

Employment Resource Book



Center for Practice InnovationsSM

at Columbia Psychiatry
New York State Psychiatric Institute

Building best practices with you.

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Employment Resource Book development team

Thomas Jewell, Ph.D. (Project Lead)
Center for Practice Innovations

Paul Margolies, Ph.D.
Center for Practice Innovations and Columbia University

Anthony Salerno, Ph.D.
New York University

Gary Scannevin, Jr., M.P.S., C.P.R.P.
Center for Practice Innovations

Lisa B. Dixon, M.D., M.P.H.
Center for Practice Innovations and Columbia University

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INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to this resource book

This resource book is designed for you if you have had mental health problems and you are now considering finding a job, you have already decided to find a job, or you already have a job in the general workforce. Finding a part-time or full-time job in the general workforce—a job not set aside for people with disabilities—is known as *competitive employment*. This resource book is designed to help you think about working and guide you before, during and/or after your competitive employment job search. It will also help you move your life in a meaningful direction.

The resource book is based on the principles and practices of effective employment services that help people seek work independently. This resource book does not recommend lengthy pre-work activities, because they have not been shown to help people find competitive employment.

Instead, this is an *action-oriented* book, meaning that it encourages you to make thoughtful choices and then consider taking steps toward finding and keeping a job that's right for you.

Getting started—Suggestions for using this book

THIS IS YOUR RESOURCE BOOK

It is designed to help you as you strive to choose, get, and keep a job that will be meaningful to you. It can be used in individual sessions with a counselor, with an employment specialist, or with other members of your support team. You can use it during team meetings or on your own.

YOU MAY COMPLETE TOPICS AT YOUR OWN PACE

You might choose to complete a topic all at once or a bit at a time. Or you might choose to complete a topic with others during one meeting or during several meetings. There is no need to complete all of the topics in this book. Instead, you can choose the topics that you think will be most helpful to your needs. What is most important is to use this resource book in a way that works for you.

THIS RESOURCE BOOK COVERS MANY TOPICS

Some of the topics will be very important to you. You may want to discuss these in greater detail with a counselor, employment specialist, or other

people who support you. Bringing these topics up in conversations with people you trust, including mental health professionals, will probably help you get the most out of this book.

YOU CAN START WHEREVER YOU WANT

Once you read this introduction, you might look over the topics listed at the beginning of the book to decide which sections might be most helpful to you now. For example, you might choose the topic “My decision to work.” This topic will help you to think about your desire to add employment to your life. Or perhaps you have already applied for a job and are preparing for an interview. “Preparing for the job interview—The basics” might be your starting point. If you are working with a counselor or employment specialist, he or she may also have suggestions about topics that may be helpful to you.

PEOPLE DO THINGS AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS

This resource book acknowledges that people go about a job search in different ways and at different rates. This book need not slow you down nor pressure you in this process. Instead, we hope that this book will be a resource for you as you go about choosing, getting, and keeping a job that is right for you.

Sections and Topics

This resource book is organized into 32 important topics, which are divided into three sections. It also offers appendixes with practical guidance and examples to help you with important issues. You may choose to go through some of the topics in order. Or you may prefer to focus on just a few topics and spend more time on those topics. Keep in mind that you don't need to go through this resource book from beginning to end. Instead, you may pick and choose the topics that fit your needs at this moment.

This book covers the following sections and topics:

SECTION 1—PRIOR TO JOB SEARCH

- My decision to work
- Talking with family and supports about work
- My hopes and concerns about working
- My personal strengths and job preferences
- Important things to consider about my mental health
- Things to consider if I am using substances like drugs and alcohol
- What if I have had legal problems?

- Important things to consider if I am a parent
- What if I have physical health issues?
- Medications and side effects
- Finding work without a high school diploma
- Working and my benefits
- Work and my schedule preferences
- Figuring out what I would like to do for work

SECTION 2—DURING JOB SEARCH

- Developing my specific work goal
- Developing a plan and finding a job
- Applying for a job
- Disclosure and deciding what to say about my background
- Preparing for the job interview—The basics
- Preparing for the job interview—Answering questions and asking questions
- How do I explain gaps in my work history? Or having several brief jobs? Or being an older worker?
- What to do when I'm offered a job—Talking about a start date and pay
- What are reasonable accommodations, and what's the best way to request one?

SECTION 3—AFTER GETTING A JOB

- Dealing with my concerns when I'm starting a new job
- Transportation to and from work
- Talking with people on my first few days of the job
- Important considerations for the first month of a new job
- Contacting supports when the job becomes challenging
- Workplace protections—What are my rights as a worker?
- Talking with employers about getting a promotion or a raise
- How do I know if I want to end my job? And how do I appropriately end a job?
- Planning for my next job and/or developing a career path

APPENDIXES

- A** Basics of benefits counseling
- B** Sample cover letters
- C** Sample resumes
- D** Sample job applications
- E** Interview tips
- F** Sample thank you letter
- G** Sample scripts and a letter requesting an accommodation
- H** Starting the new job and preparing for the first day of work
- I** Using supports
- J** Sample letters of resignation

WORKING THROUGH A TOPIC

Each topic has three parts:

- **Important information:** Each topic contains several “Important Information” sections that introduce the topic and provide important facts for thought and discussion.
- **Personalized activity:** After many of the information sections, you will be presented an activity to help you think through the information and how it applies to you. Activities may consist of worksheets, checklists, questions for consideration, or other exercises.
- **Next steps:** These sections allow you to decide your next steps for moving closer to your goal.

Suggestions for practitioners

Practitioners’ feedback on earlier versions of this resource book yielded the following suggestions:

REVIEW THE CONTENTS OF THE RESOURCE BOOK

We recommend taking some time to review the contents of the resource book so that you can familiarize yourself with the topic areas that are covered, as well as the types of activities that are available for the job seeker. The more familiar you are with the contents of this resource book, the better you will be able to guide and direct people to sections that are most relevant to them.

TALK WITH PEOPLE ABOUT HOW THEY WANT TO USE THE RESOURCE BOOK

Engaging them in choosing how to partner with you in its use is an important aspect of recovery. Here are some common ways to use the resource book:

- People may want to keep the resource book, work through some topic areas and exercises with you, and work through other topics or exercises on their own.
- People may want to have an initial conversation with you and then use the resource book largely on their own time but bring back to you their completed materials, exercises, and thoughts for discussion.
- People may want you to keep the resource book in your office. Then, when they come in for a face-to-face meeting, you can review topics or pieces of the resource book together.

USE EFFECTIVE JOB-SEARCHING PRACTICES

If you are a practitioner, we recommend that regardless of your role (e.g., counselor or employment specialist), you become familiar with basic job-searching practices if you are not already familiar with them. Further, if you are an employment specialist and expect to spend time searching for or developing jobs, we recommend that you learn the effective job-searching practices and how to implement them. For example, face-to-face contacts with employers are critical for success. Another effective job-searching practice is to develop relationships with potential employers over multiple visits and then foster those relationships by staying in contact. More information about effective job-searching practices can be found on Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center's website at www.dartmouth.edu/~ips/. A video about job development is also available from Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center via YouTube, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0B8x4yEcDo&list=ECFBCDC9B8FD6C0434&index=2.

ADOPT THE INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT (IPS) APPROACH

The IPS model of supported employment is an evidence-based approach to help people with diagnosed mental illness to find their own jobs via competitive employment. The IPS method has been found to improve rates of competitive employment for this group of people. The eight principles of the IPS approach are as follows:

- **Each person's preference is central:** Research suggests that when people work in the types of jobs and settings that they have selected, they are more likely to achieve satisfaction and success in the workplace. A person's individual preferences drive the process of the job search.
- **Zero exclusion:** Research and experience have shown that people with a mental disorder can find satisfaction and success in the workplace regardless of their level of psychiatric impairment (or symptoms), use of drugs and alcohol, and/or behavioral issues. Zero exclusion means that anyone, regardless of illness severity, can expect to find support from job-finding services when choosing to look for competitive employment. No one is excluded. This method of helping people focuses on matching people's skills and strengths with the specific jobs they want to do.
- **Benefits counseling:** Many people in recovery rely on government benefits for both their income and their general medical and psychiatric care. The IPS method focuses on providing assistance in managing these benefits so that going to work will make good sense on several fronts, including financial health, physical health, and mental health.

- **Competitive employment is the goal:** The IPS method is based on finding jobs in the standard workforce that pay at least the minimum wage and that are open to anyone. Piece-rate work and sheltered employment are not encouraged and are, in fact, the opposite of the employment experiences that this model stresses.
- **Mental health services and vocational services are integrated:** The IPS method for successful job matches involves creating a treatment team that partners practitioners who do not provide employment services (e.g., nurses and psychiatrists) with practitioners who do (e.g., employment specialists).
- **Time-unlimited follow-along support:** This approach to helping people move toward recovery by finding gainful employment recognizes the importance of support, technical assistance, and plain old help. IPS programs offer individualized job support that is based on the person's preferences and needs. Support is available as long as help is needed. The frequency of visits and the intensity of the help are dependent on what the person wants and needs at any time.
- **Staff systematically develops relationships with employers according to each person's choice:** Employment staff who provide intensive IPS services develop relationships with potential employers and develop a network of relationships with multiple employers. They listen closely to the needs of potential employers and try to match available jobs with people's preferences.
- **Rapid job search:** Research has proven that programs that help people move toward employment right away have better employment outcomes. In the IPS model, as soon as people express that they would like to find a job, they are engaged in activity toward that goal. Programs that progress more slowly have lower employment rates compared with those that begin individual job searches immediately.

USE THE RESOURCE BOOK WITH INDIVIDUALS IN 1:1 SETTINGS

This resource book is designed to be used—and we believe it will be the most helpful—as a tool to support your work with individuals while you are practicing the evidence-based IPS approach. It is not intended for use as an intervention approach for groups, and we caution against trying to use this book as a group curriculum. That said, you may wish to bring in or copy parts of the book to share during group sessions. This may be an efficient way to help people learn about this resource while you are trying to engage and inspire them to consider activities that lead to an individual job search. In other words, it is possible to introduce the resource book in a group setting

as a time-limited engagement strategy that will lead to 1:1, focused vocational efforts with people in your program.

DO NOT USE THE RESOURCE BOOK AS A STAND-ALONE INTERVENTION

Our hope is that this resource book is helpful in *supporting* your work with people who are pursuing a job. This book is not intended as a stand-alone intervention, and it should not slow down the process of helping people find competitive employment. Instead, it is designed as an adjunct resource to support your ongoing IPS practices. We recommend that you consider suggesting topics or exercises in the resource book that you think are the most relevant for people at specific points in time, with the goal of supporting their most immediate needs related to finding, getting, and keeping a competitive job. In other words, we encourage you to skip to specific parts of the resource book that are helpful to you and, most importantly, to each person with whom you are working.

Prior To Job Search



TOPIC:

My decision to work



*Choose a job you LOVE, and you will never
have to WORK a day in your life.*

CONFUCIUS (BC 551–BC 479)
Chinese Philosopher

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Why Do You Want to Work?

People choose to join the workforce for many reasons. These can include making money, taking pride in the status of being employed, feeling that having a job enables them to make a difference in their community, and furthering their personal recovery. There is no one “correct” reason to go to work; many of us have several reasons. Knowing what is contributing to your desire to work can help you to make a good decision about whether to start looking for a job. We provide you with an exercise below to help you think about this.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Why Do You Want to Work?

Here is a list of reasons that people might choose to explain why getting a job is important. Please choose all that are true for you and add others that may not be listed.

- Making money
- Valuing the status of being employed
- Feeling that I'm making a difference in my community
- Being with other people and feeling less isolated
- Feeling more like everyone else
- Pleasing family or friends
- Giving me something to do
- Believing that I'm on the road to my recovery
- Believing that going to work is more enjoyable than going to a mental health program
- Having an active role in my community
- Helping to reduce stigma by being a living example of success
- Having an opportunity to use my skills and talents
- Other reasons: _____
- _____
- _____

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Pros and cons of working in a regular job

Every decision has its positives (pros) and negatives (cons). Even the best decisions usually have some cons as well as pros! Identifying your pros and cons to finding a job will provide valuable information to you. The exercise below can help you to think about this.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Pros and cons of working in a regular job

Please list the pros and cons of working and the pros and cons of not working, as you see them now.

