

Ask Me Anything Webinar with Kim Mueser, January 21, 2015

David Blair: Welcome to Ask Me Anything About Employment. This is not a presentation, but a series of interactive question and answer sessions where you can ask questions about employment. Today's expert is Dr Kim Mueser, Executive Director of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and a clinical psychologist. Dr. Mueser has developed or studied programs focusing on a broad range of topics, including returning to work or school, collaborating with families, illness management and recovery, social skills training, addressing substance abuse, trauma, PTSD, and improving cognitive functioning. Over the next hour, Dr. Mueser will take your questions. We will alternate between questions submitted during registration and questions from anyone who has joined us today. To ask a question, please indicate that you would like to ask by typing in the chat box. When your name is called upon, press the star key twice on your phone to unmute yourself. Welcome Dr. Mueser.

Kim Mueser: Thank you, David. It's great to be here. We thought that we would start today's talk with one of the questions that was sent into us ahead of time, and so I'll start by reading the question and then providing my answer. The question is, "How does one navigate through the past walkouts, criminal history records, rough periods of life and career, etc., and have the self-esteem and desire to take it all on again after mistakes had been made and competence has been diminished?" This is a tough question, and I certainly understand the difficulties of it. I think the most important thing is that hope is the constant companion that fuels the energy in the recovery process and the process of looking and finding work again. It's a process in terms of not just believing that there is something out there, work, meaningful work, community engagement; but knowing that it's there and along with it a better life. Social support from family members, friends, peers, and others can be critical to maintaining this hope and sticking with it in terms of job search and keeping jobs. Another important thing is self-compassion. Self-compassion refers to giving yourself a break, showing yourself the kind of compassion and the kind of understanding for the difficulties that you've been through, that you would show to another person in a similar circumstance.

David: Well thank you, Dr. Mueser. It doesn't look like anyone else has asked a question. So if you would again like ask a question, if you would please just type in the chat box below Dr. Mueser's image, we'll be happy to take your questions. And until then, I suppose you can take a second question that was submitted previously.

Kim: OK, great. This is a two-part question and I'll answer both parts because I think that they really go together. The first part says, "Do I disclose my mental illness to my employer? And then the second part is when is someone ready to return to work?" So for the first question about when do you disclose having a mental illness to an employer, there are two primary considerations that guide the decision to disclose about one's mental illness. The first one is whether you need a job-related accommodation. This is the kind of a modification in your work tasks or responsibilities or schedule that is critical in order for you to continue maintaining your

job, managing your mental illness, while at the same time doing basic work that is expected of you by your employer. Employers are required by law to give accommodations to people with disabilities, but in order to get an accommodation, of course, you need to explain to the employer that you have a disability. A second consideration is whether you want to disclose for personal reasons related to being your whole self at work and feeling more comfortable with people knowing certain aspects of your past experiences, such as a mental health challenges as opposed to keeping that part of you as a secret. Some people prefer to keep their mental health history as a part of their personal history and not to share it with others at work; whereas others actually feel more comfortable sharing certain parts about themselves, including those parts at work because it makes them feel more complete at work. So those are the two considerations that guide disclosing about having a mental illness at work. The second part of the question was **"When is someone ready to return to work?"** And the most important answer to that is when the person wants to work. When you want to work, that's your most important indicator of your ability to return to work. It's important to be able to have some ability to focus your thoughts and your concentration on work-related tasks, assuming that you're going to begin returning to work part-time, so you need to be able to sustain some attention and to get some work done. But other than that, the desire for work as a single most important factor that determines when you're ready to go back to work.

David: Thank you for that answer, Dr. Mueser. Akesha, if you could dial star star on your phone, we're ready for your question.

Akesha: Thanks so much. Can you hear me? Hi, Dr. Mueser. How are you?

Kim: Hi, good, thanks.

