from the organization to send a request that our client was looking for work and asked if they would be willing to talk with me. She cc’d me on the email and I waited to see his response. He responded and wanted to speak with me. I thanked him for the opportunity.

Here are the emails with names removed:

Email 1

Hello Mr. F,

I have been assisting CLIENT with attaining employment and I would love to have the opportunity to speak with you. It will only take 15 minutes of your time and hopefully we can meet at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

Email 2: Employer response

We can talk later today after 2 pm. Please let me know what time is good for you. Thank you,

Email 3: My response

Thanks Mr. F.

How is 3:15pm this afternoon? I'll come by the store.

At this point I went to the store, at the time I had stated. He had not responded to the email and was busy and thought I was calling. He spoke to me on the phone and said his location was not hiring but that other locations may be in the area and said he would send an email out. If I was to do anything different I would have called ahead of time to see if he wanted me to drop by. I’m glad I did though. If he expected me and I did not show up, it would not look good.

Email 4: Employers email to other managers

Hello Folks,

Please read the email from our community partner organization. I am looking for your help to get this youth to get a job. This young man was part of community built on May 09, 2014 and showed a great interest in working with our organization.  Please reach out to Sean if you can help to get this youth a position at your location.

Thank you,

Mr. F

Email 5: Employer 2 response

Hi Sean,

We would be happy to meet with CLIENT and arrange an interview.

Can you please provide me with his contact information and have him send his resume?

Thanks,

Mrs. K

Email 6: My response

Hello,

Thank you, Mr. F and Mrs. K. I'm glad you are giving CLIENT the opportunity to interview. He is a very likable, hardworking young man. I've attached his resume and cover letter from a position he recently applied for online at ‘location’ for ‘position’.

Yours truly,

Sean Murphy

This has now led to an interview and they are now checking his references.

**Ellen Shaffer**

I like your honesty and desire to do better for the people you support. I too try to remember that the bottom line for the employer has to be "how will this hire benefit my organization" and so to determine what the employer’s needs are makes sense from that perspective.

**Sylvie Cleroux**

At this point, we are not doing active job development work; we are considering incorporating this in our services as part of the IPS program.  It is therefore, difficult for me to speak of a presentation and or a proposal I’ve used with an employer because I have not done job development at this point.

What I can speak about is what I know, which is the importance of researching and knowing all I can about the employer in question, about his/her needs, wants; find out about their workplace culture, how their business is doing, do they plan on hiring in the near future, if so for what type of positions etc.  Once I have that information, I can then be in a better position to explain about my services (agency), what benefits and advantages the employer can and will gain if they consider utilizing my services.  At this point, it’s all about informing them.  If they demonstrate and interest and wish to know more and/or want to see some resumes, then the relationship building process starts.

Employers are busy and the odds are that they will have time to meet with me face to face then are slim.  Some employers prefer contact via emails, they can respond when it is convenient for them, if they wish to.  We also have to take into consideration that we are not the only agency in the community who is knocking on the employers’ doors; we don’t know what their past experience with these different agency has been like, good or bad.  From my past experience, cold calling is not necessarily the best way to connect with employers.

There are a number of groups or associations in the community where employers gather on a monthly basis.  For example, in our region, we have the Chamber of Commerce, The Human Resources Professionals Associations (HRAP) and the One Voice Network.  Finding out who is in charge of organizing these and contacting them asking if it would be possible for me to be invited and to speak about our agency and our services as Employment Specialists.  The benefit of this would be increased visibility in the community; it gives me the opportunity to inform a large group of employers at the once, and it can give me precious insight about their needs, which in turn will help me build my proposal and it will help me target the employers I need to.

**Cheryl McLaughlin**

My presentation was with Human Resources at a local hotel.

An appointment was set up beforehand and made with the individual that does the hiring.

I started with who I was and where I worked and why I wanted to meet with her (information meeting about the hotel hiring and how we could work together). Keeping some of my clients in mind, I asked her what she specifically looked for in an employee. The great thing about this hotel is the diversity of employees they have.

While I was aware of the "major" jobs in a hotel, I asked her what other types of employees they hired. One that I never much thought of was a team of individuals who do room repairs (such as painting, crack filling, caulking, etc.)

I explained to her that I work with job ready individuals who have a mental illness and require some supports to get hired and maintain employment.  I explained to her that since I already know the strengths, likes, skills and experience of individuals, I could help match a person with any job openings she may have and could be cost efficient because the pre-screening has already been done. I explained that I want my clients to be successful so therefore I wanted to make sure they fit the job that is available. I told her it was very important to everyone that there be success, so I wouldn't recommend someone just for the sake of them getting hired.

I think the whole presentation went very well. She was very interested and because of the diversity of employees already working there she was very open. I was impressed that she did not dwell on the fact that my clients have a mental illness. A few questions were asked, but they were in the positive nature.

**James Schiesz**

In my presentations, within the discussion of being a mental health counselor, I discussed with the employers what type of symptoms some of our clients struggle with (in a general sense), such as anxiety/depression.  I find that it is helpful to clear up a lot of the stigma / misunderstanding that people have regarding mental illness.  In my discussion, I do not dwell on the aspects of mental illness, but try to normalize them as much as I can, while explaining that when our agency refers a particular client, we are doing so not out of charity, but because we believe that particular client is qualified to meet the expectations of the employer.  I always tell employers that I would not refer someone to them if I did not believe that person could do a good job.

I reinforced with the employers that I would support the client behind the scenes on an ongoing maintenance capacity, and that I would also be available to meet with the employer if any issues came up.

Overall, I attempted to frame any possible future hiring as a partnership between myself (and our agency) and the employer.

**Nancy Gagnon**

Our role is Employment Specialist, but in the past we have referred our clients to other Employment Agencies who provide Job Developers. Since taking this course, I've become more comfortable in taking on a role as Job Developer and approaching employers.

Presentation 1:

1. What do you think went well from your Presentation/ Proposal?

I had done my research on the company, its background and various jobs available at the resort. I had made my first contact at a Home Show, found out through conversation that this company were open to hiring people with disabilities, and was given a card with a contact name, so I knew who to ask for when I arrived with a client. The client was open to disclose and gave me permission to speak to the employer on his behalf. I prepped the client on how to present him and how we could do this as a team effort.  I was clear to the employer that we had visited the website and found out that we could "drop in anytime" and pick up an application. I introduced myself and the client and shared about my role and how it could benefit the employer. I asked "get to know" questions but allowed time to listen to the employer - he said that although they were done their seasonal hiring at the Golf area, I could probably meet with someone from HR at the main resort, where they hire up to 100 people and it can be yearlong work. When I mentioned opportunity in the future, a local partnership option and the benefits of my role to his business as well as a job trial option, his eyebrows raised and he gave me his card and asked me to contact him by March of the next year to look at hiring our clients. My follow up: I have left a message to set up a meeting to talk to the HR person at the resort.

2. What might you have changed?

Golf Area:  Earlier contact for seasonal hiring, find out what they struggle with, I could have asked if they would be willing for our clients to do an informational interview, or look at internships.

Resort: I wish I had not hesitated in calling and had pre-arranged a meeting at the resort with someone before deciding to stop in with the client present. The client was in a healthy mental state where he wanted to put in resume's and fill out some applications in his area of walking distance and the resort was a close opportunity.

Presentation/ Proposal 2:

1. What do you think went well from your Presentation/ Proposal?

Phone contact with the person in charge of hiring for Value Village. Client dropped off her resume and was called for an interview.

The person to contact was going away on holidays so we were unable to set up a face to face meeting. However, I feel that through my initial call, I got a sense of compassion from the employer and that he was an equal opportunity employer. I was enthusiastic, gave the employer information on my role, how it could be of benefit, how our support is there before and after hiring and during employment, and asked him open ended questions, which gave me an opportunity to listen to get information about the company and his employee expectations. I explained how my involvement could reduce costs for the company and I talked about job trial opportunity. Positive result: the client I work with was given an interview - the outcome is unknown until the person returns from vacation.