PROS of working:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

CONS of working:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

PROS of not working:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

CONS of not working:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

MY DECISION TO WORK



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

How culture might affect your decisions about working

Culture is a word for all of the thoughts, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions of an ethnic, religious, or social group. People sometimes see themselves as belonging to several different cultures. You might want to think about your own cultural background and whether your beliefs affect your decisions about working.

Whether you choose to get a job, and the type of job you try to get, may

or may not be related to your own cultural values. The exercise below encourages you to think about how different parts of your culture may affect your thinking about work.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

How culture might affect your decisions about working

Below is a list of statements designed to increase your awareness of the connection between your cultural, family, and religious background and your thoughts about working. Think about each statement and circle **YES** or **NO**.

My religious beliefs affect the decisions I make about whether to look for a job, which days I could work, or what kind of job I will take.	YES	NO
My preferred language affects the jobs that I will consider or whom I want to talk with about jobs.	YES	NO
The customs and beliefs of my family affect how I feel about getting a job or what kind of job I will take.	YES	NO
My sexual orientation affects how I feel about getting a job in certain environments or industries, what kind of job I will take, or which employer I will work for.	YES	NO
My gender affects whom I'd like help from as I look for a job or whom I will talk with about whether I want to work.	YES	NO
My ethnic background affects how I feel about getting a job.	YES	NO



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “My decision to work,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Review the pros and cons that you came up with about work, and talk

with someone who is supportive, ideally an employment specialist or counselor, about your decision.

- Choose one of your **YES** responses above and explore it further by talking with someone about your cultural values and how they may affect your decisions about working.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps. With those and the steps outlined above, what would you like to do next?

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Talking with family and supports about work

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Your treatment team and other supports

The support of other people can be very helpful in choosing, getting, and keeping a job. These people include all of your treatment team members and perhaps some family and friends. You may want to think about which family members or friends can provide support and encouragement.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Your treatment team and other supports

Whose support would be helpful to you? Whom would you like to approach to ask for support? They may be family members or friends. Supports may be one person or several.

Please list the person or people you might want to approach:

- _____
- _____
- _____

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Conversations with others about your desire to work

Your friends and family members can be some of the best people to root for you. They may be very supportive of your interest in working. And they may be happy if you asked them for support in your quest to get a job and become successful. On the other hand, your friends and family may be concerned about how things will go for you when you start working. They might be concerned about what will happen with your government benefits if you

start working, or they may worry that your psychiatric symptoms might get worse with the stress of a new job. Talking with them about these issues and their thoughts and feelings about your working is probably an important conversation to have. However, the choice to have this discussion is up to you.

Talking with others may be a good way to clarify your thinking about work and to find out who will be there to support you as you move ahead with finding a job. By thinking about all points of view, your decisions will become clearer and stronger. If you haven't yet had these kinds of conversations, you may want to think about whom to speak with and how to start that conversation.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Conversations with others about your desire to work

If you do not know how your friends and family feel about your working, and if their views are important to you, please think about whom you'd like to talk with about this. Whose opinions do you value, and what do you want to ask them about your working?

People who know you and whose opinions you value concerning your getting a job:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In the space below, write down a plan for when and how you might contact the people you listed above to discuss your interest in finding a job.

In the spaces below please list the people you've talked with about finding a job. If they were mainly positive about your going to work, circle the **+**. If they were mainly negative about your going to work, circle the **-**. If they were about as positive as they were negative, or if they didn't seem to have an opinion, circle the **=**.

PERSON'S NAME:	CIRCLE (POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, OR EQUAL)		
	+	-	=
	+	-	=
	+	-	=
	+	-	=

Overall, what kinds of things did people say about your going to work? Below, please write down some of what you heard.

Thinking about what your friends and family have said, how do you think they feel about your working? Please explain your answer.

What do you think about their feelings? Do you agree? Do you disagree?
What are your thoughts and reactions?



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Things you might say to family and friends about working

Finding support from others can be very helpful when making your way in the work world. Although some people can be very helpful and supportive, other people in your life may worry and have trouble supporting your idea to find a job.

Below are some examples of typical conversations that you might have with others as you begin your search for work.

Friend or family member: “You know, I really am concerned about your getting a job. I’m worried that it will be too stressful for you and that you won’t be able to handle it. Working probably isn’t a good idea.”

You: “I can appreciate your concern about my well-being. The team at my program and I have discussed my interest in working, and I have learned that I can get a lot of support in finding and keeping a job. We have put together a plan so that working will be a positive thing in my life and I will be able to move ahead with my recovery and go to work like everyone else.”

* * *

Friend or family member: “It doesn’t pay for you to go to work; you will stop getting your monthly check.”

You: “A lot of people say that. The good news is that my counselor and I have mapped out a plan that will allow me to work and still receive some of my check. At the end of the month I will have almost twice as much money as I was getting in just my benefit check. We double-checked this with the Social

Security office. To top it off, the counselors at the program are going to continue to help me manage my wages and government benefits for as long as I need. Learning to manage my benefits while earning a paycheck is going to be a challenge for me. I am happy to have all the help I can get.”

OR

You: “I know that you have concerns about what will happen to my benefits if I get a job. I worry, too, and that is why I have been working with the benefits experts at my program. I learned that the Social Security Administration has all kinds of incentive programs to encourage people receiving benefits to go back to work. People almost always come out ahead if they work. It isn’t like it used to be.”

* * *

Friend or family member: “That’s great—you are going to go out, earn a paycheck, and come out ahead—but what happens if you lose the job after your checks are reduced or gone altogether?”

You: “That is actually one of the programs. Nowadays, all you have to do if you lose a job is go down to the Social Security office and tell them, and your check starts coming the next month, kind of like a safety net.”

* * *

Friend or family member: “You had better be careful that you don’t earn too much money, or you will lose all of your benefits. Work might not be worth it.”

You: “Work is very important to me and my recovery. I know that if I stay on my benefits forever, I might never live comfortably or live like other healthy people. Right now I am using my benefits to help me get back to being independent, and I look forward to eventually doing without them. I don’t like being unemployed, and I want to enjoy a better quality of life than I have now being on benefits. I want to rejoin the world.”

* * *

Friend or family member: “I know that you tried to work a few years ago, and it didn’t go well. Why do you think things would be different this time? I don’t know if this is a good idea.”

You: “The good news is that at my program I am working with a team that is

going to support me to help things go better this time. As a matter of fact, I would like you to be a part of my support team and meet the others who are on it.”

OR

You: “I am building a team of people who are important to me and who support my plans to return to work. Work is very important to my recovery, and I would really like to have you on my team.”



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Things you might say to family and friends about working

Think about what you might say to family and friends if they bring up specific concerns or topics about work. Some of the concerns mentioned above may sound familiar and match concerns raised by people close to you. Now please think about how you might respond to them. Write down your ideas below.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Talking with family and supports about work,” and the personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- If you do not know how your friends and family feel about your working, and if their opinions are important to you, you may want to ask them what they think.
- Approach one or more people (family or friends) and ask for their support concerning your desire to work.

You may have additional ideas about your next steps. Remember, this is an exercise to help identify people who will support you and to think about ways to talk with them. It is not an exercise to seek permission from others about going to work. It is to find support for your decision about going to work.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

My hopes and concerns about working

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Identifying your hopes

We all have dreams and hopes about the future. Our hopes help to motivate us and move us in a positive direction. This is a good time to identify your hopes about finding employment. Do you have a vision of what working will be like for you? How will it affect your life? How will it affect how you feel about yourself? What will be different?

You might want to buy things that you cannot currently afford. For example, some people want to get a job so they can buy a new TV or computer or even a car. Perhaps you want to earn more money so that you have enough to go on a date or see a movie with friends. These are all fine reasons for wanting a job. Think about what things are most important to you and how getting a job may help you achieve some of your goals.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Identifying your hopes

Please take a moment to envision yourself successfully working in the community. How does the “working you” look and feel? Use any form of creativity (words, art, etc.) to share this vision. For example, you could consider drawing a picture that reflects the positive changes that working will bring to your life.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Identifying and addressing your concerns

People often wonder whether finding and keeping a job will be possible and whether that job will be satisfying. Answering these questions means thinking about your concerns and worries about working. Doubts about finding and getting a job can lower a person's confidence. A person might give up the job search too early or not start at all, or a person might give up at the first sign of difficulty. Identifying and resolving your concerns about working is an important step in your success. Below is an exercise to help you to think about this.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Identifying and addressing your concerns

Below are some common concerns people may have about working. Please review each item and check the ones that apply to you.

What concerns you? What makes you think you won't be able to find and keep a job that you will like?

- I haven't worked before—what would I tell an employer?
- I tried to work before, and it didn't go well—why would it be different this time?
- I have no skills.
- I don't want to lose my benefits (such as Supplemental Security Income [SSI] and Medicaid).
- No one will hire a person with mental illness.
- I've had legal problems, and that's going to be hard to overcome.
- Other people in my life—family, friends, mental health staff, my doctor—don't want me to work.
- My current vocational rehabilitation program is very comfortable for me.
Will a regular job be too stressful?
- What am I going to talk about when people at work start a conversation with me?
- What do I say if people ask me about my previous jobs and I haven't worked for a while?
- What if I get symptoms at work?
- What if I have a relapse?
- I like the mental health program that I'm attending.
I would miss the staff and the friends I've made there and don't want to leave them.
- I think I use drugs and alcohol in a way that will get me in trouble at work.
- How will I feel if the job does not work out or last?

Other concerns that I have: _____

Now you can begin to address your most important concerns and questions. For each concern that you have identified, it may be helpful to find out more information and to discuss the concern with a counselor, employment specialist, psychiatrist, or other team member, including a friend or acquaintance and a family member you trust and with whom you feel comfortable.

Thinking about the concerns that you identified in the section above, please write down your thoughts about how you might address them. You might talk about this with people you trust.

While you are considering addressing your concerns and going back to work, please think about the following questions. Your answers may help you to decide whether it is time to find a job that's right for you.

If you went back to work today, how would that be? What would be different in your life?

If you waited a bit—say you went back to work one month from now—how would that be? What would be different in your life?

What would your life be like if you decided not to try to get a job?



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “My hopes and concerns about working,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- For each concern that you identified, you may want to find out more information and to discuss the concern with your counselor, a friend or acquaintance, and family members you trust and feel comfortable with.
- Moving ahead with finding a job.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

My personal strengths and job preferences



*I do KNOW one thing about me: I don't
measure myself by others' expectations
or let others define my WORTH.*

SONIA SOTOMAYOR (1954–present)
Supreme Court Justice

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Strengths you can bring to a new job

Everyone has strengths, yet sometimes mental health problems can keep people from recognizing or remembering their strengths and what they have to offer an employer. This is a good time for you to become aware of all that you offer—you may be surprised by how many strengths and skills you discover. Many people have found success when selecting a job that will use their strengths and that matches the types of things that they do well.

Strengths include

- Personal qualities and values, for example, flexibility, resiliency, respect toward others, motivation to work, and self-confidence.
- Interests, which are things that you enjoy doing and things that excite you. Examples may be reading literature, listening to music, and exercising.

- Skills, which are tasks that you do well. They may be general in nature, such as solving problems and managing your time well. Or they may be job specific, such as computer programming and driving.

Below is an exercise to help you to think about your strengths. Better understanding your strengths can help inform your job search as you look for a job that best matches your values, interests, and skills.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Strengths you can bring to a new job

As you review this list of personal strengths, ask family members, friends, and other important people in your life for their opinions about your strengths. They may see strengths in you that you don't see in yourself.

Below is a list of strengths that may or may not describe you. Please check the strengths that apply to you.

Personal qualities and values:

- Friendly
- Respectful of others
- Highly motivated to work
- Resilient
- Confident
- Contributes to team effort
- Open to change
- Flexible
- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Good listener
- Kind
- Likes doing a job well
- Other personal qualities and values (list): _____

Interests:

<input type="checkbox"/> Computers
<input type="checkbox"/> Art
<input type="checkbox"/> Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Dance
<input type="checkbox"/> Sports (specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading literature
<input type="checkbox"/> Current events
<input type="checkbox"/> Helping others
<input type="checkbox"/> Painting or drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Building or making things
<input type="checkbox"/> Fixing things
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors and nature
<input type="checkbox"/> Animals
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizing things
<input type="checkbox"/> Movies
<input type="checkbox"/> Theater or acting
<input type="checkbox"/> Working with your hands
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal beauty aids
<input type="checkbox"/> Other interests (list): _____

Skills:

<input type="checkbox"/> Solving problems
<input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming creatively
<input type="checkbox"/> Managing time well
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicating with others
<input type="checkbox"/> Taking public transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Driving

- Working with computers
- Writing
- Accounting and bookkeeping
- Working with my hands
- Building things
- Inspiring others
- Reading
- Organizing things
- Other work-related skills (list): _____

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Using past work experiences to guide your search

Some people may have worked in the past, and some may not have. Some people may have had positive experiences with work in the past, and some may not. What matters now is that you are interested in finding and keeping work that is meaningful to you. For this section, we define past work experiences as any paid work or nonpaid work in which you had a specific job and responsibilities to an employer or business of some kind. This experience can include volunteer or education-related positions.