Akesha: My question is really specific. So it's focusing on how do you, um, **"What kind of interventions do you use to help build motivation and energy and clients that may specifically have negative symptoms dealing with schizophrenia? So we're often having that low level of energy. That's the first part, and the second part is, "In the process of doing it, how do you make sure to draw that line of distinction between acting as a therapist vs. acting in the role of employment specialist?"**

Kim: Those are great big questions, Akesha. I think that the most important things in terms of working on building motivation and building stamina in people who struggle with negative symptoms is trying to take things slowly one step at a time and to have a positive attitude about the person's ability to gradually either relearn or take on a greater challenges, and to invest greater energy in the work that they're doing. Finding work that is related to the person's past experiences and interests is important because engaging somebody's attention can certainly be critical. Working out a schedule so that it becomes a planned part of the person's regular day, whether it's a schedule involved in the job search process or if work has been obtained, that the work is done on a regular basis and that the schedule includes a, um, things pertaining to getting up in the morning, getting ready on time, and the like, so the person's day

becomes a pattern over time and predictable. And eventually the predictability of one's schedule, including both work as well as fun things, can facilitate looking forward to the day as well as reflecting back on it and enjoying certain positive moments. Another thing to do is when people have significant negative symptoms, and they may have limited amounts of energy, is to work on gradually sending the periods of time in which they work on particular tasks. Most everybody can extend the amount of time they work on a task, if they scheduled rest breaks, and then gradually increase the distance or the time between those rest breaks. So the most important thing that we find in terms of helping people cope with negative symptoms is focusing on the positive, identifying things that are related to their areas of interest, and working on gradually building up their schedule in terms of particular things that they're doing with a plenty of rest breaks in between, and focusing on increasing the amount of time that they're able to attend to particular task. And that may include work tasks, but also recreational tasks. People used to think that people with negative symptoms didn't have as much capacity to enjoy events, but we now know that enjoyment, the experience of pleasure, is something that can be learned with practice. Like so many other skills.

David: Well, thank you for your answer, Dr. Mueser, and Akasha, for your question. Again, if anyone has a question. Looks like Kelsey has one, why don't we take that now? Kelsey, if you can dial star star on your phone. We're ready for your question. Delta. I guess Kelsey isn't quite ready yet. Dr. Mueser, can you go for one of the prepared questions that were submitted?

Kim: Sure, here's another question. Very interesting one and not an uncommon experience. The person writes, "Even though I am a VA, and an Indiana peer specialist, I stay as a volunteer because I live with command hallucinations." For people who don't know, command hallucination is a hallucination, like a voice that instructs or tell the person to do something, and they can be very upsetting. "I've found that my best defense or coping strategy is to disengage or leave the place where this occurs. So my question is, How can I better combat or cope with this and a work setting? I've lost many jobs already, but I still want to try to stay in the workplace." So let me talk about this. And first of all to, as I noted earlier, to say that hearing voices and including hearing voices that tell you to do things that you don't want to do, are not uncommon experiences. They happen in different mental illnesses, sometimes, even occasionally, they happen even in the general population. So it's not that unusual. So here are some different strategies that can help you cope with those voices without having to leave a work situation, which can enable you do to keep a job, which it sounds like that is related to your goals. First of all, is to take an acceptance-based approach to the voices, which is to accept the fact that you can't completely control when they occur and when they don't occur, but what you can control is your behavior. Just because you hear voices doesn't mean that you have to respond to them, to do what they tell you to do, or anything else. What you can do is attempt to just notice the voices, meaning you're not trying to suppress them. You're trying to acknowledge them, but not give them undue attention and not let them wreck your day or make you feel bad. In other words, just noticing the voices is sometimes easier to do than trying to make them go away or reacting to them. And then a related part of this, is to remind yourself

of what your goals are. Why are you at work? Why is being at work important? And to remind yourself that you're the one who's in control of one's behavior, not these voices. The voice is actually have no power over you. They can be upsetting, but only to the degree that you allow them to be upsetting. Accepting them and the fact that you can't control everything that goes on in your mind, but you can control your behavior is really one of the basic parts of a kind of therapy called, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. That's proved to be very, very useful to people who have upsetting feelings and thoughts that they have difficulty having control over. Of course, the important thing here is that you have control over your behavior, and your behavior is directed by your goals and your values. And so that can help you accept when you hear voices, without having to feel that you need to leave the situation or that you will lose control, There are other strategies for dealing with voices. One kind of strategy is a positive self-talk. Reminding yourself of personal strengths, of the fact that you're in charge, and so on, can be way of countering the effects of voices. Use of relaxation strategies can also be helpful in terms of reducing the extent to which people hear voices or the distress that they're associated with. Another thing is that when people engage in some kind of distracting activities, it could be talking to somebody else. It could be listening to music, those kinds of distracting opportunities when feasible in the workplace setting can also reduce the severity or sometimes eliminate of voices including command hallucinations. So those are some and there are many other kinds of coping strategies that can enable people to deal with the experience of hearing voices without allowing it to affect their behavior and their work performance.