2. What I would change?

I would probably ask what they struggle with finding the right people to hire and what jobs are typically more difficult to keep filled. I forgot to mention the varied skills and professions that our clientele have. In the future, I would be more proactive in setting up a time to meet with the employer. I didn’t talk to him about a partnership.

**Irene Sng**

Presentation 1:

1. What do you think went well from your presentation or proposal?

I provided the employer with comprehensive understanding of my program including background, mission statement, program objective, descriptive role as an employment specialist and the supports provided to job seekers and their employers, how I match the individuals to the jobs and the recent statistic of clients’ placements by industries and vocation, and clients’ outcomes of job sustainability.

2. What might you have changed?

I would have presented successful outcomes of clients for employers that my agency program has collaboration with instead of sharing the information of clients’ outcome of job sustainability.  I have put myself with more questions raised. I was eager to present the facts and statistic of agency program rather than initiate with getting-to-know-you questions.  
  
Presentation 2:

1. What do you think went well from your presentation or proposal?

I was well prepared for having research on the company’s vision, background, production and hiring requirements. I was able to initial with the getting-to-know-you questions, which might not be a good start in the Asian context as this is view as intrusive.  Nevertheless, the employer was comfortable to share the profiles of his employees, their openness of hiring people with disability, what he looked for in employees and expectation at work, staff benefits and production tour to understand the hiring needs of diverse vocational types.

2. What might you have changed?

The employer was enthusiastic to share of their business processes and topics on human resources.  I have missed the opportunity to ask about what are their struggles in finding the right people. This is an important lead for me to market future job seekers.

**Damian Hudson**

I met with two employers and did a presentation. The first was for Goodwill and the advisor was very interested in what I have to offer, but the downside is the relationship ended there instead of being open ended.

The second was a temp service that was interested in putting groups of people to work. I wish on that day, I had specific resume's to discuss and some disclosure permissions.

*Comment: An important step in job development is the follow up. Giving a Presentation is only a beginning. Then it is worthwhile to contact the person with a candidate or several candidates. If no one is ready, try lunch with the employer to further bond. As for the Temp Service, it might be worthwhile to ask if you can bring in a couple of candidates for an interview or for an informational interview. Good to get their “face in front of” as Elisabeth Sanders Park mentions in her interview in the course.*

**Sue Fitzgerald**

Hey Damian - way to go with the presentations! With Goodwill, is it possible to ask for feedback about your presentation, not the actual work you are doing as it helps you build up your contacts.

As for the Temp agency, again you could follow up with specific people/permissions in place & offer to be a resource in case they need help with hiring groups of people with different abilities.

**Irene Sng**

Damian – Proposal

I have experienced with some employers that were expecting a ready resume.  At the time I didn't bring the resume along for the proposal, however, I usually prepared 1 or 2 ready candidates with a relevant job-fit that I can discuss with the employer. Only when the employer is interested to arrange for interview then I follow up with thank you notes and the job seeker's resume.

**Beatriz Lomas**

I made a cold call to an employer who I've had my eye on for a while. This person, I spoke to is a manager and when l made my Presentation, he seemed very receptive and interested but when I asked for the name of a hiring official, he seemed reluctant to provide it. I turned my focus around and observed that they have a big need for warehouse workers who drive forklifts and we'd be training them which means it would cut training costs for them, and bingo! He became very interested he not only provided the information I needed but also gave me a great lead for another local employer who is currently hiring for summer jobs!  I am really happy I made the call! )

*Comment: Good catch! Remember to always open with a listening session.*

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| --- |
| **M5 Discussion:**  **Please respond to at least one of the following questions:**  **1. What are the biggest issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities in terms of keeping jobs?**  **2. What are the skills, resources or motivations that help people keep their jobs?**  **Feel free to comment on other postings.** |

**Christina Finamore**

I really liked in this course when Joan said that everyone is motivated to do something. I have thought about what motivates me and wondered what motivates my co-workers and have spoken with several people who have severe psychiatric disabilities that have maintained jobs for years. It is so inspirational and simple.

Motivation can lead to or result from trying to be independent. Working improves self-esteem and knowing that promotes motivation. Employment is a way of taking care of yourself.

**Kevin Stansbury**

1. Some of the biggest issues our members face in regards to keeping their jobs are: not understanding or using proper work place etiquette; not feeling confident enough in their ability to do the job well; being overly concerned about symptoms they may experience on the job; and a lack of flexibility when it comes to requests made by supervisors.

2. I feel like encouraging members to openly communicate with myself and the other job developers can really help with job retention.  If they bring any problems to our attention, like anxiety around not feeling confident enough to do their job well, then we can have some conversations about how we can address the problem.  When someone feels like they have to deal with their problems on their own then it might become too much for them to handle and they might just quit.  We try to make sure they understand we really want them to be open and honest with us about how they feel on the job and if there are any problems we can talk about it, focusing on building the necessary skills or motivation.  If talking isn't going to be enough then we can reach out to the case management team they belong to connect us with the resources that particular member may need.

**Aaron Fernandez**

Anyone, including persons with psychiatric disabilities who acquire employment, needs certain skills in order to keep the job. These skills include extrinsic, intrinsic and personally-acquired skills. Frequently it’s the extrinsic skills or job-related skills that got employees the job in the first place and these skills seem to naturally be the first suspect when an employee falters at work. Unfortunately, it is more likely that the work-related problems faced by this population of employees is caused by poor intrinsic skills or popularly known as soft-skills, besides the problems with pace and persistence. These skills are often impaired in persons with psychiatric illnesses due to the impact of the illness at a time in their lives when their peers are learning these skills. The resulting dysfunction in these skill areas can also be attributable to the illness process itself when it affects cognitive functions and social cognition. Thus the skills that most people require to be gainfully employed are skills in Activities of Daily Living (ADL), Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL), social and interpersonal skills, time management etc.

Sometimes the employee is able to secure a job only to be hindered by lack of resources. Lack of or poor family and social support is a valuable resource many of us take for granted and is sometimes an obstacle in the lives of those mentally ill persons. The resources lacking may be financial where the person can’t even buy decent work clothes or shoes. Health may be affected due to poor access to nutritious food and irregular meals.  Proper and safe housing may also be a resource that is lacking what more with soaring inflationary costs. Resources lacking may also be in the form of timely and accessible transportation to and fro the intended place of employment. The job of the employment specialist then is to ensure that the job seeker is aware of potential resources that he or she can avail in the community and is put in touch with such services. They must also be aware of their rights as an employee under the ADA, disability benefits as well other benefits like reasonable accommodations they are privileged with.

To the uninitiated, securing a job may seem like the natural thing to do for an independent adult but what we often fail to realize are the intricacies associated with employment for persons with psychiatric disabilities.  They are often concerned with the withdrawal of benefits derived from their disability should they secure employment. The vagaries of employment and their SSI/SSDI should be addressed and they should be helped to transition to employment at their own pace and capabilities with the knowledge that they can safely, should they require to, move between the two. The benefits of being employed go far more beyond the obvious financial rewards. Employment brings about the social contact and connectedness that many persons with chronic psychiatric illnesses are deprived of. It also brings about the sense of purpose, of contributing meaningfully to something larger than oneself. Being in employment frequently means one is a part of an organization or group. These benefits provide motivation for most people to remain in employment far beyond the financial ones.

**Linda Schroeder**

1. One of the biggest issues is the lack of self confidence in the person's abilities. People begin jobs and as they become comfortable on the job they compare themselves to others or they think they aren't working fast enough. At times, paranoia sets in and they begin to think others are talking about them. The ability to focus for long periods of time, the amount of people around them, getting enough sleep, anxiety and feeling a sense of belonging to the place of work.