If you have worked, talking about your work experiences with your counselor or another supportive person would be helpful. What have you liked and disliked about past jobs? You may have learned a lot from the problems and the achievements that you had in past jobs. When things went well, why did they go well? When things went poorly, why did they go poorly, and what would you like to do differently this time?

It may be useful to identify the qualities that you will want in a job, and one way to do this is to learn about the qualities of past jobs that you liked and disliked. Below is an exercise to help you to think about this.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Using past work experiences to guide your search

You may want to complete this activity if you have worked in the past and would like to use that experience to guide your current planning. As stated above, for this activity we define past work experiences as any paid work or

nonpaid work in which you had a specific job and responsibilities to an employer or business of some kind. Past work experiences can include volunteer or education-related positions.

If you have not worked in the past, skip this activity.

For each job that you have had, please write down

1. Job type or title:
• _____
• _____
2. Employer:
• _____
• _____
3. How long did you work?
• _____
• _____
4. Why did the job end?
• _____
• _____
5. What are some positives about the work experience?
• _____
• _____
6. What was your favorite part of the job?
• _____
• _____
7. What are some negatives about the work experience?
• _____
• _____
8. What did you like least about that job?
• _____
• _____

Now answer the following:

1. Which job did you like best and why?

2. Which job would you not want again and why?

3. What lessons have you learned from past experiences for your current planning?

Some people have already discussed past work experiences with their team members. If you have not already done so, you may find it helpful to discuss this information with your counselor, employment specialist, or others on your support team. This information can help you with the decisions that you will be making about work.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “My personal strengths and job preferences,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Review your list of personal strengths, ask others their opinions about your strengths, and add those strengths to your list.
- If you have worked in the past and have completed the activity in this topic called “Using past work experiences to guide your search,” discussing this information with your counselor and other supports may be helpful. This information can help you with the decisions that you will be making about work.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Important things to consider about my mental health



It doesn't MATTER what you're trying to accomplish. It's all a matter of discipline. I was determined to DISCOVER what life held for me beyond the inner-city streets.

WILMA GOLDEAN RUDOLPH (1940–1994)
American Athlete and Olympic Champion

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

The impact of your mental health issues

Knowing about your psychiatric symptoms and their possible impact on finding and keeping a job will help you achieve your work and career goals. Different types of symptoms can affect a person's feelings, mood, and thinking. Understanding how your psychiatric symptoms might affect you while you are working is important to finding the right job. For instance, for some people who experience depression, the sadness and hopelessness they feel are so severe that they are unable to pursue work. However, for others with depression, work may be welcome because the focus it requires might improve their mood and self-esteem.

Understanding the symptoms you are having or have had in the past will help prepare you for dealing with them if they arise while you are pursuing or performing a job. It is also important to understand any symptoms that

you are having now and how they might affect your employment efforts. Exercises below will help you identify which symptoms are most bothersome, how your symptoms may affect getting and keeping a job, and ways you can manage your symptoms at work.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

The impact of your mental health issues

Think about any psychiatric symptoms you may experience that may affect finding or keeping a job. If any psychiatric symptoms have bothered you over the past month, please list them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do these symptoms affect your day-to-day life?

How might these symptoms affect your ability to perform the basic duties of the kind of job that you are looking for?

What have you found that is most helpful to you in managing these symptoms?

If you would like to give more thought to the topic of how you manage or maintain your wellness, including your mental health, many resources are available to you, and you can access many of them, including the ones listed below, on your own. If you are working with a counselor or employment specialist, you could also talk with him or her about the following resources:

- Wellness Recovery Action Plans have been used by many people for dealing with mental health and other kinds of health challenges. For more information, you can go to the following website: www.mentalhealthrecovery.com.
- *Wellness Self-Management* and *Wellness Self-Management Plus* workbooks can help you help yourself. These workbooks can be accessed at the following website: practiceinnovations.org/CPIInitiatives/WellnessSelfManagementWSM/tabid/189/Default.aspx.
- There are also several potentially helpful resources for managing your wellness that were developed by Dr. Patricia Deegan and her team. You can find these at www.patdeegan.com.

How might you explore this topic further?



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Important things to consider about my mental health,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Talk with someone you trust, such as your employment specialist, counselor, psychiatrist, or other team members, about the ways that your psychiatric symptoms may or may not affect the type of job you want.
- Explore the websites mentioned above for more information about managing your mental health and wellness.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Things to consider if I am using substances like drugs and alcohol

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

The impact of your substance use issues

When thinking about using substances, especially illegal substances such as marijuana or cocaine, please keep in mind that many employers require drug tests for all job candidates. In addition to basic blood or urine tests, many employers are now using hair follicle testing because it can indicate whether someone has used illicit drugs within the past year. Although this section is not meant to discourage you from applying for a job, please be prepared for the fact that you may be tested for drug use.

Understanding how using drugs or alcohol may hurt your chances of getting or keeping a job means learning about the pros and cons of each activity and making informed choices. It is important for you to understand what types of substance use activities may affect your ability to get a job or keep a job. Below is an exercise to help you think about how substance use may or may not play a role in your employment.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

The impact of your substance use issues

If you currently use drugs or alcohol, what's your pattern of use? In other words, how often do you use, what substances do you prefer, with whom, and in what situation or setting?

If you currently use drugs or alcohol, how do you think your drug or alcohol use will negatively affect your job performance or ability to keep a specific job?

If you currently use drugs or alcohol, how do you think your drug or alcohol use will *positively* affect your job performance or ability to keep a specific job?

Will you be able to pass a drug test? (Circle)	YES	NO
--	------------	-----------

If you answered **NO** to the question above, you may wish to discuss this with someone you trust and who is supportive of your getting a job, including your counselor or employment specialist if you have one.

What kinds of jobs do you think you might be able to do while still using drugs or alcohol?

What kinds of jobs do you think you would *not* be able to do while still using drugs or alcohol?

Are there jobs that you might like and be able to do if you used drugs or alcohol less frequently?

Please take some time to think about the following question: What is your plan for managing your use so that you can be successful at work? Write your thoughts below.

How might you explore this topic further?

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Things to consider if I am using substances like drugs and alcohol,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next step:

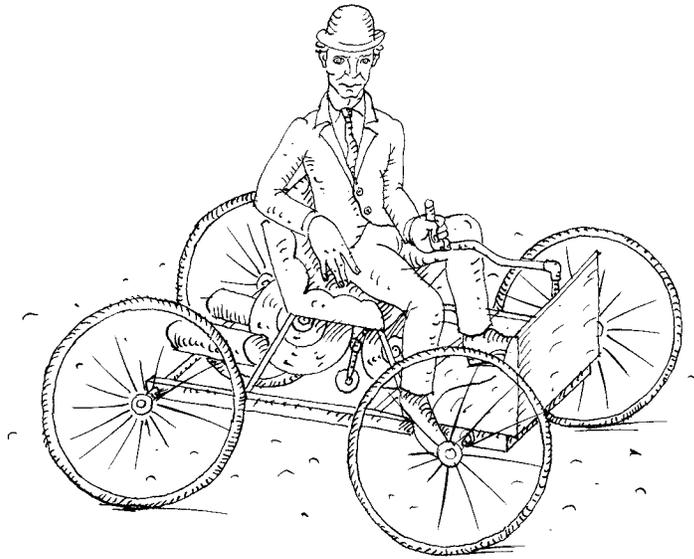
- Talk with someone you trust from your treatment team about your substance use and how it relates to getting and keeping the type of job you want.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

What if I have had legal problems?



*It is all **ONE** to me if a man comes
from Sing Sing or Harvard.
We hire a **MAN**, not his history.*

HENRY FORD (1863–1947)
American Industrialist

People who have a criminal record or other legal issues can and do find jobs. Many people who have been arrested, been in jail, or had other involvement with the criminal justice system are not sure how these experiences will affect their job search. Some people feel ashamed or embarrassed that they have a legal history. Although having a legal history presents some challenges, finding and keeping a job are still possible.

State and federal laws protect the employment rights of people who have had legal problems. There are also many effective strategies and programs to help people become gainfully employed. Employment specialists receive training and have access to expert knowledge about helping people with a criminal history. Also, it's a good idea to take the time to research what documents you will need and what steps you will need to take before looking for work. This section covers some of this process. By understanding what you need to do, you will have a much better chance of succeeding on the path to employment.


IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Your legal record

It is common for people to be confused about what is and isn't on their legal record.

One of your first steps is to request a copy of your criminal record, also commonly referred to as a Record of Arrest and Prosecution or "rap sheet." Anyone who has ever been arrested and fingerprinted has a rap sheet. Rap sheets, just like any other paperwork, can have errors, and it is important to check your rap sheet so you can get any possible errors corrected to prevent them from coming up during your job search.

Knowing what is on your legal record will help you prepare to talk about this information in a job interview. For example, someone who was in prison might say, "Yes, I was in prison for something I regret doing when I was younger and hanging out with a bad crowd, but that's behind me now."

There are several ways to obtain a copy of your rap sheet. Every state has a criminal records office. If you have a counselor or employment specialist, you can talk with him or her about requesting a copy of your rap sheet. You might ask for help by saying, "I have no idea what an employer might be able to see about my criminal record. Can you help me get my rap sheet?" Or, "I'd like to get my history of arrests to make sure it's accurate. Can you please help me contact the state's criminal justice services to get this?"

If you happen to live in New York State, you may access the Division of Criminal Justice Services website at www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/ojis/recordreview.htm, or you may request an informational packet about obtaining a copy of your criminal record by calling (518) 485-7675 or writing to

*DCJS Record Review Unit
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Alfred E. Smith Building
80 South Swan St.
Albany, NY 12210*

In New York, you can also access a helpful document that contains information about criminal history background checks on the New York State Office of Mental Health's website at www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/fingerprint/need_to_know.html.


PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Your legal record

If you've been arrested (which means taken into custody by law enforce-

ment), convicted of a misdemeanor or felony (which means convicted in court by a judge or jury), or incarcerated (which means time spent in jail or prison), do you know what information is on your rap sheet? If you don't know what's on your rap sheet, you might consider contacting your state's criminal records office.

Take time to identify any and all convictions that you have received. If there are any convictions that you are not sure about, or if you need additional information from the criminal justice system, find out who can help you access that information. Please list any convictions you may have below.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Legal issues and job applications

Many job applications have a section that asks applicants about their legal history or involvement with the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, what is and isn't on your legal record can be very complicated and confusing. Be sure to have accurate information about your criminal history before applying for jobs. If you don't have this information yet, you can request a copy of your rap sheet (see the sections above for more information).

In many states, such as New York, it is illegal for an employer to ask (on a job application or in an interview) about any arrests you have had that did not result in a conviction. However, an employer is allowed to ask about any misdemeanor and/or felony conviction(s) you may have on your criminal record.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Legal issues and job applications

Talk with a counselor or employment specialist about how you might complete a job application that is accurate and has the best possible wording to improve your chances of getting a job interview. Write your ideas down in the space below.

Possible answers:

“On April 30, 2007, I was convicted of [insert offense here] and sentenced to [insert sentence here]—not something I am proud of. While I was away, I worked doing [insert here] and/or studied [insert here]. I am now looking to get back on track and move ahead with my life. I have grown and want to join the workforce.”

OR

“In 2005 I was arrested for [insert here], convicted, and sentenced to [insert here]. At the time of my offense, my judgment was impaired, and I was not mentally well. I have since found good treatment and have built a support network. I very much want to prove myself to you and your company, and I have truly learned from my experiences. Because of my history, any employer who hires me may qualify for the Federal Bonding Program. I have the information here if you are interested.”

OR

“In 2005 I was arrested for [insert here], convicted, and sentenced to [insert here]. The person who committed that offense is no longer here. I am a different person now and want very much to start working and getting on with my future. I am hoping that you will consider hiring my future and not my past. Because of my history, any employer who hires me will qualify for the Federal Bonding Program. I have the information right here if you are interested. Or you can go to their website, which I’ve written on this piece of paper for you. You can see it right here, it’s www.labor.ny.gov/businessservices/services/fbp.shtm.”