David: Thank you again for the answer, Dr. Mueser. Kelsey, if you dial star star on your phone now, we're ready for your question.

Kelsey: Hello?

Kim: Hello. I can hear you.

Kelsey: Great, awesome. Well, thank you so much. "My question is about job development. I was curious, what's the most effective approach to job development? Specifically, approaching employers for job placement, maybe a new employer for the first time."

Kim: Of course, there are many, many strategies involved in job development, and there are some very good materials that have been produced, including a video series by my colleagues at Dartmouth, who have created similar material, such materials related to their work in supported employment. The important things about job development include, as a job developer, an employment specialist, addressing professionally, being able to figure out a good time to schedule a meeting with a prospective employer. Some of this has to do with whether job development is done individually for a particular client or whether it's more aimed at establishing contacts with potential employers and potentially new employers within a particular area. So, part of it needs to be informed by that. Arranging to meet with an employer at a time that's convenient with them. and that is aimed at understanding both what their needs are and what, in particular, what their workforce needs are, can be a good way of

identifying whether there are potential jobs that may be matched to the specific preferences of consumers. It's important that these meetings not be kept for, not extended an extremely long period of time, to be 10, 15 or 20 minutes, or so. And that the idea of the meeting is really to establish a connection, which can then be followed up on in the event of potential jobs being identified. Another thing that's always important to bear in mind in terms of job development is to use the extended network of the person who is the job developer, more broadly, the vocational team, as well as the tap of the possible network of the consumer and the consumer's families. We know that many jobs that people obtain are obtained through connections with other people. And so it's through those connections that jobs can often be developed. And it's important to try to tap those jobs and to explore them, similar to the way any other kind of job is developed.

David: Alright, well Kelsey says, "thank you," and thank you Dr. Mueser. Let's go ahead and take Lindsay's call. Lindsey, if you dial star star on your phone.

Lindsey: Hello?

Kim: Hello.

Lindsey: Hi. "So, I have a question. I'm an employment support worker, and I recently got a client who has a lot of social anxieties. She wants to pursue her career in a library information and technician, so she would like a career position, but she seems to have a lot of anxieties around teamwork around people supervising her. So she says she has a lot of anxiety if people are almost watching over her shoulders. Even maybe I asked if she has anxieties about even people sitting maybe close beside her by computers. She has some anxieties around that also. I wonder if you can give me maybe some strategies that can work with her."

Kim: Absolutely. I'd be happy to. First of all, it's important to bear in mind that Social Anxiety Disorder is actually the most common anxiety disorder and probably the most common psychiatric disorder, if you want to consider it a disorder of all the possible disorders. So, it's very important for people to know that the anxiety that they experience is quite common and that other people experience it. People tend to develop social anxiety relatively early in life. Often the onset is sometime in adolescence, and it can make people very, very uncomfortable. And even though people want to connect with others, it can inhibit or get in the way of connecting with others. But on the positive side, there are lots of effective strategies as well as treatment programs for people, for helping people overcome their social anxiety. Some of the strategies for overcoming social anxiety include helping people practice and use anxiety management or relaxation skills. For example, there's a kind of a skill that's widely used in anxiety disorder treatment programs called, breathing retraining. The idea of breathing retraining is that it teaches people how to slow down their rate of respiration in order to decrease their overall physiological arousal or over arousal as the case often is in people with social anxiety disorder. When people get anxious, they often begin to hyperventilate. This increases the oxygen to the brain, lightheadedness, and feelings of anxiety. So, breathing