2. The skills, resources or motivations to help keep jobs: having someone to talk to at the end of the day about how their day went, the good, the bad, having someone listen to what their day was like establishes a sense of accomplishment and being productive as a human being. Establishing good routines to help them get to work; planning the day before of what to where; what to have for meal and snack time (establishing the importance of fueling the body); getting enough of sleep; making sure ADLS are being addressed; time management; getting to work early enough that they can get settled before their shift starts - to avoid anxiety and stress before the day starts. Having a supportive network of friends, case managers who are there consistently and listen to the issues, brainstorms ideas for problem solving and follows through to see how it went, giving praise and high fives for getting up and going to work every day. Acknowledging that any job a person works, even if it's not the most glamorous job is important and adds value to society and to the person's life. It helps to review coping skills and make sure there are other things in the person's life besides just work so they are well rounded and have other things to do to avoid burn out.

**Pauline Banducci**

1. The majority of individuals with whom I work have enormous difficulty in socializing on the job, at breaks, and before and after work. They may have an excellent work ethic, but have a flat affect and do not initiate conversation. They may be uncomfortable asking questions or asking for the support of a supervisor. They may have difficulty when a supervisor gives them constructive criticism, and become scared the person doesn't like them and will soon fire them. The "Soft Skills" seem to be the most difficult for potential employees to overcome. It is challenging to carefully speak about these skills and encourage individuals to work on them, when they are not even aware this is a skill they need. So I feel like I need to tread carefully sometimes. I facilitate a small cognitive remediation group where we talk about social skills, questions, ending a conversation, initiating, ordering at a restaurant, describing feelings etc. I then ask them to take these skills out to the wider farm community, the dining hall, the work program and practice these new found skills. Sometimes they are able to do it and sometimes need more practice.

2. Some of the skills needed are: an ability to cope with anxiety in the job, an ability to be organized in the early morning with ADLs, recognize when they may need more supports and ask for them, and the courage to use compensatory strategies on the job. If they are active in a 12 step program its vital they continue to connect with this. I have noticed they may be more motivated if the job has something to do with their interests/fields of fascination and they are able to use their favorite skill set. It’s also helpful if they have explored what they are looking for in a supervisor or co-workers and the environment where they will work best. They may not get everything they are looking for, but will be more aware and motivated if they have done the exploration first.

**Linda Schroeder**

I totally agree with the issue of how to socialize in a work setting. There are "unspoken rules of engagement" on how to communicate with others.  This is a skill that needs to be consistently worked on and should be recognized from the start.

**Maria Garritt**

I read the answers posted before mine and I completely agree. I would like to add that another important issue that people with psychiatric disabilities face in terms of keeping jobs is the lack of consistency and continuity.  It is important to assist clients in understanding that getting a job is only a minor part of a professional career.  I think that sometimes, in order to motivate our clients to move into securing a job, we might imply that the ultimate goal is to get employment.  It is important that the job seeker understand that obtaining a job is the beginning of a whole career and that his/her therapeutic team is committed to support him/her along the “long run.”  I believe that it is important that the client and support team keep consistency and continuity in the effort of retaining and improving the client’s working experience.

*Comment: Thank you for pointing out this very important ingredient in the vocational recovery process!!*

**Pauline Banducci**

Thanks for this. I do think sometimes the job seeker wants to immediately be able to have a high level job with excellent pay, and sometimes needs to first get a job matching their interests and skills and be patient about "moving up the ladder."  The first job they find may not be their dream job, but if it has enough challenge and a field they enjoy, they can look ahead with the team and reach higher in the future.

**Teri Sauve**

It has been my experience over the past 8 years working as an Employment Specialist regarding my observations/ conversations and the support I have given to hundreds of Job Seekers, that the following are issues that are reported as some of the biggest issues that people with psychiatric disabilities face when it comes to retaining their job:

Fear of Failure; Fear of Success; Self-Sabotage; Losing Interest, Failure to ask for accommodations, if needed; Possible disclosure if necessary; Symptoms of Illness, (they do not want to be judged); negative past experiences (fear of getting fired); Lack of supports. Some think they have to work harder than the other employees just to prove themselves to others. Self-fulfilling Prophecy, "I am only going to get fired anyway, so why bother working."

Many of the above issues need to be addressed at some point with the job seeker, through the Employment Specialist, to define what has been an issue for the individual and come up with a plan to address the issue and find a solution to work through it. Look at their work history and discuss what happened, is there a reason why it happened, and is there a solution that can be put into place and what supports are required to deal with the issue. Do this for every issue that has occurred. It is also very important to maintain regular contact with the employee and keep two way communications open so that any issues that come up can be addressed immediately.

**Pauline Banducci**

Your list is so true. I wish more individuals I work with would accept supports in the workplace. They are full of their own internalized stigma and do not want to be "treated differently." I agree that there is the issue also of "I have to work harder than the other employees, just to prove myself…” I think it is so difficult.

**Irina Markovich**

In my experience the one of the biggest issue in a workplace for my clients is managing behaviors induced by their illnesses such as impulsiveness, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, lack of critical thinking, memory loss and the like. Stigma around mental health is a big issue, too. Therefore many employees prefer not to disclose their issues. As a result they do not access accommodations and consequently become overwhelmed. Other issue for many clients is lacking ability to read social clues and react in a common socially appropriate way. All these factors could easily lead to voluntarily or involuntarily job loss.

I noticed that coaching support through the first 12-16 weeks of employment can make a real difference for the employee and substantially increase retention. The strategies that work best for me  are  to  help clients  to build support system at work (e.g. find  a  Mentor or  go to person, identify supportive supervisor) , assist  with disclosure ,  request accommodation and educate s if needed.

With regards to motivation I noticed that in addition to monetary aspect, very powerful motivation to work is to be able to contribute to the community, to be able to feel that they belong and doing something that speaks to their skills and abilities. Many clients want to support their family or make them proud.

**Pauline Banducci**

The ability to read social cues is such a difficult one to teach and so important. I like your strategies of building support - finding a mentor, assist with disclosure, and requesting accommodation and educating the employer.  Can you explain a bit about how you assist with disclose? Can you give an example?

**Irina Markovich**

Hi Pauline,

Thanks for a questions.  I believe that helping with disclosure is one of the most complex tasks in our job.  My process includes clarifying with individual what disclosure means for him, what should be shared, having this information in writing and then sharing it with employer.

I always start with a discussion about disclosure with the individual. I call it “creating a business plan for disclosure”.

We discuss such things like:

* What she/he wants to disclose, how much information will be disclosed, what terminology are we going to use etc.?
* What she/he wants to achieve by disclosure: sympathy, accommodation, any other objective?
* How he/she would think employer will receive this information.

Then I emphasize that it is still responsibility of the employee to be able to do the job. I do believe it is  important to clarify that disclosure does not  mean less work  or no work

After that we discuss accommodation step by step. Individual shares what he/she thinks would be helpful.  We discuss if his/her expectations are feasible. I also guide a client what else could be helpful.

Then I make the letter to employer.  I record the points that we agreed.  Individual receives his/her copy and confirms that this is the information he/he is willing to share.  At this point we decide who would discuss this information with employer. My preferred option would be organizing the joint meeting with employer where individual can discuss accommodation he/she needs with employer. I support individual if need to be. I do believe that my presence helps to facilitate safe environment to talk.  I tend to ask for one-on-one meeting with employer for the first 20 min.  This helps me to receive employer feedback, identify if there are any communication problems and based on that give employer heads up about what we are going to discuss with the individual…

If joining a meeting is not an option, I either encourage individual to share the letter with the employer and talk with employer, or I meet employer and share letter with him or her and answer questions that they may have.

If I do disclosure prior the interview, I do emphasis individual’s skills, fact that he worked before and able to do the job and then share specific facts about the disability, e.g. “He has some issues with his vision, but he can read Font 16. He can stock shelves and follow the planning map, although he might need a bit more time to complete his task due to his vision issues. He worked in similar role for 6 years, and never had any safety issues before”.

I encourage employer to ask individual or myself about disability as many questions as needed.