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Legal issues and what to say during job interviews**

Please write in the space below some of the ways that you may talk about your conviction(s) with prospective employers during a job interview. For example, you might say something like, “The person who committed those crimes is not in this room. I am now a different person and ready to move on with my life.” Or “Yes, I was in prison for something that I regret I did when I was hanging out with a bad crowd, but that’s behind me now.” You may want to talk with others on your support team, such as your counselor or employment specialist, to come up with ideas together. Give examples of how you have changed your life and what you are doing differently.

When you need to talk about legal issues with a potential employer, what will you say about your legal history? Practice your response below.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Programs that can help if you have had legal problems

PROGRAMS:

Many states have special programs and strategies designed to help people with criminal records. To find out about programs in your area, contact your state's department of labor. For example, if you live in New York, the New York State Department of Labor office can send you a booklet called *The Prime Objective*, which has information to help people with legal histories return to work (or access the booklet at the Department of Labor's website at www.labor.ny.gov/formsdocs/pubs/pdfs/es302.pdf). The booklet covers employment-related topics from before being released through getting and keeping a job.

AGENCIES:

Some states also have agencies that can assist you with many of the topics discussed in this section of the Employment Resource Book. For example, the Legal Action Center (LAC) is a resource for New York State residents. The LAC can help you obtain a copy of your rap sheet and "clean up" or correct any mistakes that may be on it. The LAC website, www.lac.org, also provides many free, helpful, and easy-to-understand publications on topics such as reviewing your rap sheet for errors and taking steps to correct them, obtaining a certificate of rehabilitation, and requesting a "disposition slip" for any convictions you have. All of these documents are worthwhile to have before you start your job search, and some of them are required before you start working. For more information about these and other resources the LAC offers, New York residents can also call the LAC office: (212) 243-1313.

INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYERS:

Just as there are laws to protect people with legal histories to ensure that they are treated fairly, there are laws that provide hiring incentives to companies that hire people with legal histories. The Federal Bonding Program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit are two such hiring incentives to motivate employers to provide employment opportunities to people with criminal records. One protects the potential employer against the risk of hiring someone with criminal justice system involvement; the other provides a monetary incentive in the form of a tax credit. More information about the Federal Bonding Program is available at www.bonds4jobs.com, and New York residents may visit the New York State Department of Labor’s website: www.labor.ny.gov/businessservices/services/fbp.shtm. To find out more about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, New York residents may access www.labor.ny.gov/businessservices/edsu/edsu%20wotc.shtm.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Programs that can help if you have had legal problems

Think about whether any of the programs or strategies above might be helpful to you. For example, do you want to order and read The Prime Objective? Are you interested in learning more about the Federal Bonding Program? You may wish to share your ideas with your counselor or employment specialist if you are working with one.

Write down which of the programs or strategies above you would like to learn more about.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “What if I have had legal problems?” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- If you've been incarcerated or convicted of a misdemeanor or felony, and you don't know what the following two items are, you may want to speak with someone on your support team, such as a counselor or employment specialist, about how to find this information:
 1. Rap sheet (Record of Arrest and Prosecution)
 2. Information about the Federal Bonding Program or other hiring incentives
- Practice what you might say on a job application and in a job interview about your legal issues.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Important things to consider if I am a parent

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

How might being a parent affect finding and keeping a job?

If you are a parent, one of the important issues that you need to face when looking for work is how your parenting responsibilities may affect your job search. For instance, it will be important to think about whether you'll need child care and whether your role as a parent affects the specific days and hours that you want to work. You may find that you want to coordinate your work hours with the hours you want to be available to your children. Other considerations are the location of your job and how much time is needed to travel to and from it and whether your job is located near where your children spend their time while you're at work. If you are a parent, these issues and more will need your careful consideration as you look for work.

An exercise below helps you to consider which, if any, issues related to being a parent may affect finding or keeping a job.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

How might being a parent affect finding and keeping a job?

This activity is designed to help you identify how being a parent may or may not affect your ability to find and keep a job. Please list below any of your concerns about being a parent that might affect your job search and selection.

List your concerns about how being a parent may affect your job search and selection:

1.	
2.	
3.	

How might these concerns affect finding and keeping a job?

What types of jobs or specific aspects of job responsibilities may be affected by your role as a parent?

What kinds of things do you need to do to address your concerns above? For example, if you can work only certain days of the week outside of your home, how might you handle that with an employer? Or if you need child care, how might you go about finding a child care situation that's right for your children and for you?

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER IF I AM A PARENT



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Child care considerations

Whether you'll need to get child care depends on the age of your children and whether they are in school or preschool, whether you are working days or hours when your children are not in school, and whether another adult is already able to be with your children. In other words, will you need to be at

work at a time when your children would be home without an adult? It may also be important to have a backup plan for emergencies such as when your child gets sick in school while you're at work. Also, child care can be expensive. This is a topic that you may wish to further discuss with people you trust, such as your counselor, your employment specialist, other members of your treatment team, and your family.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Child care considerations

If you have child-rearing responsibilities, thinking through child care issues is important. Below is an exercise to help you think about this.

Do you have a current plan for child care if you need it when finding and keeping a job that's right for you? (Circle the best answer for you)	YES	NO
--	------------	-----------

If you answered **YES** to the question above, please write down your plan here:

If you answered **NO** to the question above, please write down your thoughts about child care and what you might do next to further explore this topic:

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Important things to consider if I am a parent,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Talk with someone you trust, including your counselor or employment specialist if you have one, about how being a parent may affect your job search, the job you choose, and your work day.
- Think further about how your role as a parent does or does not affect your ability to work or do a specific type of job.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

What if I have physical health issues?

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

How might physical health issues affect finding and keeping a job?

When it comes to finding and keeping a job, understanding your personal strengths and challenges, including your physical health, is important. Sometimes physical health issues can interfere with obtaining or keeping a job, but this is not always the case.

You need to think carefully about your own physical health issues and how those issues may or may not affect your ability to work. Health concerns may not affect one type of job but may affect a different type of job. For example, back problems might not be an issue for a job that involves moving around throughout the work day, but back problems would likely be an issue for a job that involves sitting for a long time in front of a computer or lifting heavy objects. An exercise below helps you to consider which, if any, of your physical health problems may get in the way of finding or keeping a job.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

How might physical health issues affect finding and keeping a job?

This activity is designed to help you identify any physical health issues that may or may not affect your ability to find and keep a job. These include conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, cancer, coronary heart disease, being overweight, arthritis, or having had a stroke. If you have not already done so, having a medical professional check any physical symptoms or problems would be a good idea. Some of these conditions can limit a person's stamina, strength, dexterity, mobility, or speed.

The following are my physical health issues:

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____

How do these physical health problems affect your day-to-day life?

What types of jobs or job duties may be affected by your health issues or physical condition?

Are there ways that these health problems probably *will not* affect your performance on the kind of job that you are looking for? Please explain.

What kinds of tools or accommodations will enable you to do a specific job (for example, reading glasses, a wheelchair, or having a private place to take medications)?



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “What if I have physical health issues?” Your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Think further about how your physical illness does or does not affect your ability to work or do a specific type of job.
- Talk with a medical care provider or an employment specialist about how to best take care of your physical health issues while working.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Medications and side effects

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Medication side effects and how they may affect your job performance

If you are taking medications for any condition, your medicine is meant to help reduce the symptoms you experience. For example, you may be bothered by feelings of hopelessness or depression, or you may experience frightening sights, voices, or sounds. With the right medicine, these types of symptoms may improve, or they may completely disappear. Although helpful for treating these symptoms, many medicines create different problems, called “side effects.” Understanding how side effects from medications may or may not affect your job performance will be helpful to your job search.

If you experience side effects from medications that your doctor has prescribed, do you think they will interfere with doing your job? We strongly recommend that you discuss this with your doctor, who might be able to make changes. For side effects that cause serious health issues or that really bother you, it is important to take care of these issues as soon as possible. If you are currently managing side effects, we also suggest that you think about which methods are working best for you.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Medication side effects and how they may affect your job performance

Below, please list in the left column any medication side effects that you currently experience. Then, on the right, please think about what kinds of job or job duty might be affected by this side effect.

SIDE EFFECT:	WHAT KIND OF JOB OR JOB DUTY COULD BE AFFECTED BY THIS?

Now please think about how you might manage the side effects that you experience. This includes what has been helpful for you in the past. Please write your thoughts here.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Medications and side effects,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next step:

- Talk with your treatment team about the side effects that are most troublesome to you or that might seriously affect your ability to do a job activity.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Finding work without a high school diploma



Learn to do COMMON things uncommonly well; we must always keep in mind that anything that helps fill the dinner pail is VALUABLE.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER (1864–1943)
American Scientist, Botanist, Educator, and Inventor

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Identifying jobs that do not require a high school diploma

Finding a job can be more challenging for people who have not graduated from high school. Certainly higher education can lead to increased employment opportunities as well as to a wider variety of jobs. However, many people without high school diplomas can and do find work. Most communities offer a wide range of competitive work and jobs that do not require a high school education. It may be helpful to talk with others to figure out

which jobs are available and then think about whether any of the jobs match the types of things that you want to do.

Below is an exercise to help you think more about getting a competitive job without a high school diploma.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Identifying jobs that do not require a high school diploma

It can be helpful to focus your job search on the types of jobs in your community that match your skills and interests and that do not require you to have a high school diploma. Program employment staff and vocational rehabilitation counselors (ACCES-VR in New York State, which is Adult Career and Continuing Education Services—Vocational Rehabilitation) can be helpful with this part of the job search. Employment staff often have relationships with local employers and might know of jobs already available.

Talk with your support team about which jobs in your community do not require a high school diploma. Please list those jobs below.

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____

Once you have identified possible jobs, you can prioritize them in order of the ones you like the most and the least. You can cross out the “I never want to do that” jobs. Now you can start a focused and targeted job search either by yourself or with assistance from your support team. By working with your team, you are doing what we call “networking,” which means you are talking with others who might know about job leads that fit your interests.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

High school equivalency programs

It is also important to remember that many people have a job while they work on earning their high school equivalency certifications. This means that you can earn a certificate indicating that you’ve completed

an education that is equal to obtaining a high school diploma. In fact, having a job can be a powerful motivator to complete your studies. Increasingly, many jobs require frequent and ongoing training; work combined with study outside of work hours is becoming very common. This additional training and education can lead to promotions and pay raises in your job.

No matter the reason, some people feel bad about not finishing high school and may feel self-conscious when filling out a job application. If you can indicate that you are working on your education, your job application will look more attractive to employers. They will have the impression that you are motivated and in the process of making improvements in your life.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

High school equivalency programs

If you think you would like to complete your high school education, a helpful step is to identify the programs in your community that offer this kind of service. Please keep in mind that not everyone can get a high school equivalency degree. If you are working with a counselor or employment specialist, he or she should know more about this and probably has a list of the services that are available in your community.

The following organizations offer high school equivalency programs in your community:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Once you have identified community programs that offer high school equivalency services, you might want to consider making this a part of your job search plan. For instance, you might want to set aside your search and focus on your GED. Or you may want to look for a job with fewer hours so you can study. For many people, employment is a quality-of-life issue, and increasing your education can increase the employment opportunities that will be available to you.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Finding work without a high school diploma,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Find out which jobs don't require a high school diploma and decide which ones might work for you.
- Find out about high school equivalency programs in your community.
- Determine how getting a high school equivalency certificate fits in with your job search efforts.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Working and my benefits

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

What are your current government benefits?

There are many different types of government benefits and resources that you may rely on for your income and other needs. When people talk about benefits, they are usually referring to things like income or the money they may receive each month, health insurance coverage, housing supports, food stamps, and some other specific types of benefits. If you receive benefits, the income, insurance, and any other support that you receive all work together to best support you.

Your government benefits depend on many things, such as your mental health condition, physical health issues, and income level. Knowing the details about your benefits and exactly what types of benefits you are receiving is important. When you are thinking about getting a job or changing jobs, understanding your current benefits will help you make informed choices.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

What are your current government benefits?