retraining, which we teach as a skill and help people practice it as a skill, and then gradually they are able to learn how to use it in different kinds of situations, including social situations, can reduce the sensitivity that people have by reducing their overall physiological arousal. And there are other relaxation based approaches as well. A second strategy is helping people become more comfortable with different kinds of social situations. Role-playing, as in social skills training, when you have pretend situations, and you have a person practice. Sometimes practice again and again until it gets to the point where it feels kind of automatic. That could help reduce people's anxiety. You can imagine what it was like doing something, something social, maybe the first time that you had to do it and that you felt pretty anxious, but then after you did it three or four or five times, it became pretty comfortable with it and the anxiety decreased. So for example, if somebody felt anxious about being supervised, setting up role-play situations in which the person practiced responding to a supervisor giving feedback would be one way of decreasing the anxiety. And by helping them practice in role-play situations where you have a number of role-plays, one followed by the other, the person becomes more comfortable in the situation, and you can provide them with feedback to try to make sure that they are as effective as possible in responding to that situation. A third thing about social anxiety, and this was, I think, alluded to in your description is that people tend to have an exaggerated, and often inaccurate, perception of how other people view them. They feel that they're being scrutinized, and they often feel that they're being judged or evaluated more harshly by other people. So it's important to help people, with social anxiety, get feedback from other people about how they come across, and for you to provide feedback to that other person. Helping people realize that the thoughts and the beliefs that they have about how others might be evaluating them are not always accurate, and that they can test out, they can check out those thoughts. And if they need to correct them when they're inaccurate, can also reduce that sense of being scrutinized by others in different situations. This is part of what cognitive behavior therapy is about, helping people test out certain assumptions that they have. And in social anxiety treatment programs, often an important part of the program is getting people to give feedback about each other. And the feedback that people get from other people is almost always more benign, more positive than their own self-evaluations of how of how they're doing. So, I think it's very important to encourage people, who have problems related to social anxiety, to continue to pursue their goals and to assure them that there is a wide range of strategies to help them not just cope with their anxiety, but actually in many cases, to overcome it and to be comfortable in those kinds of situations that are important for their work-related goals.

Lindsey: Perfect. Thank you. The last point was really good. Thank you.

David: Thank you again for asking your question, Lindsey. As a reminder to anyone who's joined us after we started, this is a question and answer session. So if you have anything that you'd like, please type it into the chat box below the video window, and we'll get to you. Dr Mueser, let's take one of the previously-submitted questions, and then we'll take Cecelia.

Kim: Ok, this question was, “How do you get someone you are concerned about who refuses help to seek treatment?” And so this is a challenging question, and it's a question that's often asked by family members or siblings or spouses or a boyfriend or a girlfriend of somebody, who may be having emotional difficulties. There are two basic strategies involved in helping someone in such a situation seek treatment. The first is that it's very important to express your own concerns directly to the person. By expressing your own concerns, to explain to the person why you're worried and how that affects you in as a matter of fact and direct a way as possible. The second thing to do is to try to engage the person around particular goals or values that are important in their life, and that they may be having difficulty pursuing, or living a life consistent with their values because of the mental health problems that they're experiencing. If you can engage them around their goals or their values with the aim of helping them make progress towards goals and live more consistently with values that they have, that can then bring mental health problems into focus, and you can begin to explore with the person how perhaps taking very small steps to looking at different ways of dealing with the mental health problems could help the person achieve those goals. It's not important for the person to develop insight into having mental health problems or mental illness, nor is it important that they look at treatment for a mental illness as necessarily being treatment in that same way. Rather, the idea is to engage them around helping them make progress towards goals and identifying possible solutions that can be used to deal with obstacles that they're experiencing towards achieving those goals. If your connection with the person is around living the kind of life that they want to live, and you're helping them try to make steps towards that. When mental health problems are present, the possibility of different treatment strategies that may help the person deal with those mental health problems, quite naturally comes into the picture without you having to force it in any particular way, or it being coercive in any way. And that way the person sees at least exploring mental health treatment options as something that's in their own best interest and something that can help them make more progress towards their goals that they've been most recently thwarted in working on.

David: Next, we have a question from Cecilia. If you can press star star on your phone and ask your question.

Cecilia: Hello? Can you hear me?

Kim: I can.

Jen: Hi, my name is Jen, and I work with Cecilia.

David: Cecilia, I need you to turn off the speakers you have at the center there, you're creating quite an echo for everyone.

Cecilia: Yeah. Oh, sorry about that. So, one of our consumers had a question, “When you're working and you get frustrated or overwhelmed, what is the appropriate way to handle this?”