*Comment: Thank you for this thoughtful response. In a disclosure, I think it is helpful to avoid any psychiatric terminology and instead focus on functional limitations, using language about the persons functioning and then recommendations for how to deal with it. It can add to the stigmatization or fears of mental illness if labels are used because typically an employer does not know what they mean and in fact, many of us do not know what they mean. The world of psychiatry is about to eliminate schizophrenia from the DSM because they don’t understand it either! So we might say: “Marta sometimes has problems with memory and it is best if instructions are written, if job duties are clearly printed and if she can use check lists to make sure she has completed her tasks. She may have trouble reading social cues, so it is helpful if staff, especially her supervisor, let her know what they are thinking or feeling in a situation.” At no time did we say her diagnosis. The employer can ask but usually they don’t care. They just want to know if someone can do the job.*

**Thomas Schlitt**

In my experience, the biggest issues that our clients face in terms of keeping jobs are symptom management, being in a recovery-oriented environment, and being in a job that is a good fit.  If the job is not a good fit, then anyone would want a different job regardless of whether that person has a psychiatric disability or not.

Having a good support system is place and having long term and short term goals help people keep their jobs.  All people have skills, so that is just a matter of finding a job where one's skills match those that the job requires.

**Cheryl Nicholas**

I agree. I think that focusing on strengths will help in matching. Sometimes it's a matter for translating.....I have a consumer who wants to work with tigers. We don't have any tigers near us, but she might be open to working with animals in general, animal shelters, Petsmart, doggie daycare or maybe even a Build-a bear store. It's up to me to explore and assess interest. We never have the right to tell someone they can't dream, sometimes we have to "take a risk" and dream with them. Maybe one day, this consumer will add "Build a tiger" to the store's inventory, who knows!

*Comment: I like that you are thinking outside the box. With the “tiger-person” I would want to know what it is about that role (working with tigers) that she likes and see if it can exist elsewhere. It could be a fascination with big cats but it could be the idea of training animals or something else. Good exploration will lead to a good starting place.*

**Pauline Banducci**

In a brief two paragraphs you really hit the nail on the head. However I do feel that negative symptoms such as a flat affect and an inability to be able to socialize easily also has a tremendous impact.

**Amy D'Antonio**

The biggest barrier in job retention is the soft skills needed on the job especially social skills. The people we serve are so comfortable with us that they have no problems discussing their treatment, medications, symptoms, day program, etc. etc. and a lot of folks feel they can discuss these things outside the therapeutic environment.  They may feel they have nothing else to talk about. Or they do not know how to "chit chat" outside the therapeutic environment.

These skills are essential to teach people going in to the work force because this is the biggest reason why they quit their jobs.  The other area of concern is learning the culture of the work environment and how to read cues from coworkers & supervisors.  A newly admitted client to any of our programs learns the culture of the treatment environment in a short time.  And this reading is also needed when on the job. It is our responsibility to teach people these skills to help them retain their jobs.

**Elizabeth Miller**

Some of the biggest issues facing the people that I have worked with who have psychiatric disabilities, in terms of keeping jobs, include unexpected changes in their routine or supports/families, relapse of addiction barriers, feeling they do not enjoy what they are doing, decompensation psychiatrically in addition to being laid off or fired for lack of work or not being able to maintain the expected work load.

**Joseph Hvorecky**

I think the most critical skills needed for those managing a disability to keep or maintain a job are the implicit skills.  Given stress is such significant factors in maintaining a job, certain implicit skills that are useful in minimizing stress at the workplace are hugely important.  Such implicit skills at minimizing stress would consist of the following:

1. How to say "no" in a positive way -- too often, folks do not want to appear to be an underachiever or lacking motivation, so they simply continue to accept an  overwhelming number of tasks from their supervisor or co-workers, and even volunteer when presented with additional opportunities of all types.  There is a skillful way at declining to take on additional work that does not reflect negatively on the worker.

2. How to request assistance -- too often, folks think they must do all the work on their own to demonstrate their individual, independent performance.  If folks would take more advantage of the "teaming" concept in the workplace, then the additional resources gained through partnering with others on work tasks would lightening the workload.

3. How to prioritize tasks -- a "to do" list can be overwhelming at times on its surface -- however, a simple strategy such as dividing a list of 15 tasks into those tasks that "must" be done as opposed to those task that "should" be done on a given workday reduces the visual stress from any lengthy task list.

4. How to structure a lunch break or breaks in general -- too often, people feel the need to work through lunch or breaks in order to complete work tasks -- those in the workforce simultaneously managing a disability especially need to take breaks and should be taught how to use that break time in a relaxing way.

5. How to be responsive to management, co-workers, and customers -- optimal communication takes effort and if a worker can determine and execute certain communication principles (e.g. respond via e-mail or phones to inquiries within a 24-hour period; notify the supervisor if time off is needed; etc.), then the stress level overall can be greatly reduced.

*Comment: This is a really good set of examples of skills that can be taught before, during or after the person is on the job. Sometimes the skills deficit is obvious and you can work on it right away. In other situations, the problem does not surface until in a specific work environment or when the work environment changes.*

**Jessica Vaz**

1. Some of the issues my team has encountered working with this population are:

* Planning ahead: Coordinating other appointments with their clinical service teams or Doctors, which often leads to the person having to take time off regularly.
* Organizing a task/solving problems/reasoning: A lot of my participants have had trouble with steps involved to a task and difficulty understanding the process of why it is that way. An example in terms of reasoning: I once had a consumer in an interview where the interviewer had to answer her phone for a business-related call. This consumer proceeded to make a personal call on her phone because she felt it was okay since the interviewer was on the phone.
* Accepting criticism/suggestions: Our consumers often feel that once they receive feedback or criticism from an employer, they are up for termination. Sometimes, it has led people to quit out of fear of being fired. We have also witnessed consumers lose motivation for their work if they are told to improve in specific areas.

2. Skills and resources/motivations:

* Weekly phone check-ins/post placement support: Our most successful placements have benefited from weekly or bi-weekly phone calls to check in and see if there are any concerns and how things are going. Post-placement support has included agreed visits at the workplace or near the workplace (a lot of consumers take pride in their work and want to show case their success).
* We run 3 Employment Preparation Workshops a week. Some consumers like to attend at least once a week for additional support and to share experiences with their peers.

**Alice Bilodeau**

Issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities:

* Lack of continued support after finding employment
* Lack of understanding on the part of the client with understanding the continued need for consistent treatment.
* Fear of losing disability payments, medical insurance/ understanding their benefits spend down etc.
* Poor job fit for the person, or unreasonable expectations on their part or the employer.

**Rita Reilly**

This is a huge question and the answer is as varied as the number of individuals you have that HAVE these disabilities.  I work with many who have been employed in a TEP program for many years and those who only recently became competitively employed.  The members who have been employed for many years have a greater tendency to "use their illness" as an excuse for reasons for time off.  We encourage them NOT to use a Dr. apt for an excuse as they have a choice in regular appointments, and we make them aware that they need to stay away from their employment time.  They do have a choice.  We talk about acceptable excuses for being absent.  When they bring up "what happens when I have a panic attack on the job" we talk about "what would you do if you had an asthma attack on the job".  It is another subject that needs to be addressed to help educate them on how to keep their job. None of them really want to be identified as part of a special program if it makes them stand out.  So, it is imperative to have the supervisory staff on board with treating them like all other employees, only allowing a special environmental allowance if you would do so for any other employee.  It is imperative that the supervisor in your employment situation communicate with job coaches, employment specialists, whomever they work with, including the employee regarding any concerns they see.  This is what we all face and what we all deal with on a daily basis.

Those who are treated in the work place as close to the rest of the employees will succeed and feel the best about their job.  The new employees we work with we have a chance to catch and address these issues quickly and educate them on the plan of attack.  If they start off with good prevocational training and close interaction as long as is necessary, making them the core of the employment/life decision making process, they appear to do much better.  I think we sometimes look at us as the experts with all the answers which may not necessarily be the answer that works for the person with psychiatric disabilities.

**Elizabeth Atwood**

Job retention can be negatively impacted by:

1.  Lack of support - whether 'natural' supports within the work environment or lack of follow up by an employment specialist.  It can be challenging for any new employee to get up to speed quickly, learning and mastering job tasks.  Without coaching, the new employee may not have or use skills such as recognizing and responding to social cues.