What government benefits are you receiving now? If you are not sure, you, your counselor, or your employment specialist can find out from your local Social Security Administration and other agencies whether you are a beneficiary. Please look at the following list and check all of those that you receive:

- SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
- SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)
- Medicaid
- Medicare
- TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
- SNAP (food stamps)
- Subsidized housing
- Veterans disability benefit

Other (please list) _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Will working affect your government benefits?

When people think about working, many questions come to mind. One important question relates to the ways that working may affect their various benefits. As stated above, benefits are extra income and resources, such as Social Security checks, Medicaid payments, or support for housing, that are provided by the U.S. government to people with disabilities. The ways that working will affect your benefits, such as the amount of money available to spend weekly or monthly, will depend on your personal situation.

It is important for you to know how getting a part-time or full-time job will affect your financial situation and your benefits. For instance, bringing in additional dollars each month may affect your income payments (e.g., SSI and SSDI) but not your housing supports. It is important to understand which of your benefits will be affected if you get a job and how. Many counselors today have formal training in benefits management as well as a broad network of counseling and expert assistance that will be available to you. If you have access to this resource book, you have access to these opportunities. For example, Appendix A contains information about working with a benefits counselor.

Some people choose to work and manage their own benefits. Others choose to work to replace their benefits with their paychecks. It is a very important matter that should be given a lot of attention by both you and your employment staff and support network. Below is an exercise to help you think about important questions and concerns related to jobs and benefits.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Will working affect your government benefits?

Here is a list of common questions that arise when people think about working and their benefits. Please check off all of the items below that you have questions about, and add others that may not be listed.

- If I start a job, will I lose my income or housing benefits?
- Where do I find help managing my benefits and my earned income?
- Who can help me find answers about my benefits?
- If I start a job, where and how do I need to report my hours worked or the amount I'm paid?
- If I leave my job, will I be able to get back any benefits that I may have given up when I took the job?
- Will some or all of my benefits (including my income, housing support, and health insurance) be affected when I get a job?
- Other _____

Do you know how getting a job might affect your benefits, such as your income payments, your housing supports, your health insurance, your food stamps, or other specific benefits? (please circle the answer that's right for you)

YES

NO

If you answered **NO** to the question above, be sure to discuss this with someone with expertise about this issue, such as an employment specialist or a benefits counselor in a mental health program.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

What are your biggest hopes, fears, and concerns about benefits?

Many people who receive different types of benefits also work and enjoy earning a paycheck. However, many people who do not have a job wonder how working might affect their benefits. For instance, they hope that they can keep enough of their income benefits to give them the support they need while they are also working at a job they enjoy. On the other hand, they may worry about losing all of their income or other benefits if they make too much money. It is important to explore your biggest hopes, fears, and concerns about working and your benefits. Below is an exercise to help you think about these things.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

What are your biggest hopes, fears, and concerns about benefits?

Here is a list of common hopes and concerns that people have when they are thinking about their benefits. Please choose all that are true for you, and add others that may not be listed.

I hope that getting a job will help me make more money each month.

If I start a job, I am worried that I will lose my benefits, including health insurance.

I don't know how much I need to earn to replace my cash benefits.

How can I improve the quality of my life through getting a job?

My big fear is that someone will give me the wrong information about benefits.

If I start a job, I have no idea where or how to report my hours worked or the amount I'm paid.

I'm really afraid that if I were to lose or leave my job I would not be able to get back any benefits that I replaced with a paycheck.

My family may worry that I will lose benefits and not want me to work.

I hope that getting a job will improve my life.

Other hopes: _____

Other fears and concerns: _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Where to find facts and help concerning your benefits

It is really important to be sure that you get correct information about working and your benefits. There are many resources you can turn to in order to find accurate information. If you are working with a counselor or employment specialist, talking with him or her is a good place to start. Other people in your life may also be helpful. It will be important for you to figure out which people in your life may help you the most. Below is an exercise to help you think about where you can get the facts and which people in your life may be the most helpful to you for this topic.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Where to find facts and help concerning your benefits

Please identify the benefits counselor in your program.

What is your counselor's name? _____

What is your counselor's phone number or e-mail address? _____

What's the best way to contact your counselor with questions or to set up an appointment?
(Your counselor or employment specialist can help with this.)

There are other ways that you might obtain information about your benefits. For instance, you can go to the Social Security Administration website at: www.ssa.gov. Or you can schedule an appointment to talk with someone in your local Social Security Administration office about your plans to get a job.

If you decide to talk with someone at your local Social Security office, please write down the address to the local office below. It may also be helpful to write down directions or how you might get to the Social Security Administration office nearest to you as well as the name of the person with whom you can meet.

In addition, each Social Security Administration office has a *work incentive liaison*, who can review your benefits information with you. You might want to schedule an appointment with this person, or if you are working with an employment specialist or counselor, he or she can help you with this. Your local area work incentive liaison's name and phone number is:

Name _____ Phone number _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

What about work incentive programs? Can they help you?

Work incentive programs are programs that were created to help people get back to work. Work incentives are special rules that make it possible for people receiving SSDI or SSI to improve the quality of their lives through employment. Some working people will still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. In other words, you can work and still receive part or all of your

benefits. There are many different types of work incentive programs that can help people. Talking with someone who has expertise in these programs can help you make good choices when you are looking for a job. In many cases, people choose to replace their benefits with earned income or a paycheck.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

**What about work incentive programs?
Can they help you?**

Below is a list of the work incentive programs that are available. You may wish to talk with someone who has been trained in incentives planning, such as an employment specialist, to find information about how these work incentive programs might be helpful to you. Please write down your ideas below.

WORK INCENTIVE	HOW CAN THIS PROGRAM HELP ME?
Ticket to Work Program	
Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS)	
1619(a)	
1619(b)	
Student Earned Income Exclusion	
Special Conditions and Subsidies	
Trial Work Period	
Extended Period of Eligibility	
Expedited Reinstatement	
Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)	
Medicaid Buy-in	
Housing Earned Income Disregard	
SNAP earned income offsets	

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Working and my benefits,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- If you are not sure about your current mix of benefits, then you, your counselor, or your employment specialist can contact your local Social Security Administration office to find out.
- Plan to talk with someone you trust who has expert knowledge about benefits. Tell him or her about the concerns and fears you have in regard to your benefits. That person may be able to answer your main questions or offer the support that you’re looking for.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Work and my schedule preferences

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Thinking about work and your schedule preferences

Some employers offer jobs only to people who will work during the day, such as between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. However, other employers offer jobs that have evening or overnight work times. Everyone has different schedule preferences. Deciding the best time of day for you to work is an important decision for you. Also, think about whether you want to work weekends or only during the week, such as Monday through Friday. The days and times that you may wish to work or not work may affect the type of job you can get. Below we provide an exercise for you to think about what work days and hours would fit best with your life.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Thinking about work and your schedule preferences

Sometimes people try to arrange their schedules so that they work at a time when they are feeling the most awake and alert. Is there a time of day when you are most awake or alert? If possible, you may want to look for a job where you can schedule your work hours at these times.

Please check below which time or times during the day you feel that you function best (for example, times when you are the most awake or alert):

- Morning (for instance, anytime between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m.)
- Late morning and early afternoon (anytime between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.)
- Afternoon (anytime between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.)
- Evening (anytime between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.)
- Nighttime (anytime between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. the next day)

Please think about whether there is anything important in your life that happens on a specific day of the week that you do not think you could change—for example, a worship service or an ongoing class. You will want

to be sure to plan your work schedule at a time when this event does not occur.

- I do not need to plan my work schedule around any specific regular events.
- I need to plan my work schedule around a recurring event that is important to me. The specific *day of the week and time* that I cannot work because of this event is: _____

Think about which days of the week you would prefer to work. Please check below which days you would prefer to work. For example, if you want to work only on weekends, check only the Saturday and Sunday boxes.

I would prefer to work these days of the week:

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

Please keep in mind that while we all have preferences for our ideal work schedule, most employers are not interested in hiring people who do not express some flexibility about when they can work. Also, many work schedules are not negotiable.

COMMUTING:

How much time are you willing to spend traveling to and from work each way?

- Less than 15 minutes
- 16–30 minutes
- 31–60 minutes (between ½ hour and 1 hour)
- 61–90 minutes (between 1 hour and 1½ hours)
- 91–120 minutes (between 1½ hours and 2 hours)

COMMUTING:

What towns or areas are in the traveling range you stated above? Please list them below.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Now think about some practical considerations. Do any of the issues below affect the schedule preferences that you described above? In other words, might any of the issues below affect your ability to arrange your schedule and meet the desires you indicated above?

Please check each box below that contains an issue that may be a factor or concern for you, and talk with someone you trust about what you can do about the issues you checked.

- There is no public transportation at night (i.e., the buses in my area only run during the day).
- I don't have a car or other ride, and I may be limited about how far away I can travel to a job.
- My neighborhood does not feel safe after dark, so I wouldn't want to be out after dark.
- Child care may not be available at a time when I'd need it for my children.
- Although I might prefer to work only on weekdays, the type of job I want does most of its business on weekends (so it's more likely I'd get offered a job that includes weekend hours).

You may find that your answers about your schedule preferences might change when you find a job that you really want.

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is "Work and my schedule preferences," and your personalized activities identified the following possible next step:

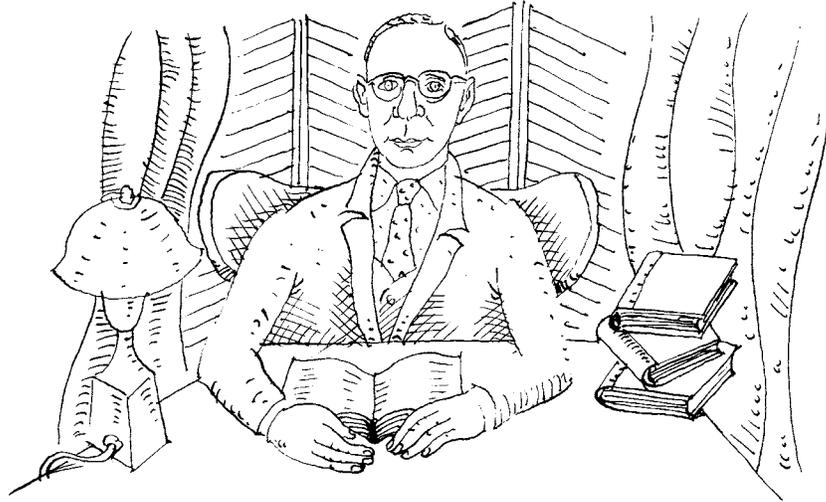
- While looking for a job, consider how each job does or does not match your schedule preferences and your traveling range.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Figuring out what I would like to do for work



Everyone ENJOYS doing the kind of work for which he is BEST suited.

NAPOLEON HILL (1883–1970)
Personal-Success Writer

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Thinking about what you may want to do

When people are thinking about getting a job, sometimes they already know the types of things they want to do. Others are not so sure, and they will want to think through their job preferences and interests. This allows them to focus on looking for a job that matches their interests.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Thinking about what you may want to do

Before focusing on what kind of job you want to do, please think about the following: Have you ever had a dream job? Some people might be embarrassed to identify a “dream job,” but it is important to remember that dream

jobs can reflect our values. Our values are important when deciding on the types of jobs we want to have.

If you have ever had a dream job, please list it here and explain why it was a dream job. In other words, what was it about that job that made you like it so much? For example, was it something you're good at? Did it allow you to do something you've done for many years and were you delighted to know you could get paid doing it? Or was it something you'd always wanted to try or to get involved in? Please explain below.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Exploring your preferences and deciding what kind of work you want to do

Many people don't know what they want to do when it comes to getting a job, and it's hard to know where to even start. We encourage you to think about what kinds of things you enjoy doing. Is there something you have always wanted to do or that you are good at? Are there things that you would like to try? Also, are there things that you definitely do not want to do?

One good strategy when deciding what kind of job to seek is to think about the things you enjoy or that you're good at and try to figure out if there is a job out there that matches those things. In other words, is there a job that matches your interests and abilities? Once you figure out your personal preferences, you can explore whether those types of jobs are available in your community. Below we provide you with an exercise to help you think about your job options and personal preferences.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Exploring your preferences and deciding what kind of work you want to do

It's okay if you don't know what you want to do for a job, but thinking about what kinds of things interest you will help you make choices. To help

you get started, here is a list of things that people sometimes enjoy that can also be found in a job. Please check each box if it's something that you're interested in or enjoy. We'll narrow down the list later.