Kim: So, you know, employment specialists are human just like everybody else, and it's certainly easy to get frustrated because of the challenges of the job. It depends a little bit on the nature of the frustration, but let me throw out a few ideas. One is that it certainly can be stressful going all over town trying to work up jobs for people, trying to provide supports as needed, and sometimes things don't always go according to plan. So I think it's important to build in either rest breaks, a temporary meditation, some periods of mindfulness, some times to do some relaxation strategies throughout the day. If you find that the stress of the everyday role of being an employment specialist or vocational specialist is something that builds up in an unpleasant than upsetting way. So, the use of stress management strategies can be very helpful. I think it's also helpful to realize that the nature of job seeking, helping people get jobs and keep jobs is one of the most difficult tasks for anybody to accomplish. It's difficult to, for people to accomplish on their own. The job market continues to be a very competitive. It's difficult if you don't have a disability, it's even more difficult if you have a disability. And the role of helping a person with a disability obtain work and keep work is very challenging as well. And so similar to my comment earlier in terms of having compassion for oneself, it's important to give yourself a break and to recognize the inherent challenges in terms of what you do and to avoid getting down on yourself excessively when you're not as effective as you would like to be. One final thought is that work in terms of helping people find and keep jobs involves working with a lot of different people, of course. It involves working with consumers, with their family members, with other employment specialists, with mental health team members, with employers, and other people in the general community. And so it's only natural that some of those interactions are going to be with people that aren't as satisfying or pleasant as you would like, and some of them may be downright annoying. And so when you're faced with some of the challenges of dealing with difficult people, I think that it may be helpful to look at those experiences as potential lessons. Now this is a way of kind of turning it around and saying, if you're getting really annoyed at something, is there a particular lesson that that can teach you? And if you're working with somebody, or there are people that you find and you find them to be especially annoying or troubling, I think that asking yourself whether there is some kind of a lesson in this for you to learn, almost as though it's been designed who can turn it around and that you may be able to find some wisdom in that situation. Another thing that can sometimes be helpful in dealing with challenging people is the use of certain meditative strategies or strategies drawn from positive psychology, such as a loving kindness. Loving kindness meditation is a kind of a meditation in which one deliberately wishes loving kindness on other people around them. And paradoxically, it can work quite well in terms of shifting attitudes when one wishes loving kindness to another person who is annoying or troubling in some other way in one's life. And then last I would say a social support, again this could be support from other employment specialists, from family members, and other people; we all need a social support to deal with the stresses of our lives and that can be another important ingredient in terms of being successful in managing all those challenges of that job.

David: I've gone ahead and muted them just so we don't get the echo again. But if you guys have a question or a follow-up, please let us know in the chat box, and we'll get right back to

you. And again to anyone else, we'd love to have your questions. It's really makes it for a much more interactive and fun experience for us all. Until then, Dr. Mueser, go ahead and take one of the other previously submitted questions.

Kim: Alright, and we do have a good number of very good questions as well. So, here's a question that says, "How do you manage making requests for change in workload when everyone in your office has an unmanageable or high workload, but when due to your anxiety, due to your stress level, yours maybe more than theirs, and maybe causing distress and health problems, language, accommodations, or when do you just suck it up and use more personal supports to cope?" This is a really important question, and has to do with the decision of when do you decide to seek for an accommodation, an accommodation due to stress, and when do you decide that maybe what you really need to do is to somehow try to figure out how to manage that stress more even more effectively. So, let's take the first part of the question to begin with, which is should you disclose? And I think that if you disclose, of course the nature of the disclosure in this case is a seeking some kind of a modified work schedule or a workload due to the high level of stress. It's important to, of course, have disclosed having a psychiatric illness to the employer, to the supervisor. And then it's important to present the request for disclosure in a matter-of-fact and non-apologetic manner. It's important to have thought through the nature of the accommodation that you would like have, so you can at least begin the discussion with a specific idea in mind in terms of what would make the job more manageable for you to continue to work there as an employee. You may also alternatively choose not to disclose and decide that what you really want to do is to try to bolster your coping abilities. And we've talked earlier about the importance of having coping skills for a variety of different things and some of them overlapping with a stress. Some of the strategies here, I've discussed before. So for example, the ability to use relaxation exercises. And I think the way to look at relaxation, it's not just a matter of stretching out, but there are, there are particular exercises that may involve breathing, like the breathing, retraining, muscular relaxation tension, the use of imagery, and other exercises that are based, for example, on meditation. It's important to look at these relaxation strategies as skills, just like any other skill, like learning to play a musical instrument or to play a sport, meaning that you get better at it, the more you practice. And that initially when you practice, it's important to practice a particular relaxation skill in a setting that's comfortable, and where you have control over it, and try to use that skill in a work-related or other stressful situation, only after you've had some comfort over it, and you've developed some mastery of that skill. So there's relaxation strategies, there's use of mindfulness-based approaches. Mindfulness-based approaches are based on the idea that you can attend to what is going on around you in your environment, but you don't necessarily have to over attend. You can let things come into your consciousness, and let them slip out of your consciousness, without necessarily buying those thoughts or becoming focused on them. So one of the important things in terms of dealing with stressful work environments is making a decision in terms of what's important to focus on and what do you not have to focus on. There may be certain things, they may be somewhat annoying or distractions, but it may be more important not to focus on them. When they come into your attention to acknowledge them, and then to