2. A work environment/supervisor that does not make accommodations for the employee with a psychiatric disability. For example, not allowing time off for mental health appointments.  Of course, the employment specialist can assist by coaching the employee about whether or not to disclose their disability and how to plan their outside appointments.

3. Lack of planning regarding available transportation, especially back up transportation.

**Melissa Kruise**

I believe that the biggest issue facing people with psychiatric disabilities in terms of keeping their jobs is handling all the demands of the job. If the person is not provided assistance mastering the skills and having someone believe in them they are usually not successful. I also believe that transportation is another reason because if can be costly and sometimes it can feel like it isn't worth working if they have to spend a portion of their paychecks on transportation. Another reason could be having no one to care for their children or any other home life situations. That is why it is important to have supports to give the individuala greater chance of success.

**Lani Otto**

I believe some of the issues facing individuals with psychiatric disabilities in keeping employment include:  Not having supports in the home where they feel like someone cares about their lives and their day.  When you have someone that shows interest, it can begin your day on the right foot for going to work in a good mood. People understanding in the work place that people do have off days, including themselves, but they look at someone else first.  The person with the disability that cannot understand why some of their benefits are taken from their Social Security now that they are working and the ones that do not want to report.  Some individuals may not understand and are afraid to ask for what they need, they are too embarrassed to let their co-workers or manager know that they are struggling with (ex.) vision, needing new glasses to read better with. Those that will not let you help them with things such as transportation issues or were let go, but could have been employed because they did not let Employment Services know there was an issue.  (Being proud?) People who do not take their meds correctly and on time.

Skills/Resources/Motivations:  Following up with the employee and employer are two of the best ways for retention.  Building a relationship with the employer that knows you are going to be coming in for follow-ups, re-training, if necessary and an employer that rewards their employees even with nice words is a BIG plus. I have even had employers that have come to meetings, transported people home and assisted in doing laundry, if needed.  A support system is really important for people to help them in the beginning and middle and then you can fade back but keeping in touch thereafter is one way to give someone their independence but at the same time let them know that you are still there, if need be.  Just never completely go away.

**Charles Lansberry**

I feel the biggest issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities in terms of keeping a job is acknowledging and understanding their disability as well as knowing where to go for resources to assist them where they may need additional help; i.e. employment services, peer support, perhaps group therapy. What helps? Having the supports to learn or retain the hard and soft skills of employment.  Having employment training specialist available, having peer supports, and if possible supportive friends and family.

**Melissa Marien**

It is important for the employment specialist to continue to maintain contact with the supervisor so if an issue occurs at work it can be resolved instead of the person being let go. I know from personal experience that employers would rather have someone else take care of the issue and keep an employee that is doing well if they have someone to call.  Also peer support is very important for people to have. Where I work we have a weekly employment group and monthly community dinner for members of the clubhouse. They share how they have overcome barriers to employment and strategies to maintain employment.

I also feel that if the person says they want any type of job and they do not partake in the process they will not stay long at the job.  For people to retain a job it is important for them to research and make an informed decision on what they want to do.

If people are not aware of how work will impact their benefits, it is a reason they would quit their job. Benefits counseling is key so people have the facts and they can budget and plan accordingly.

**Greg Baldwin**

I feel the biggest issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities, in terms of keeping their jobs, is that they let the disability define them. Whenever an issue in life arises that the person is not able to deal with, they blame it on their disability as a coping mechanism, which for many this is a learned behavior. Many people with disabilities, be it psychiatric or physical, have been taught to identify by their whenever they are unable to complete a certain task or are unable to retain the steps for the task. I have worked with several individuals that when they are unable to complete a certain task the "go to" phrase I have heard, almost verbatim, from each has been "sorry that's part of my disability". So to help them keep their jobs I feel we should let them know that it is okay to make mistakes, everybody does. That it's okay to own up to their mistakes and not blaming them on something or someone else. And that it is okay if they are unable to complete a task because, in the long run, they tried, and that says a lot about them. And to let their skills that they are able to do and work ethic define them, not their disability.

The skills are the ability to cope with situations, learning and doing the job and being able to adapt to change. Resources could be anything from company mandated training to having peers at work to look to for help whenever the Employment Specialist is unavailable. Motivations for many is the earning of a paycheck, not matter the  amount, but more importantly is the feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves and getting to be out in the community on their own.

**Robin Crawford**

The need for more knowledge and support for job seekers with mental illness is very important. Other problems that exist are the requirements of jobs do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the job seeker. When clients are at work they may experience low participation and minor decision making. Interpersonal relationships at work/poor relationships with supervisors and colleagues suffer as the client may feel devalued, low self-worth and unappreciated. Work schedules can also become inflexible and difficult to maintain or keep. All of these stressors can lead to absenteeism, poor health (depression, stress, anxiety, and burnout) and loss of motivation and commitment to their jobs.

**Jennifer Caputo**

I believe that the biggest issue facing those with psychiatric issues keeping a job is their ability to perceive certain things, people or situations. Sometimes something can be said (and an example of this could be constructive criticism) and this individual may look at is as a personal attack and they may not feel comfortable at their job and want to quit. So, if the Employment Training Specialist could work with that individual to preempt that kind of situation, it could derail a future job loss. I also feel that many mental health issues fluctuate and when the individual working is going through a good period, their work is top notch. However, during a ‘bad’ period, job situations can go downhill quickly.

**Arletta Holman**

I think that having a positive attitude is something that goes a long way in helping to keep a job. People need the skills to get ready to go to work, ability to get to and from the job, perform job duties and personal soft skills are essential, as well.

I started a Job Club for those who had recently gotten a job or were seriously looking, about a year ago.  We meet for about an hour rather informally from 4-5 PM.  They talk sometimes in pairs or trios.  Occasionally the whole group talks during this time.  After the hour is up, we go out into the community to a restaurant and eat dinner, stay for about two-three hours and all talk and support one another.  Of the seven who regularly attend, three of them have been working now for over a year and a half; one has been working for over a year, one for over 9 months and one for six months.  They are all over the average and I think the support they get from this group helps considerably.  They absolutely help motivate one another. (We have had a couple of new people who are looking for jobs now.)

*Comment: Peer support is invaluable and you have helped to bring that together successfully.*

**Leonard Suits**

Two of the major issues are:

1. Implicit skills (I am referring to interpersonal skills)
2. Symptom management

Here is an example: Bob was employed at his last job for 4 1/2 years that ended 3 years ago. In getting to know Bob, we went over what happened in leaving his last job. Bob stated that he knew the job well and that when he did leave his boss told him that he would be welcomed back if he decided he wanted to work there again. Bob's psychiatric disability was and is OCD. It did not get in his way while working for the most part, until the end of his employment there. He has told me that from the beginning he was unable to connect to his co- workers there (interpersonal skills). He always felt like an outsider and that the older employees there (his age or a little older) never seemed to want anything to do with him, the whole time he was employed there. He stated for that reason, he wanted to stop working there. But he did not. He stated, the only reason he did not leave for that reason was that he felt obligated to his last rehab counselor, because she got him the job. He said that he really wanted to leave; most of the time he worked there due to his co-workers making him feel uncomfortable. 4 years plus went by.

He was ok medically. His OCD was in check. That is when his Doctor decided to adjust his medications. That was the beginning of the end. Not long after the medication adjustment was endured, Bob became more symptomatic. His OCD took too much of his time. At one point he was taking 3 to 4 hour long showers every day and other behaviors that just took up most of his time. So with those symptoms, he had no choice, but to quit his job. It has now been three years, in order for him to get to the point to seek help from the vocational depth to assist him in becoming employed again. So even though the interpersonal skills did not cause him to leave his job, the issue was right there, the whole time. At the end it was the medication adjustment that caused his symptoms to get out of hand and causing him to have to leave his job of 4 plus years.