<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to cook
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to clean
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like animals
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to organize things
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like doing things with numbers and math
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work outdoors
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work indoors
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work with people
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work by myself
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work nights
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work days
<input type="checkbox"/>	I'd like to work full-time
<input type="checkbox"/>	I'd like to work part-time
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work with my hands
<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work at a desk
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to be able to move around at my job
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please add your own idea here: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please add your own idea here: _____

Now look at the boxes you checked above. Out of all of the things that you checked, which one or two things do you enjoy doing the most? In other words, if you had to pick only a couple of things that you enjoy and might want to do for work, what would you pick? Please write your answer below.

Please list here the things that you definitely *do not* want to do.

How might you explore this topic further?



NEXT STEPS:

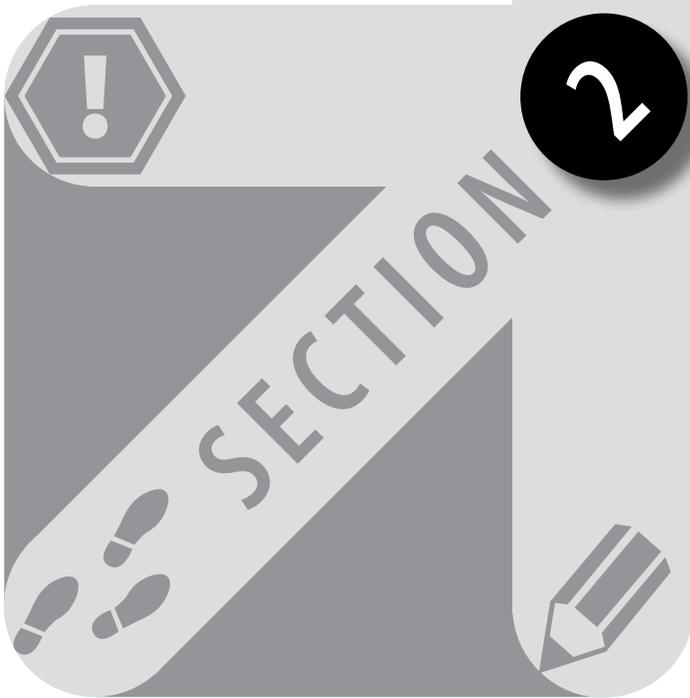
What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Figuring out what I would like to do for work,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Using the checklist above, create a broad list of things you like to do and then narrow it down to your favorite activities.
- Using the checklist above, think carefully about things you do *not* want to do.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

During Job Search



TOPIC:

Developing my specific work goal



*The road to SUCCESS is always
under CONSTRUCTION.*

LILY TOMLIN (1939–present)
American Actress

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Establishing your work goal

Once you have thought carefully about the things you would like to do, it's time for you to establish your work goal. A work goal clearly states what you would like to do for work, what kind of job you'd like to find, and the days and times you'd like to work. This goal will be your roadmap to employment. For example, if you are good at math, you might set the goal of getting a part-time Monday–Friday job as an accounting assistant.

Setting a goal for yourself is important because then you can plan the steps to achieve it. Your work goal should be specific and realistic, and it should include a time frame, all of which will help you succeed.


PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Establishing your work goal

Please write a work goal that is as specific as possible. We recommend that you try to make this goal achievable and realistic. For example, instead of “I’d like to have a job helping a contractor work on homes,” a more specific goal might be “I’d like to get a part-time job working Monday through Thursday between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. helping a local contractor with dry walling for additions on homes.” Adding a time frame in which to achieve your goal can solidify your commitment and motivation. For example, Bob will finish culinary school in a few months, and therefore he has set a goal to find a full-time pastry job in 6 months that’s within 25 minutes from his house.

My work goal is: _____


NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Developing my specific work goal,” and your personalized activity identified the following possible next step:

- Set a realistic goal that identifies the type of job you will look for and a timeline for finding one.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Developing a plan and finding a job



One important key to SUCCESS is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is PREPARATION.

ARTHUR ASHE (1943–1993)
Tennis Champion

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Developing an action plan

One of the best ways for people to accomplish goals is to develop a plan for achieving them. A good plan usually involves thinking about practical, sequential steps toward meeting a goal. Steps for finding a job can include things like talking with other people, thinking about what kind of work you might like, figuring out a way to find available jobs quickly, and deciding what help you might need from others. Different people can offer different ideas and new ways of looking at things that can help you achieve your goals. Keep in mind that if you have an employment specialist, he or she is talking with employers in your community on a regular basis. An employment specialist gathers information about possible jobs in the community and builds relationships with employers by meeting with them regularly. If you have an

employment specialist, ask if he or she has any good leads for jobs that match what you want to do.

Some states also have online resources where people can submit resumes and receive information about jobs that are available. These sites often allow you or someone you designate to receive daily e-mails on jobs that match your skills and interests. If you live in New York State, for example, you may want to consider creating a resume on a New York–based website like JobZone (<https://jobzone.ny.gov>) or CareerZone (<https://careerzone.ny.gov>). If you live elsewhere, you can conduct a web-based search using Google or another good search engine and type in the words job search and the state in which you live, and you may get some good leads this way.

Consider writing down your plan, including your overall work goal and next steps. When making your list of steps, think of the specific things that you and others need to do to meet your work goal. (For more information on work goals, please refer to the topic “Developing my specific work goal.”) Your plan also involves thinking about specific people, services, and supports that will be helpful to you. Finally, a good plan includes a time frame for accomplishing each step. In other words, how much time do you think you will need to complete each step of your plan? Below is an exercise to help you think about and organize your plan.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Developing an action plan

This exercise asks you to think about the specific steps or actions that you need to take to achieve your goal of getting a job. To get the most out of this exercise, first write down a specific job goal, meaning the kind of job you want and maybe the number of hours per week and the days of the week that you'd like to work (see “Developing my specific work goal” in Section 2).

My goal: _____

With that information, here are some suggestions to help you get started on your action plan:

1. Talk to a counselor or employment specialist about your job interests and which employers might be hiring for related positions.
2. Talk to someone who has a job that is similar to the kind of job that you want.
3. Search the Internet on your own for job openings or work with someone you trust, such as a counselor or employment specialist.
4. Learn about your government benefits and how getting a job might affect them.
5. Practice interviewing skills.
6. Write or revise your resume.
7. Make sure you have appropriate clothes to wear to an interview.
8. Get vocational training or education.
9. Go to your local Department of Labor office to find information on job openings.

The steps or actions that you intend to take in order to achieve your work goal are as follows:

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____
6.	_____

It's a good idea to talk with others about the plan and steps you wrote down above. Getting feedback and input from others can be helpful for everyone. See below for more information.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Collaborating with someone to find a job

Once you know that you want to work and have identified a possible work goal, you can begin actively looking for a job that will suit you. Sometimes, just looking for a job can help you feel good about moving forward. Your counselor or employment specialist, if you have one, can be a big help as you search for a job that fits what you want to do. You may also wish to involve someone else who is important in your life. The decision is up to you.

A common phrase heard when looking for work is, "It's not what you know, but who you know." One of the ways that many people find a job is by

talking with family, friends, or acquaintances. These people can provide what we call leads, or ideas about possible job openings. You do not need to try to find a job all by yourself. In fact, many people have some kind of help from another person. It can be interesting and useful to ask the people you know who are working how they got their jobs.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Collaborating with someone to find a job

Think about the different people in your life. Who do you think might be helpful to you in finding a job? Remember that these people can include a counselor as well as other people in your life. For instance, your list might include your counselor, an employment specialist, a family member, and a friend. What about others? Where do you go and what do you do when you're not at home? Could you talk to people you might know from these activities about your intention to go back to work? For example, do you know anyone from church/temple/synagogue or from your eating establishments? Do you live in a neighborhood or perhaps in an apartment building or in a housing program where you talk with one another?

If you are well acquainted or friendly with the people around you, they may hear of a job and they might let you know, or even recommend you to a potential employer. This is called networking, and it is one of the best ways to find a job. You may also choose to connect with an organization in your state that links you with vocational rehabilitation counselors, who help people with disabilities who are trying to get jobs. For example, in New York State this organization is called ACCES-VR, which stands for Adult Career and Continuing Education Services—Vocational Rehabilitation. You can learn more about ACCES-VR at the website www.acces.nysed.gov/vr.

List two people who might help keep you informed about possible jobs.

1. _____
2. _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Identifying the kind of help you want

Once you have identified people to help you stay informed about jobs, the next question is, how do you want them to work with you? For example, you may want assistance finding a job opening in the community. Or you

may want help writing a resume. Or you may even want someone to talk with an employer to learn more about a job that's being offered. Or perhaps you'd find it helpful to have someone to practice with for an upcoming job interview. There are a lot of different ways that a person can be helpful. It will be important for you to think about exactly what kind of supports you want. Below is an exercise that will help you do that.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Identifying the kind of help you want

Think about the person you listed on line 1, above, and choose from the list below the kind of help you would like from him or her.

- I would like him/her to help me search through job ads in newspapers.
- I would like him/her to help me look for jobs posted online.
- I would like him/her to go into the community with me to talk to potential employers.
- I would like him/her to help me get job applications.
- I would like him/her to tell all friends and coworkers about me and the fact that I am looking for a job.
- I would like him/her to tell me about any job leads that match what I want to do.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Now think about the person you listed on line 2, above, and go through the list again to determine the kind of help you would like from him or her.

- I would like him/her to help me search through job ads in newspapers.
- I would like him/her to help me look for jobs posted online.
- I would like him/her to go into the community with me to talk to potential employers.
- I would like him/her to help me get job applications.
- I would like him/her to tell all friends and coworkers about me and the fact that I am looking for a job.
- I would like him/her to tell me about any job leads that match what I want to do.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

We also recommend working closely with a member of your support team, such as a counselor or employment specialist, as you look for a job. These team members will be happy to talk with you about what they can do to help you find the right job for you.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Learning about potential employers

Potential employers try to let people know about a job opening in many different ways. Some employers advertise in newspapers. Others put information about job openings on the Internet, on their own website or on other websites. People also find out about jobs by word of mouth, which means that people who have a job tell people about an upcoming job opening where they work. They hope that telling people, and inviting those people to tell other people, might help them find someone who is a good match for a specific job.

Employment specialists can also be a good resource for learning about potential employers and job openings. After all, they are working in your local community to try to find the best possible jobs for people like you.

As you can see, there are many ways to learn about job openings. You can choose to learn about potential jobs and employers in the ways that feel most comfortable for you.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Learning about potential employers

Which of the following resources do you feel would be helpful in learning about potential employers?

- Employment specialist
- Department of Labor office
- Department of Labor website
- Newspaper
- Online or web-based job listings
- Trade papers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local community organizations/networking
- Acquaintances or peers
- Family members
- Other resources for learning about potential employers: _____

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Developing a plan and finding a job,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Outline the steps needed to achieve your work goal. This is your action plan.
- Identify who can help you as you look for a job and what kind of help may be most useful to you.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Applying for a job



{ *“I can’t DO it” never yet accomplished anything;*
“I will try” has performed WONDERS. }

GEORGE P. BURNHAM (1814–1902)
 Author

Now that you have decided to apply for a job that you want, there are a few steps for actually applying. These include writing a cover letter to the employer to identify the job you are applying for and to briefly describe your qualifications. Many people also create a resume, which provides more detail about qualifications and work history. All applicants will need to complete a job application.

Although most people apply for a job by mailing their cover letter and resume or submitting them online, consider doing this in person. You might simply pick up an application and express your interest in working. If you can make contact with the person in charge of hiring, you can introduce yourself and express your interest in applying, and then he or she will see you as a person instead of as just a name on a piece of paper.

Do you use any social media, such as Facebook? If you do, then before you begin sending out resumes and job applications, you may want to consider activating the privacy settings for the social media you use. Employers often do Internet searches on applicants, and they could view your Facebook page if you don't have privacy settings turned on. One tip is to enter your name into a search engine such as www.google.com to see what information comes up. You can talk with a counselor or employment specialist about this if you don't know how to do it. If you have a common first and last name, another tip is to include your middle name on any job applications to help potential employers avoid confusing you with anyone else.

For every step of the process, remember that you want to present yourself as someone who is “ready, willing, and able” to work. You also want to let the employer know that you are a good match for the job for which you're applying. If you have ever worked in volunteer positions, be sure to include the skills gained from this work when discussing your strengths and skills. You may even get a good reference from supervisors of your past volunteer work.