let them flee out of your attention without giving them more mind. Meditation, something that I mentioned earlier, is certainly again, a skill that can be developed. It's typically used outside of work settings, but there are aspects of it that can be used in work. Being able to identify when you're talking to yourself and saying things that may not be very helpful and may not necessarily be accurate. In other words, challenging your own thinking that may lead to or even contribute to the stress. So for example, saying, well, people shouldn't be that way. And the reality of it is that, well, we would like it if not everybody acted in a particular way, but we don't necessarily have control over it. Or if you say, I can't stand it, this is intolerable. And of course, you need to make a distinction between when you can stand it and when you can't, but in many cases saying these kinds of things. This is what Albert Ellis would call "awfulizing" saying these things is not especially helpful and an increase of the perception and the experience of stress. So, being able to identify when you are talking to yourself in a way that is seeming to contribute or to add to the stress, as opposed to either a soothing yourself, or adopting an approach in which you can let certain things pass by without focusing on them unduly. All of those could be strategies that can help manage stress more effectively. And of course, there is social support; very, very helpful in terms of managing stress. It may lead to different ways of thinking about things or additional stress management strategies. But even in the absence of this, having somebody that you can talk with, including talking about things that are difficult, such as stress at work, can be useful and can be a way of relieving some of the stress that you experience.

David: Great answer, Kim. I'm sure a number of you are thinking about questions, but aren't sure that you want to ask the whole group, and that's ok. I'd encourage you to ask it, but if you wish, you can also type your question into the chat box, and we will read it aloud and answer it from there until then. James, if you could press star star on your phone, we're ready for your question.

James: Doctor, let me ask you this question. I'm not totally sure how to phrase it so it comes out right, but I'll give it a shot. "One of the things we want to do as job developers, is in helping an individual return to the workforce or develop their career further, is to encourage them to achieve or to achieve as much as they're capable at the moment. However, there is a risk behind that because how do I know when I'm over encouraging? How do I tell if I'm, when I shouldn't be backing off because I don't want a client to start to decompensate because they're trying to please me, and they tell me that I can't cope with this. Maybe perhaps they don't even know they cannot cope with that, or they're ashamed that they can't cope with that or something like that. But just to, kind of, where I'm going with this, and I'm wondering what your thoughts would be on it."

Kim: Right, thanks for bringing it up. It's a very useful and thoughtful question. In my experience working with people, I don't think the risk of somebody working too hard and that leading to a symptom exacerbation a decompensation, so to speak, or relapse. In my experience, that does not happen very often. And that the negative effects of pushing somebody too hard are more often that the person becomes somewhat less invested in work and in pursuing work. And that

the process of pushing actually leads to more and more difficulties in terms of active collaborating. The way I like to think of it is, with many clients that I work with, I like to sometimes think of myself as a coach and that what I, the basis of my relationship with the person is the goal that the person has in terms of the kind of work that they want to have, and the kind of job, and it may that may be related to either the kinds of things that they want to do or something that's important about having the increased income, or just being a more of a contributing member to society; but the relationship is based on that. And then what I try to do is to lay out different approaches and to explore. The person often has a lot of additional knowledge, and so it's very much of a collaboration, but to lay out and explore different options or approaches to helping the person make progress towards that goal. Now, there may be areas where I have particular expertise, and where I think, for example, that practicing skills, helping the person get out to a certain number or with a certain regularity in terms of job interviews, and something where I think that the practice can really be helpful, or the process of engaging in job search activities on a regular basis can be helpful. What I try to do is to get the person to buy in to the goal as well as the process towards achieving that goal, and then to provide positive encouragement aimed at helping them marshal their energies, helping them do better one step after another step. As long as I'm convinced that this is part of their goal and that they also agree with the process involved, it's ok if they're trying hard. If you're concerned that they're trying hard just to please you, or that they're trying harder than they really are capable of, or that there could be untoward effects, I think it's very important to check it out with a person. But I think the trying hard in its own right, I think that's a good thing, and if we can inspire in people. We don't want them to do it out of fear of our getting accepted by us, or something like that, but if we can inspire people to really put in extra effort into achieving goals, and we can provide the support and the positive reinforcement for that, I think that's great, it won't backfire on you. If you're concerned about it, then I think having the kind of open relationship and being able to stop and say, how's this working for you? You know, can you handle this? You know, I'm worried about it, or something like that. I think that it's important to be able to ask that. But I also think that people can benefit from working hard as long as they're getting the support and help along the way, and as long as it is consonant with their personal goals, what it is that they want to achieve.