**Shawn Hughes**

In my experiences over the last 9 months of being a VRC, the issues that I have noticed often is the continued motivation and desire of some of the clients I work with to follow through with the tasks at hand with seeking, finding and maintaining employment. I offer as much support as I can in assisting them with writing resumes, performing effective job searches, networking, completing job applications (on-line and paper), practicing interviewing skills, developing and practicing basic work skills etc. It seems as if they are able to stay motivated for a little while but often experience setbacks in their recovery which puts their vocational goals on hold. It can be a return of their symptoms, family or living stressors or other situational stressors.

Some clients who have landed jobs struggle with the basic activities of maintaining a job such as getting up for and going to work and managing psychiatric symptoms which make it difficult for them in their work environment. Inconsistencies with attendance tend to be a big issue.

I believe that continued and intensive support from a job coach who could be available at all times and continued support from the employer as needed would be beneficial and helpful in helping these clients keep and maintain their employment but the reality I find is that these resources are not as readily available as they need to be.

Also, a competitive job market and the stigma of mental illness still seem to be barriers and prevent potentially good employees from getting a chance at being hired.

**Judith Halloran**

In my experience, the biggest issue facing people with psychiatric disabilities on the job is the stigma; either internally perceived or externally validated. Many of my clients have been out of the work force for extended periods of time due to symptomology which has reduced their self-esteem, resilience, and created a negative self perception. Once in the community and working, the same individual has to 'suddenly' operate on different principles. Coming in with the aforementioned barriers in addition to diagnosed symptoms may create a 'system overload'. This person then cannot perform well which may lead to losing the job. This further effects self-esteem and ongoing motivation.

To help this cycle from occurring I'm a strong believer in rehabilitative efforts prior to job placement. I've found that those clients that engage in psychosocial education classes focused on employment, connect with Peer Support Specialist, and develop a specific vocational plan with an Employment Specialist tend to be the most successful. The more we can talk about the barriers and come up with creative strategies to work with them, the more educated the job seeker is and the more confident the job seeker becomes. Once on the job the individual then has a 'book of instructions' and/or insight about how to work with difficulties to fall back on. Additionally, the individual knows they have a team of supported employment professionals that are available when issues arise on the job. Success on the job deserves to be celebrated. Constant feedback/check-ins in addition to annual awards ceremonies has helped our clients solidify the progress they have made. And those that have success love coming back to tell their stories and inspire their peers that work is attainable and just may change your life.

*Comment: This is well thought out and covers many of the key barriers and facilitators to successful job retention.*

**Jeff Sidders**

Within our vocational rehabilitation program model, we developed a 15-week class curriculum to promote retention that is evidence based, draws upon research findings from numerous experts (including Kim Mueser, who is credited appropriately), and encompasses 4 major components--> 'PASS to Success.' P = Placement, A = Attitude, S = Skills, S = Support

Placement considerations include choosing the right job fit, following closely along the lines of Unit 3: Investigate the participant's key interest, preferences, and challenges as related to work environment, supervisor/co-worker relations, salary/benefits, logistics, stress level, potential for advancement, skill level needed, etc.

Attitude considerations include having a positive, flexible attitude that reflects willingness and openness. Inflexible, fixed/rigid thinking patterns and attitudes are often barriers to job seeking success that we encounter, and are addressed in our 15-week class as we present self-management strategies to our participants.

Support considerations are along the same lines of Unit 1 and entail identification of persons, things, and activities. Examples of personal support resources that we help participants to identify, access, or further develop include family, friends, co-workers, church/community groups, etc. Examples of professional supports include VR, case managers, therapists/prescribers, benefits specialists/counseling, social services, housing authority, physical health providers and wellness coaches, etc.

Skill considerations are broken down along the lines of:

* Technical
* Interpersonal (Basic conversational, conflict resolution, problem solving, assertiveness, boundary awareness, ability to set limits). Ability to receive feedback positively on-the-job has been a common barrier that I've encountered, and by addressing this challenge in our preparedness classes, I've found that our participants have demonstrated pretty impressive gains in that area once employed.
* Self-care (Sex awareness and management, WRAP, coping skills, stress management, emotional regulation, tolerance for distress, diet/wellness, hygiene and appearance, other educational enhancements). Coping skill development has really enhanced retention in our program!
* Life management (Learning to deal with everyday stress of life, dealing with daily upsets, rubs, minor annoyances, dealing with major life stressors such as death, sickness, major transitions).

Of course, we always try to help participants explore research and identify skills that need to be developed that are specific for their individual vocational goals and work settings (e.g. work culture). But once participants have completed our course, we speak a 'common language' so to speak, which makes it much easier for myself and my colleagues to provide effective supportive coaching--> our participants have a robust set of cognitive skill sets that can be accessed. [Teaching--> Coaching--> Providing support to overcome obstacles to skill development and use] has certainly been our method of operation, long before I encountered it so nicely summarized in this course.

**Sandra Swegryzynowicz**

Clients have inconsistencies, when they get a job. Prior to working, many persons in recovery have very lenient community and personal schedules. When they find a job, with protocols, requirements, and a job description, it restricts their daily schedule.

I help people identify that working hard work on some key factors, gaining trust with the individual is primary, building a relationship, schedules which indicates job ready skills, working on motivation, individual personal care, interview skills, communication skills. These are some of the key factors of placement and keeping a job. My experience working hard on these factors has been very successful.

**Fran Granaham**

In working with individuals with psychiatric disabilities for many years, I find that the biggest resource and/or motivation to help people keep the jobs is the support that is provided by the Supported Employment agency - an individual personal job-coach to help them through the rough spots.....  This is huge!  Individuals like having this coach with them to help them through the difficulties that they may experience on the job.  Individuals, for the most part, have been working with their job-coaches/employment specialist for a period of time.  There is a trust factor that is built amongst the two.  The job coach is someone that the individual can confide in, laugh with, get mad at, learn from, etc...   this relationship grows to a point where an individual has the opportunity to work with their job coach to muddle through the rough patches.   Another wonderful resource and motivation is having a great employer …an employer who understands that you may have good days and not so good days; an employer who understands that you may have an issue with socialization.; an employer who understands that you have been out of the work force for a period of time, and you might need more time than others to adjust.  I have been blessed with working with some wonderful employers, who have patience and understanding for the individuals that I work with.  Employers who are non-judgmental and want to do the right thing and hire individuals with varied abilities!

**Sharon Roberson**

I believe one of the biggest issues facing people with disabilities is the o going lack of support.  Employment specialists should not help a person get a job and then just leave the "high and dry" or "only" to cope by themselves to the changes and stress of obtaining the job the work to get.

Everyone needs support when big changes happen in their lives, like new jobs...people with disabilities or not.  I believe all agencies should work together and communicate with each other to support a job seeker/consumer that has obtained a job.  That is the purpose and goal of all the programs is to help, support, and be there for the consumers.  The worst thing programs can do is have the ..."That's not my problem or part of our programs attitude". Common goal is a part of ALL the programs.

**Wesley Baker**

The biggest issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities in terms of keeping jobs include perceived barriers on the part of both the employer and the job seeker. Employers often have stigma against individuals with psychiatric disabilities and can lose patience the extra time and attention it may take in order for job seekers to be successful. A specific example of this would be employers being annoyed with the time it takes for job coaching and the perceived budgetary burden on making accommodations for job seekers. Job seekers may experience paranoia, difficulty with symptom management, and lack of appropriate support from their treatment team in order to be successful. Job seekers are also often scared that they may lose their benefits if they do not undergo appropriate benefits counseling or fully comprehend the information attained at a benefits meeting. In terms of retention consumer's often fall back on the safety net of their benefits if the work gets too hard or they find they are not passionate about the work that they do. As Employment Specialist's we should meet the consumer where they are at and help to provide the necessary skills in order for them to obtain and retain their own individual employment goals.

**Anthony Sirignano**

We have to help overcome the stigma of mental health that many employers have about people with mental illness. Not having enough support at the workplace; having to disclose their mental health issue to an employer in order to request an accommodation.

What helps: Participating in a work support group; practicing "what if" situations to give individuals strategies for dealing with difficult situations; educating employers about the value of people with mental health conditions in the work force.