The sections below are designed to help you with each step of the job application process: 1) creating a cover letter, 2) creating a resume, and 3) completing a job application.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Creating a cover letter

One important part of applying for a job is the cover letter that goes with your application and, for many professional positions, your resume. The cover letter is often the first thing a potential employer will read when a person applies for a job. This letter is your first chance to make a good impression. A good cover letter lets the employer know that you are serious about getting a job. Like a good story, the cover letter has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning is where you introduce yourself to the employer and state which job you are applying for. In the middle section, let the employer know about your employment background and the skills or abilities that match well with the job. At the end, thank the employer for taking the time and attention to review your materials, and provide your contact information.

You should create a new cover letter for each specific job for which you apply. Creating one basic letter to use for all your job applications is not a good idea because it will be too general, which may be seen as lack of interest in your job search. Instead, use the cover letter to let each employer know that you are interested in the specific job that is available. Take care to ensure that your cover letters are spelled correctly and neat and clean. It is usually a

good idea to have another person read your cover letter before you submit it. Below we provide an exercise to help you complete a cover letter.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Creating a cover letter

Look at the cover letter section in Appendix B. Pick a template or format that you like and use it to write a first draft of a cover letter. Feel free to ask for help if you need it. Employment specialists are often able to assist you in this task.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Creating a resume

Some employers will want to see a resume along with a job application. The resume is a tool that you use to tell potential employers about your work history, skills, and education. You can describe where you've worked before and some of the job responsibilities you had. The resume should be brief, which means it should be no more than one or two pages long. Just like with the cover letter, it is important for the resume to have correct spelling and to be neat and clean.

Many people ask someone who knows a lot about making good resumes to help them create one. You can also ask people on your support team, including an employment specialist if you have one, to share examples of resumes. You can look at different resume examples and pick the format that you like best to create your own resume. You may wish to talk with someone who is good at making resumes about creating a resume for you to post on a job search site. If you live in New York, for example, you might try JobZone (jobzone.ny.gov) or CareerZone (careerzone.ny.gov).



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Creating a resume

Look at some of the sample resumes in Appendix C. Pick a template or format to follow, and create your own resume. You may do this on your own or with someone you trust, or you might even give someone your information and have that person type up a first draft for you. The important thing is to create a resume; it does not matter how it is created or who creates it, as long as it is accurate. Many people use a resume service to get theirs done.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Completing a job application

All job applications are different. However, many job applications involve filling out a form that can go along with a cover letter and resume. Employers pick and choose what specific information they want from the person applying. Job application forms usually ask for basic information such as your full name, mailing address, phone number, and the names of your past employers. They also often ask whether you have ever been convicted.

It's important to read each job application form closely and provide all of the information that the employer is requesting. Do not leave any items blank. Most employers will not even consider an application that is not complete.

In addition to an application form, a cover letter, and a resume, many potential employers also ask people to provide *references*, or the names of people who know you well who can comment on your work strengths and accomplishments. If the application asks you to provide a list of references, it is important for you to provide the names and contact information for people in your life who know you well. Then be sure to let those people know that you have provided their name as a reference. This way, these people will be prepared in case the employer contacts them. Don't forget to verify their phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and street addresses. Below is an exercise to help you think through how to complete the different parts of a job application.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Completing a job application

Appendix D includes a blank job application. Consider filling it out and showing it to someone you trust and asking for feedback. Also, you might consider picking up a job application from a local employer. Fill it out as practice, and show it to someone you trust and ask for feedback. Once you are satisfied with your sample job application, keep it handy to refer to when filling out an application for a job you really want.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Applying for jobs online

Many potential employers use the Internet to post job openings, and they invite people to apply for jobs online through the Internet. It will be important for you to know whether you can submit your application in pen-and-paper format or whether it needs to be submitted online. For online job

applications, you'll need to find a quiet place where you can use a computer. You will also want to have a lot of your personal information handy when you start the application so that you can complete it in a timely manner. For instance, you may want to have a copy of your work history, sample job application, or resume with you when you sit down at the computer, both on paper and as electronic files, if possible. Some businesses also may ask you to complete a survey on a computer station.

Some websites limit the time you can work on your application. For others, there is no time limit. Also, some job websites will let you save your application while you're working on it so that you can come back and finish it later. Others require you to complete the application all at once. These are the types of issues that you'll want to learn before starting to complete an online application. Below is an exercise to help you think about and prepare for an online job application.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Applying for jobs online

Applying for jobs online can be very time consuming. If you have access to the Internet, you may want to consider applying for a job online with a major company as practice. You might ask someone such as a counselor or an employment specialist to sit with you as you do this and provide feedback. It may be helpful to practice applying for jobs that you are not even interested in just to get used to applying online. Once you get comfortable applying online, you can target the companies you might want to work for.

Do you wish to ask someone to sit with you and give you feedback while you complete a sample online application? Please circle one of the following answers:		
--	--	--

YES

NO

If you answered **YES**, please write down the name of the person you'd like to ask for assistance.

Name _____

Phone number _____

We suggest that you contact the person you listed above within one week from now to ask for assistance.

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Applying for a job,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Write a first draft of a cover letter. Feel free to ask for help if you need it.
- Pick a template or format to follow and create your own resume. You may do this on your own, consider doing this with someone you trust, or even give someone your information and have that person write a first draft for you.
- Consider filling out the blank job application in Appendix D and showing it to someone you trust, asking him or her for feedback. Also, you might consider picking up a job application from a local employer. Then, fill out the application and show it to someone you trust and ask for feedback.
- If you have access to the Internet, you may want to consider applying for a job with a major company that you can identify in the community. You may wish to use a fictitious name and fictitious information to familiarize yourself with the process and to get a sense of what to expect. You might even ask someone to sit with you and do it together.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Disclosure and deciding what to say about my background

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Disclosing or not disclosing your psychiatric history

Do you want to tell potential employers about your psychiatric diagnosis and history? If so, what and how much should you disclose or share? And most important, why do you think it might be helpful to disclose some of this information?

Many people wonder whether to tell an employer about their psychiatric diagnosis and history in a job interview. There are pros (positive things) and cons (negative things) to doing so. Some employers will be very open and understanding. After all, many people have experienced mental health issues at some point during their lives. In some cases, telling a potential employer about your diagnosis might help you “get started on the right foot” with open and honest communication. On the other hand, some employers may lack understanding about mental health issues. It will be important for you to decide for yourself whether to tell employers about your diagnosis and history. You may wish to disclose to one potential employer but not another. And if you decide not to raise the issue in a job interview, you can change your mind at any time once you are hired. If you mention this information in an interview, keep in mind that you can’t take it back.

If you choose to tell any employers about your psychiatric diagnosis and history, the next choice will be what, exactly, to reveal in the interview and why.

- Do you want your employer to know only your diagnosis?
- Why might that be helpful?
- Do you want to also explain some of your symptoms and what types of treatment you’re involved with?

For example, some people feel comfortable sharing that medication and therapy have been helpful to them. Others do not feel comfortable sharing this much. You might wish to share, if this is the case for you, that working often helps you feel better and helps you keep your symptoms under control. These

decisions are up to you. In general, we would recommend disclosing only information that may relate to arranging a work accommodation. For example, if you have fearful thoughts when you are around a lot of people, you might want to negotiate a private work space in which you won't have to be around a lot of people. Another example of an accommodation that you might request is having a quiet work station or using headphones to muffle background noise.

The important thing to remember is that the choice about which potential employers to tell and what to share is yours. Here is an exercise that will help you think about what you do and do not want to share with potential employers.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Disclosing or not disclosing your psychiatric history

What are the PROS of discussing your condition with potential employers during an interview?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What are the CONS of discussing your condition with potential employers during an interview?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What are the PROS of *not* discussing your condition with potential employers?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What are the CONS of *not* discussing your condition with potential employers?

- _____
- _____
- _____

If you decide you want to disclose to one or more potential employers that you are in recovery from mental illness, this next activity is designed to help you think about what you want an employer to know. Please list below the things that you feel comfortable discussing with a potential employer and the things that you do not wish to discuss.

WHAT I MAY CHOOSE TO DISCUSS:	WHAT I DEFINITELY DO <i>NOT</i> WANT TO DISCUSS:

Please keep in mind that if you are working with an employment specialist, you can also talk with him or her about what to share with potential employers.

EXAMPLES:

Below are some examples of conversations with potential employers, including what you can say during your job interview.

Employer: “You indicated that you receive mental health treatment at a local program. Tell me about your mental illness.”

Possible answers:

“Sure. I was diagnosed several years ago with depression. Although I’ve been in and out of treatment for years, I now have a great relationship with a team that is really supportive of me. I’ve found that things go better for me when I’m working at a job that I like. That’s why I applied for this job, and I am confident that I can be a good employee for you.”

OR

“I am sorry, but that is something that I am not comfortable talking about. I will be more than happy to tell you about why I think I would be a good employee for you. Because I receive disability, my employer will qualify for a federal tax credit. I have the brochure right here if you are interested.”

OR

“I indicated in my cover letter that I have been out of work due to my mental illness. I shared this in the hope that the Work Opportunity Tax Credit would be an incentive for this company to hire me. I don’t want to go into too much detail about my mental health, but I can tell you that I am doing well right now, and I’m sure that I am a great match for this job.”

OR

“I am sorry, but I would rather not answer any questions about my disability. Given my skills and background, I’m confident that I would be really good at this job, and I hope that you give me the chance to prove it.”

OR

“Okay. I was diagnosed several years ago with bipolar disorder. I’ve been in treatment for the last few years. I’ve worked for most of my adult life, and I’m really motivated to rejoin the workforce and work for your company. The only way that I think my illness might affect my job is that once per month I would have to leave early to see my doctor because she only has evening hours. Is that okay? I’m willing to do whatever it takes to figure this out because I think I’m a perfect fit for the position.”

* * *

You may have noticed that the examples above demonstrate different levels of disclosure. Carefully consider each level, and choose which disclosure level feels right for you. Remember also that you are not “locked in” to this

choice and may choose differently for one potential employer compared with another. Let's review the levels of disclosure:

- **open disclosure:** This means you will discuss your psychiatric condition briefly, be specific about how it may affect your work hours or work habits, and then emphasize your qualifications that match the position available and make you a good choice for the job.
- **no disclosure:** This means that you will not bring up your psychiatric condition and instead will talk about your qualifications and why you think you're a good match for the job.
- **partial disclosure:** Here, you choose to disclose that you have a psychiatric condition but you share very little detail about how it affects you. With this option, you'll briefly note that you have a mental health condition, tell the employer that you would prefer not to go into detail about it, say that you don't anticipate that your condition will affect your job, and discuss why you think you're a good match for the position available.

Please keep in mind that the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people who have physical and mental health problems from discrimination. Be aware that there are certain things that an employer cannot ask during a job interview. For example, did you know that it is illegal for an employer to ask a job searcher whether he or she has a disability? An interviewer also cannot ask your race, or your age, or whether you've been arrested. Detailed information on the ADA can be found at the U.S. Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov. Additional information also can be found in the topic "Workplace protections: What are my rights as a worker?"

How might you explore this topic further?



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is "Disclosure and deciding what to say about my background," and your personalized activity identified the following possible next steps:

- Think carefully about whether to discuss your mental health condition in a job interview by identifying the pros and cons of doing so or not doing so.
- If you decide to discuss your condition in a job interview, think carefully about what aspects of your illness and treatment you want to disclose.
- If you decide to discuss your condition in a job interview, practice what you will say, always ending with why you think you're a good match for the position.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Preparing for the job interview— the basics

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

First impressions

The first few minutes of a job interview might be the most important because this is your first opportunity to make a good impression in person. Within just a few minutes after meeting you, the interviewer you will often form an opinion about you and whether you'd be a good employee. This means that how you look, what you do, and what you say in the first few minutes can greatly affect your chances of being hired. On the other hand, if you do not make a good first impression, your chances of getting the job may decrease. Although this may not seem fair because the interviewer does not know you well, it is a fact that first impressions are important.

Be sure to arrive 5–10 minutes before your interview is scheduled to begin. Arriving earlier than that is something you will want to avoid. Arriving 5–10 minutes early will help you make a good impression even before you meet the interviewer. Definitely do not be late to your job interview.