James: Ok, thank you. That's very helpful.

David: Well, Dr. Mueser, I have a question to read to you from Kim. Kim writes to us, "Having very recently applied for a new job, hopefully for the remainder of winter and spring, I am concerned about some personal attributes created by my acceptance of my disability, mainly my tattoos and my nicotine addiction. What are parameters, in general, for such unique identifications in the workplace?"

Kim: You know, I can't say that I'm an expert on knowing the parameters, and it probably varies from one workplace to another in terms of the exhibition of those things, tattoos and the like, but I can say these are very common kinds of body ornaments, for example, that are worn by many people in the general population. I don't think of those things as, they may occur more

often in certain sub cultures, but they also occur more often in certain geographic areas. So for example, I lived in New Hampshire for 17 years, and tattoos are a very common kind of a body ornament there. They're much more common now than they were 10 and 20 years ago, but of the different places that I've lived, there are certainly much more common in New Hampshire, for example, than when I've lived in New York City. I think that it's important to look at these as, not necessarily reflecting anything in terms of one's psychiatric past. I mean, there may be certain things that the tattoos themselves indicate that generates curiosity, but I think that these are a type of one's person, one's history that reflects the specific culture in which they lived for a period of time, and that being able to bear them as a part of yourself without fear, in a matter-of-fact, sort of way. In my experience, most people in many walks of life accept such individuals quite readily.

David: Well, thank you for your answer, Kim, and thank you everyone else for submitting your questions. They've really been great. Well, we have about 15 minutes left, and I'm going to read one, another question from Laura here. Laura writes, "Hello Dr. Mueser, I often use motivational interviewing within my job to not only serve individuals, but also when working with providers and employers. Could you advise and/or provide your opinion on VMI and its usefulness with respect to supported employment? Also, I really liked the plug for loving kindness meditation."

Kim: Well, thank you very much. Motivational interviewing is really a broad set of different techniques, developed over 20 years ago. And at first, focused primarily on helping people make certain health behavior changes, such as smoking, substance use, foods one eats, and so on. And while there are many different aspects to motivational interviewing, the part of motivational interviewing that I've always most strongly related to and incorporated in my, both clinical work, but I think in my relationships and other work as well, is the notion that what determines when people change is when they decide that a change is critical in terms of their own personal values or goals. That we have many people in our lives in many different circumstances in which there may be pressure upon us to change, or on other people to change, and that it's very difficult to get people to change if they don't see such change as a consistent with their own personal values and goals. In motivational interviewing, the idea is to take the focus off of some kind of a pre-determined kind of change that is supposed to be the focus of the interaction, such as a person using substances, and instead to refocus first on developing a relationship around an understanding of the person and an understanding of what their goals are and the kind of things that they would like to live their life in accordance with or values. Then, I think if the relationship can be built around, and this can be neutral as well as in a couples or in family work, if the relationship can be focused on helping the person make progress towards those goals, that then opens up the door for exploring potential changes in behavior that may facilitate achieving those goals. Now, in motivational interviewing, one of the ideas is that when there's a change in behavior that might facilitate achieving a goal, helping the person come to an understanding to develop an insight into the nature of that change is sometimes facilitated when the person comes to the insight on their own, rather than

ones directly pointed out by another person. So, in using motivational interviewing, I think that what's critical is having a connection with the other person, understanding what's important to the other person, and then exploring together what our changes are, or what are things that could be done to help the person make better progress towards those goals. And to the extent that there are changes in the person's behavior, and that in some way, the person's behavior has been an obstacle to achieving their goals. People are often open to changing that behavior when through exploration, genuine, shared, and collaborative exploration, they can see that some alternative would be more effective in helping them achieve their goals. So that can relate to helping people find jobs, exploring the possible interference of using substances in achieving or in keeping a job. It could also refer to being an effective employment specialist, and what does it take to be an effective employment specialists? And you can use many of the basic strategies of motivational interviewing to help an employment specialist become more motivated, more effective, say at job development. The person doesn't spend as much time developing jobs, and isn't as effective as an employment specialist, and has fewer clients working, and has less satisfaction from their job, and less approval from their supervisor. So that's the kernel of motivational interviewing that I found most helpful in my work, and which I think is applicable both to a client that we work with as well as to many other relationships that we have. Understanding what's important to the other person and having part of your relationship, or maybe the most critical part of your relationship, focused on addressing that.