**Crystal Dainard**

When talking about issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities keeping/getting jobs, I feel there are several...

* Employee may not believe they are worth/capable/good enough for the job/lack of self-confidence
* Transportation barriers - depending on where the person lives, they might not be able to afford or have access to reliable transportation.  Or with some people, anxiety can inhibit people from even using transportation
* Lack of experience in the work world or the "right" experience
* Gaps of time on resume
* Expectations vs. reality
* Lack of education
* Systemic barriers such as race, ethnicity, social status, etc.
* Circle of support both at home and at work to feel/be successful
* Lack of appropriate social skills
* Lack of experience in navigating the world of work

**Philip Maranon**

For veterans with psychiatric disabilities, one of the biggest barriers when working with this population is criminal background, and finding employers who are felon friendly.

**Kati Flanagan**

I believe there are several barriers facing persons with a psychiatric disability. One is the Stigma of Mental illness, another is their own self-doubt or self-sabotage and another I have experienced with clients is that of a lack of education for both employer and employee on working with someone’s mental illness, however this is certainly not an extensive list.

Stigma is one thing that folks living with a psychiatric illness have had to endure for years upon years. Many feel that simply can’t work for fear of being mistreated, misunderstood or will not be accepted on the job if they disclose their illness. There are employers that can tend to have a hard time because of being fed misinformation giving to them over the course of their lifetimes, through their own peers, the media sensationalizing mental illness and or their own lack of educating themselves on mental illnesses.

This becomes a whole other issue to job seekers looking to join the workforce in a place that has no education, compassion or understanding of psychiatric disabilities. Employers who are not aware of the different types of illness, the different treatments, coping methods, accommodations and on the job support are then afraid to hire anyone who has come to them disclosing a mental health issue. There may be fears of what can happen on the job, fears of workers having punctuality issues or absenteeism, and even a fear of the person’s symptoms real or not real.

All of this in turn can affect the job seekers motivation for, or determination to keeping a job. If they feed into what is being told to them by others, or again the media they (the job seeker) can become their own worst enemy and may even start demonstrating some of the above listed behaviors. Another way I have seen clients have a negative result is through a fear of success. If they are afraid of the “unknown” and have been living on assistance for years, or were burned on the job by a previous employer or co-worker, or generally just don’t know what to expect of a new life that comes from this routine and responsibility.

From what I have experienced “self-sabotage” can come from not wanting to change their appearance to “fit” with the job description or workplace, finding faults with the posting or employer, or demonstrating behaviors that would cause them to lose their jobs, to go back to what is familiar and comfortable. As I said this is by no means an extensive list, but the main ones I have seen in working with clients.

**James Schiesz**

1. In my experience with helping clients who have a mental illness and are looking to maintain a new job, I find that many of the people I have worked with experience a lot of stress/anxiety when they have begun a new job because it has been a number of years since they have worked.  Many of these clients have been out of work for years, and had to overcome large gaps or little experience on their resume to acquire their job.  The anxiety shows through when they are looking for work, and they often have low self-esteem, maybe not believing that they can acquire the job in the first place.  If they are able to be hired, that anxiety can transfer over into the new job, with them now worrying whether or not they can maintain their duties successfully and keep their employer pleased. This anxiety can snowball if the client runs into some extra stress at work (such as they are given extra duties), or if they receive some negative feedback.  These are the types of stressors that can affect anyone on a new job.  With someone who is experiencing psychiatric disabilities, these stressors can become compounded.  If a person has less than average coping skills, it may be very difficult for them to maintain their employment.

Symptom Management is another key factor when maintaining employment.  This may be especially true with someone experiencing schizophrenia.  If a person is reliant on medication to prevent them from experiencing hallucinations or delusions, they need to make sure they are taking their regularly scheduled medication and keeping their doctor's appointments.  If the client begins showing up at work disheveled, or saying odd things, it could lead to a very quick downward spiral with the additional stress of maintaining a job.  Someone experiencing depression may be able to pull through their day at work, but suffer at home, which could lead to oversleeping, tiredness at work, etc.  In short, there are a number of personal factors which need to be maintained in order to have success at work.

2. I always encourage people to have a good network of support.  I believe the more people you have to lean on, the more places you have to turn to when you are experiencing trouble.  My office helps clients with job searching, but we also assist clients in maintaining a job once they have found one.  We believe that the most important part of our work is not helping the client FIND a job, but rather helping them to MAINTAIN it.  If the client also has a connection with a psychiatrist, for medication, and a government worker, for benefits, and possible another case worker or therapist, then there are numerous ways that client can be supported through their transition.

As for motivations, I have yet to see a client who has not been motivated to work hard and to get off of “the system”.  I would say that nearly 100% of the clients that ask for our help truly want to find and maintain some type of work.

**Karen Kuah**

Thanks James for your points as I encounter what you shared with most of my clients.

The biggest issues are stress, anxiety, negative self-talk and inability and sometimes, refusal to interact with colleagues. A lack of confidence to cope with the job & colleague interaction definitely adds to the stress.

Most of my clients who are motivated to keep their jobs are usually because of financial reasons e.g. for sustenance, medical bills, independence. Also, some have goals for further studies and to purchase their housing.

Resources would include a supportive network- employer, colleagues, family, friends, peers and spiritual community. Other resources to help keep a work life balance would include hobbies, exercise and meditation. One of my clients shared that now that she has a higher income, she takes vitamins and supplements which help her improve her physical health and having a healthier body, and she has a healthier mind too.

**Cheryl McLaughlin**

These two questions go hand in hand. When looking at what the biggest issues are in maintaining jobs, we see that the skills, resources and or motivation all have a hand in determining job retention. Finding the right fit is very important in job retention and satisfaction. It doesn't necessarily mean that job can't be lost, but one may work harder to keep a job that is a good fit.  The number one reason my clients have not been able to maintain employment, is not because they cannot do the job, it is because of the lack (or unawareness) of soft skills. Getting along with others, knowing when to take part in conversations, or not take part in conversations. Should we just say "hi" as we meet a co-worker in the hallway, or do we have to stop and talk? Being able to manage their time effectively is a skill that is learned and if someone has been out of work (or has never worked), lack of time management skills can cause disruption and anxiety and this can fall over to the work place.

Having no outside support is another obstacle that can determine job retention. We must encourage our clients that getting the job is the hardest part, that maintaining it is and they should remain in contact with their employment counselor. Depending on the mental illness, lack of motivation could very well be one of the symptoms thus making job retention more difficult.

Stigma and shame may also be an issue. They may feel they are not accepted on the job site.

Having the right fit, a job that interests and is somewhere you want to go to everyday, maintaining contact with the support people who have helped along the way in finding the job, asking for help and clarification when needed are all very important to help maintain employment.

Knowing what is expected before they start the job. Clients should be encouraged to ask questions and explain why asking questions in a good thing. Employers would rather have their employees ask questions when in doubt than having to fix some problems down the road. Satisfaction is one of the keys to retention and is crucial for the both the employee and employer.

**Nancy Gagnon**

I really liked Lyn's talk about her experiences and her comments of Embrace Exploration and Embrace Failure. To keep jobs, I believe that exploring their interests/ preferences or choosing and then using their resources, supports and understanding that it’s not the illness but rather the possibility that it’s not the right job match, when things don't work out - but to move on and keep choosing, getting and keeping.

Finding the Satisfaction in their work can be the key motivation to keep and be successful at the job. Developing the skills required for the job, even educating yourself in advance of applying to school to do that specific job that you would love to do, prepares you with the skills and confidence to do the job. Everyone has access to the employment resources in their community but also using the social support circle, like family and friends to support and motivate you to succeed.

Once a person has the job, developing skills, finding what they are interested in and finding value in the work that they do, they will be more likely to succeed and want to go to work. Sometimes it may be the employer that is not as open and understanding to the needs of the employee, but with the support of an employment specialist, who can talk about accommodations with the employer, there is a higher chance of success.

**Sean Murphy**

The biggest issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities in terms of keeping their jobs is their soft (Implicit) skills. I’ve found with some of my clients that the way they interact with others have led to their dismissal. It was either their inability to interact with their coworkers or not asking for feedback or assistance so they could do their job properly from their supervisors. Many of the clients did not want to disclose they work with a mental health worker or ask for accommodations, so I was unable to assist with the employer. After reviewing what has occurred with clients we have discussed what could have been done differently.  I will take on role playing more in future endeavors with my clients. I have another client who cannot say ‘No.’ He always takes on extra hours and tasks and feels overwhelmed almost every time we meet. I address this with him and need to look at other ways to address this since we have not come up with a solution. Many of the clients I have with ‘Personality Disorders’ seem to blame everyone else for negative interactions. I try to point out different ways of dealing with a situation or conversation that they had difficulty with.

**Sylvie Cleroux**

What are the biggest issues facing people with psychiatric disabilities in terms of keeping jobs?

From my experience as an Employment Specialist and a Job Developer, these were the greatest issues workers faced after they were hired.

Fear

* Fear of the unknown
* Fear of failure
* Fear of ridicule
* Fear of not being able to do the job
* Fear of not knowing how to do the job
* Fear of asking for help
* Cyclic symptoms

When workers do not have a plan in place for when they start cycling, most of the time the issues follow this pattern.

* There will be a sense of loss of  control
* They pretend they are feeling ok and hope that their symptoms will go away (negation)
* The difficulties in the workplace then begin to compound
* They spiral out of control and will not be able to maintain the employer’s expectation
* They eventually will either quit or be fired

Non-disclosure

They are not informed about their rights and the obligation of the employer to accommodate.  They have not had support, information and fear consequence and retribution from employers and co-workers if they disclose.  They have no information about when and why they should disclose (pros and cons).  Lack of self-advocacy skills

Shame and Stigma

Their number one challenge is attitude, not just of the potential employer, but also of the person with the disability. The individuals must challenge their ideas of themselves and their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as their compromised self-esteem or self-confidence.  The worker fails to look at themselves as skilled workers and instead they identify themselves as a person with a psychiatric disability first.

Lack of knowledge about explicit and implicit skills

Most worker have the necessary explicit skills to do their job well, but they don’t have a clear understanding of the implicit skills they will need to maintain their jobs, as these are even more important to ensure fulfilling and successful work.  Because of this lack of knowledge they are more likely to become overwhelmed, frustrated and they will eventually consider giving up their job, or again risk getting fired.

Lack of support

New workers are often not aware of how important their support system can be for their success.  Pride and shame prevents them from discussing their work related difficulties with members of their social network.  Some people don’t have good support systems in place.

Lack of job maintenance plan

When there is not plan in place for job maintenance, the workers who experience job maintenance issues will keep getting hired and then getting fired.  The workers often have no idea why they are having such issues maintaining their job.  It will affect their progress and recovery. They will likely spend years coasting from job to job not knowing why.

The job maintenance plan is as important as the pre-employment action plan. The job maintenance plan should include the barriers/difficulties they might face in the workplace, and it should include possible solutions and steps to be taken to help and prepare the worker to deal with them.  This is where the employment specialists can train, coach and mentor the worker to learn the necessary implicit skills that will can eliminate some of the unexpected difficulties, and help the workers maintain their jobs.

**Irene Sng**

Based on my evaluation in the last 3 years, the biggest issues faced by the clients unable to keep their jobs, generally, were individuals’ coping skills such as learning the jobs skills with little or no supervision, slow performance, managing psychiatric symptoms, medication side effects, unable to concentrate, difficulties in following instructions, change in leadership and processes, unable to handle office politics, demanding work deadlines, high volume transaction, unstructured work environment, self-stigmatization and unable to adapt to organization culture.

**Ellen Shaffer**

Many of the people we support are lacking the soft skills needed for life and for work because their mental health issues have been front and center for many years. Offering training in areas such as life skills, time management, and interpersonal communications can help. In our organization we have recently hired an occupational therapist. She can work with people who are in the beginning stages of thinking about employment. For example she can ride the bus with a person so they can gain confidence that they can ride the bus alone. Another example of how an OT can support people is in connecting with others by holding small support groups and encouraging positive relationships. Whatever the person identifies as something they want to work on, the OT can support them in that goal, even helping them to set goals for themselves. And this can set the person up for a more solid, confident work experience when the time comes.

We can support people in job retention by assuring that any necessary accommodations are in place for them, as required. So if a person works better in a quiet space for example or with a work buddy, this can be requested from the employer, especially if the job developer has formed a solid relationship with the employer already. An important part of success in the workplace for anyone is the ability to form great relationships with our co-workers. Positive, supportive work relationships will enhance the person's work experience and help to motivate the person to get into work for every shift. And this in turn supports then in their psychiatric recovery.

**Ellen Shaffer**

One of the biggest issues that people face in job retention, if not the biggest issue, is their mental health recovery and the supports that they have for that in their lives, both personal and professional. A poor match with an employer is a big issue too because if the job is not a good fit with the person's interests, values, soft skills and hard skills, then the likelihood of retention is low. This can result from a lack of support through employment counseling to identify the person's skills, interests, values and barriers as well as support to connect with the right employers and having support in conducting a thorough job search without losing hope. I agree that skills and supports are indeed the biggest job retention issues for our folks.

**Damian Hudson**

I think the barriers for people with psychiatric challenges in keeping employment are the implicit expectations, because the persons going in focused on keeping the job can feel alone in the workplace due to stigma or lack of confidence.

I believe the best resource for retention is a job coach or a circle of people who "support the dream". If a person can find a local resource such as a one-stop for employment tools on the explicit requirements.

**Sue Fitzgerald**

I agree with you Damian. I also see barriers for people that include explicit skills as well.

Some individuals either interpret the job duties a specific way or they respond to them the only way they know, which can again be attributed to their understanding that the truth should always trump.

Teaching participants that there is more than one way to achieve results is a good first start. Another is to share the value of adaptability & flexibility. Both these come from a positive attitude & the employment specialist can do wonders by being a good role model.

**Beatriz Lomas**

From my experience, it seems there are numerous issues keeping people with Psychiatric disabilities from keeping a job.  The first is not keeping up with their medications I have seen this so many times where the client is doing very well and then they decide they no longer need their medication. Once they stop taking them, they have erratic behavior which will many times get them in trouble.  Sometimes by the time we realize they've stopped taking the medication it is too late!  Then they've missed work too many times and inevitably get fired. A second issue, are they own misconceptions of being inadequate or a “misfit”, I wish I had a magic potion for this!  They seem to talk themselves out of so many great opportunities because it's so difficult for them to move forward.

I feel they just need to take a step back and allow to be helped and then they can see that things will fall into place with a little bit of patience.

**Barbara Oliver**

Some of the biggest barriers that people with psychiatric disabilities face are:

- Limited education & credentials, including many individuals who lack a high school education

- Limited or no previous work experience (including unpaid & casual work,) especially when dealing with younger populations

- Lack of appropriate, positive references (due to limited experience or previous negative experiences, or losing contact information for references)

- Lack of appropriate clinical support around mental health, including medications, especially in younger populations

- Relatively high rates of concurrent disorders and/or dual diagnosis

- Criminal record

- Limited access to reliable transportation and communication (ie. no phone, no email, etc.)

- Reduced ability to succeed in traditional hiring processes (ie. online applications using screening algorithms, standard interview, etc.)

These are just some of the common challenges that my clients face in finding employment, but an additional challenge is that each situation looks unique so it takes time to figure out exactly where each individual is in each area, and what supports are available to them.  I work with many clients who don't have any other supports, including family, mental health workers, school, etc.

 The solutions to these situations cannot be generalized to an entire population at large, like "job seekers with depression."  Instead, the key thing is to get connected with appropriate supports that can work together with the job seeker to identify unique barriers, develop a plan for finding a suitable job, and support the job seeker to follow through.

**Thank you everyone for your excellent contributions to the classes.**