David: Well, thank you for that answer. And Laura says, "Thank you so much for taking my question. I found it helpful with stigma and conquering fears on both sides of the interviewing table. I truly appreciate your insight. We have time left for two, maybe three more questions. And so I'm gonna read you the next one that comes from the group that Cecilia led up They write, and I have to scroll up here. "One of our consumers in the past has dealt with a heavy workload-related bullying that leads to coworkers using your disability against you while managers have done nothing, how do you overcome this?"

Kim: That is another challenging question. It's interesting because one of the questions that we were sent to ahead of time, addressed a similar situation. This one is a little bit more specific, but the other situation that was raised was what can one do to maintain wellness and recovery and survive in a hostile work environment where harassment and bullying occurs? The first thing that I suggested for the question that had been written in advance, was to seek validation for your perception of the experiences. With the question that was just read out loud, the description of it sounded like that validation had already been sought. But in the absence of that, the idea is that one may perceive other people as not being nice or potentially as bullying, but seeking some kind of validation to ensure that your perceptions are accurate. I think certainly is important or would be helpful. I think that the most important thing is to recognize that that bullying, workplace bullying, either from coworkers or from supervisors, and this could be related to one's disability, one's gender; it could be a form of harassment and the like, but such bullying is illegal. And it is important to seek protection, if it's occurring to the extent to which it's really interfering with a person's quality of life at work and potentially their ability to

work. There are opportunities or avenues within the workplace in which one can seek help, restitution, or something like that. In terms of going to one's supervisor, there are rules and laws around such interpersonal, intimidating interpersonal behavior; and it is the supervisor's responsibility to provide protection and to address those kinds of issues. It's an even greater problem when that kind of harassment or bullying comes from the supervisor because the natural person to go to in that circumstance may not be easily accessible to the consumer. And in those situations, I would suggest that seeking counsel, getting the advice from other people in terms of how to handle the situation and who to go to, would certainly be useful. There are human resources departments and people within the human resources departments, who one could go to and in such circumstances. But human resources departments are at least partly in place to prevent companies from being sued. And so how effective the steps might be that could be taken, are uncertain. However, it certainly is one potential recourse in that situation. I have perhaps overstepped or by-stepped the most direct possible way of responding, which would be to attempt to speak to people directly about their behavior and about its effects. This is not, this is perhaps the most difficult thing to do. But I certainly wouldn't rule out the potential benefits of having a direct and honest, and preferably not hostile, communication or interaction with the person, in which the person expresses their feelings, and expresses their unhappiness or their dissatisfaction with another person's treatment of them, including any bullying kinds of behaviors around the disability and makes a frank, but explicit request for the person to stop. It may well be that people will not feel comfortable doing that, and there could, of course, be circumstances in which doing that might not be felt to be completely safe. On the other hand, it might be very effective at terminating that kind of behavior. It might also win new respect from people. It's hard without getting into the specifics to discuss, when that would be advised. I certainly think that if the person feels an inclination to do that and to do it in a civil and socially-skilled manner, it would be appropriate, before taking things to another level. But again, that requires a high level of assertiveness skill and a willingness to try to deal with the situation directly and in person before taking further steps.

David: Great answer, Dr. Mueser. We only have time for one more short question, and then we'll have to conclude this session. Steve writes to us, "I have a very motivated individual in a very rural area that only wants to be paid with the barter system. He has numerous delusions about money in banks. Would it be appropriate to job carve in with this request?"

Kim: I'm glad that's a nice short question, and the answer is yes. A barter system is recognized as an alternative payment system. Many, many merchants working in many different walks of life are open to barter as an alternative to a financial payment for services. I was even reading, much to my surprise a number of years ago, that psychologists providing psychotherapy are permitted to barter in settings and as appropriate that the goods are in appropriate value to the services delivered, but I think that the potential of using a barter system, rather than a direct payment, is certainly viable. And, if that's the way the person wanted to do it, and I could find people who are willing to engage in it, I think that would be a viable way of helping the person to achieve their goals.

David: Well, thank you. I'd like to thank Dr. Mueser for answering our questions today, and everyone for attending. In the next few days, you'll receive a survey about your experience here, and it would be really great to get your feedback, so we can continue to improve upon these events. The next Ask Me Anything About Employment session will be announced shortly, so remember to check your email for that announcement. Have a great day everybody, and thank you for attending.

Kim: Thank you.