The first few minutes need to convey that you are someone who is friendly, honest, and hardworking and someone who listens and communicates well. Often, this is communicated without words, for example with eye contact and a firm handshake as you introduce yourself. Some people often find it helpful to quietly take a deep breath at the start of the interview to relax. It is also important to remember to speak slowly and clearly, especially when you're answering the interviewer's questions. We suggest that you have a few ideas about what you will say first in case the interviewer asks you to tell a little about yourself or to explain why you want the job. More about answering questions is covered below in another section. Also a few exercises are provided below to help you think about how to make a good impression during your interview. Most important, be confident about all the strengths and skills you have to offer.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

First impressions

Are you typically on time or late for events? Do you think that getting to an interview on time might be a challenge for you? If not, skip to the next

part of this topic. If this is an issue for you, please check all of the things below that you could do to make sure that you arrive 5–10 minutes before your interview is scheduled to begin. Refer to Appendix E for additional information about this.

- Go to the interview location a day or two early to make sure you know how to get there.
- Set your alarm to make sure you wake up and start getting ready when you need to.
- Get ready extra early the day of your interview.
- Plan your transportation to and from the interview a few days before the interview.
- Plan to arrive in the general location of your interview 15–20 minutes early (but do not go to the interview until about 5–10 minutes before it's scheduled to begin).

Now think about other things that you can do to make a good first impression during your interview. Are there specific things you may say or do to start off the interview? Please write them down here.

Are there any things that you should *avoid* doing or saying at the beginning of the job interview? You might want to check with family members, friends, an employment specialist, or other members of your treatment team about this one. Sometimes we all do things or have habits that would not make a good first impression, and because they are habits, we may not even be aware of them. You might want to ask others about this so that you can avoid doing any of these things in the interview.

To make a good first impression, I should avoid doing or saying these things:

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:****Dressing for success**

The clothes you wear to a job interview tell the employer a lot about you. Wearing nice “dress clothes” tells the employer that you are serious about the job and that you care about what the employer thinks about you. Clothes should be neat, clean, and professional. Avoid dressing casually, such as wearing shorts and a T-shirt. Below we provide you with an exercise to help you think about wearing clothes to the interview that will help you succeed at getting the job you want.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Dressing for success**

Dressing appropriately for interviews is important. Please refer to Appendix E for additional information on this topic. Do you own nice dress clothes that you could wear to a job interview?

- Yes, I own nice dress clothes for an interview.
- No, I do not own nice dress clothes.

If you own nice dress clothes, make sure they are clean, unwrinkled, and available to wear on the day of the interview.

If you do not own nice dress clothes, we suggest that you plan to buy or borrow some before the interview. There are places in most communities where you can obtain clothes for free, such as churches and even some employment agencies.

Would it be helpful to you to have someone else’s opinion about your outfit for the interview? If so, you’ll need to contact him or her and arrange a good time to see your outfit or go shopping together. If you plan on wearing a tie to your interview and don’t know how to tie a good knot, you will want to line up someone to help you out on the day of your interview.

Below please describe your plan for getting nice dress clothes to wear to the interview. Be as specific as possible.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

What to do immediately after a job interview

One of the other basics of the job interview is what you do *after* the interview. It is a good practice to follow up on your interview with a thank you letter to the person or persons who interviewed you. A thank you letter shows the employer that you are grateful for the opportunity to interview for the job and gives you an opportunity to restate your interest in the job and remind the interviewer who you are. If the competition for a particular position is strong, a good thank you letter can tip the scale in your favor. Many employers expect serious job candidates to follow up with a thank you letter.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

What to do immediately after a job interview

A sample thank you letter is available in Appendix F. You may wish to use the same format or draft one on your own. In any case, since the letter will be an expression of your thoughts and feelings, try to create one that makes you comfortable. Just as with cover letters and resumes, it is a good idea to have a friend or someone from your support network check your letter before you send it. Typos and misspellings can sink an otherwise good thank you letter.

For this activity, please use a blank piece of paper and write a thank you letter to a company. Pretend that you have just finished an interview for your dream job. What might you say to the interviewer in the letter to express your gratitude and let the employer know that you think you are the right person for the job? Once you're finished, show your letter to someone you trust, such as a counselor or employment specialist, to give you thoughtful feedback.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Maintaining perspective when dealing with rejection

An unpleasant part of the job search is dealing with rejection. You may not get a call back from an employer about a job for which you applied. You may get called for an interview but not get the job. You may even get a second interview and still not get the job. It's important not to take this bad news personally. Anyone who has ever searched for a job has experienced rejection at one or more of these points, and the path to successful employment is rarely smooth. Try not to get discouraged. Use your supports, and give yourself credit for your determination and "can do" attitude. You have control only over what you do, and by looking for a job that's right for you, you are taking positive steps to improve your life.


PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Maintaining perspective when dealing with rejection

Below please describe what you will do to positively cope with not getting offered an interview or not getting offered a job. Be as specific as possible about what activities or ways of thinking will be helpful to you. Feel free to ask someone you trust for input, because most people have had some experience with not getting a job that they wanted.


NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Preparing for the job interview—the basics,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Plan ahead for the interview by thinking a few days in advance about how to arrive a few minutes early and about an outfit that will make a good first impression.
- Plan to follow up your interview with a thank you letter that expresses your gratitude and reminds the employer about your skills and motivation.
- Plan for some disappointment in not hearing back about a job, and plan to remain positive in your search.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Preparing for the job interview— answering questions and asking questions

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Preparing for basic questions

Ensure your interviewing success by preparing for basic questions the interviewer may ask. Interviewers often ask the same types of questions, including ones about work history and reasons for applying for the job. Thinking about how you might answer these types of questions even before you go to the interview can help you feel prepared and confident to discuss the skills you offer.

It is important to be honest when answering the questions. Think about how to answer each question so that you can share your strengths and other positive things about yourself with the interviewer. You might consider writing down your answers so that you will be better prepared for your interview. It's also a good idea to practice answering these questions with someone you have chosen to support you in getting a job. Below is an exercise that helps you think about your answers to basic questions that interviewers often ask.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Preparing for basic questions

Here is a list of commonly asked interview questions. After each question, there is space for you to write possible responses. Writing them down will help you prepare just in case the interviewer asks you any of these questions.

- 1) Tell me about why you applied for this job.

2) Tell me a little bit about yourself.

3) Describe your work history and background for me.

4) What are your biggest strengths?

5) What are your biggest challenges?

6) Why do you think you're a good fit or match for this job?

7) I see from your resume that you haven't worked in a while.
Can you please explain these periods of unemployment in your
job history?


IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Addressing your personal history in the interview

At some point during the interview, you may have an opportunity to talk about your personal history with mental illness or substance abuse or with legal troubles you may have had. The interviewer may ask you a direct question about your history. Or you may decide to bring up your personal history in a way that makes you feel comfortable. Think in advance about whether to tell the interviewer about your mental illness or substance abuse history. Be sure to decide before the interview about what you do and do not wish to share about your personal history. The choice is yours. There is no right or wrong way to address this topic. Instead, we suggest that you be prepared with some brief comments about your personal history so that you are not surprised or “caught off guard” if questions about it arise.

Please refer to the topic “**Disclosure and deciding what to say about my background**” for more information and exercises about this issue. Also, below are examples and an exercise to help you think about how you’d like to address your personal history.

EXAMPLES:

Below are some examples of answers that you can give to potential employers during your job interview.

Employer: “I notice that you have no professional references on your application. Have you worked anyplace before?”

Possible answers:

“I have not worked in a number of years and do not have any current references. I am eager and ready to make a fresh start and be a member of your team.”

OR

“I have not worked in some time due to working out issues with my disability, but I can certainly provide you with personal references who can tell you about me.”

OR

“It’s been a while since I worked, but I have been polishing the skills and assets that I can bring to your company if you hire me.”



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Addressing your personal history in the interview

This activity is designed to help you think about how you’d like to address different parts of your personal history. For instance, if your psychiatric, substance abuse, or legal history has gotten in the way of working in the past, you might choose to talk about this during the interview.

The following are some important parts of my personal history that an interviewer might ask me about:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Here are some ways that I might answer the interviewer’s questions about the issues I described above:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If the interviewer does not bring up any of these issues, but you still want to address them, what might you say? How might you approach this? Please write down some of your ideas here. Take a look at what you’ve identified as challenging in your life, and write down what you might say to address this in a positive way with an employer.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

It's probably a good idea to talk with another person you trust in your life about the ideas in this section. Asking other people for their feedback and practicing your interview responses with them can help you do your very best at the job interview.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Asking questions during the interview

Many people often think about a job interview as the time when a potential employer gets to ask questions. This is true. However, it also may be important for you to ask some questions in the interview. Many potential employers think that job candidates who ask some questions are really interested in the job and in working for the company.

Consider using the Internet to do some research on the company. You may learn that the company needs something, and you may think of questions to ask about that need, especially if the company's need relates to a special skill you have. You may also learn some details about the company that will help you develop questions to ask during the interview. The questions you ask can be basic about the company, or they can be about something specific about the job available. Either way, it's important to think about which questions you'd like to ask during the interview.

EXAMPLES:

Below are some examples of questions that you can ask potential employers during your job interview.

Employer: "Do you have any questions for me?"

Possible answers:

"Yes. What kind of training for the position will be available?"

OR

"How often will I get to meet with a supervisor to review my progress and performance?"

OR

"When are you hoping to fill the position?"

OR

"How many people are being considered for the position?"

OR

“How would you describe the working atmosphere here?”

OR

“What are some of the qualities that successful workers at this company tend to have?”

OR

“Could you tell me about the management style that I could expect to work under?”

Below we provide an exercise that encourages you to think about the basic and specific questions that you might ask during your interview.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Asking questions during the interview

Talk with an employment specialist or someone else with hiring expertise about basic questions you might ask at a job interview. Please write down your own ideas about basic questions you might ask below.

Now talk with an employment specialist or someone else with hiring expertise about what *specific* questions you might ask about the job responsibilities or job activities of the job that you’re applying for. What would you want to know about the position? Please write down your ideas below.

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Preparing for the job interview—Answering questions and asking questions,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Think about how you might best respond to some typical interview questions, and practice your responses by writing them down or having a “practice interview” with a trusted support person.
- Think about how you would like to respond to questions that touch on your psychiatric or substance abuse history and any legal troubles you may have had.
- Think about what you might like to ask in an interview to learn more about the company, position, or work environment.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

How do I explain gaps
in my work history?
Or having several brief jobs?
Or being an older worker?



{ AGING is not 'lost youth' but a new
stage of opportunity and STRENGTH. }

BETTY FRIEDAN (1921–2006)
Author, Writer, Publisher, and Activist

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Addressing gaps in work history

Some people have periods in which they have not been able to get or keep a job. Many months or even years may have passed since a person had a competitive job. The reasons for this could involve past psychiatric symptoms or substance use that interfered with getting or keeping a job. Or someone may have been so focused on recovering from these symptoms that he or she did not have the time or energy to get or keep a job.

Interview questions about gaps in work history can be difficult or uncomfortable to answer. Regardless of the reason, it is important to be honest with a potential employer about your work history.

For the gaps, it will be up to you to decide what to tell the potential employer. For example, some people have had part-time volunteer positions or internships for which they were not paid. These are important to include in a conversation with the potential employer about your work history. Helping the interviewer understand your work history and the fact that you are now committed to working will be important.

You might even consider putting together a sample of any work or a portfolio of achievements you may have accomplished that were unpaid. If you receive training or attend classes, a record showing what you have been doing while out of work will be helpful.

EXAMPLES:

Below are examples of how to answer a typical question that you might be asked during a job interview. If these responses do not seem to fit for you, play around with them and arrange them in a way that feels more comfortable for you.

Employer: “I see that you have been out of work for several years. What have you been doing with your time?”

Possible responses:

“I was out of work due to a disability. I am ready to return to work now.”

OR

“I was unable to work due to emotional issues. I am feeling great now and want to get back to working.”

OR

“I was unable to work due to a mental illness. It was a rough time for me, but now that I am better and feeling good, I would like to return to work as soon as possible. I am hoping that you will give me a chance.”

OR

“I was unable to work because I struggled with mental illness. I now have the right treatment and great supports and I feel more than ready to return to work. As a matter of fact, because I was out on disability, if I am hired, the company will be eligible for a tax credit from the federal government. I have the tax credit brochure right here if you are interested.”

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Addressing gaps in work history**

Close contact with your support network is important when deciding what to disclose about your gaps in work. Remember that it's up to you how much you share or do not share about your illness and circumstances. But it's important to be prepared to respond if you are asked about your gaps in work or if you decide to bring these issues up to an employer.

In the space below, develop a script about what you would say if someone were to ask you why you have not worked for a long time. For example, you might say something like, "Mental health and emotional issues made working difficult. I now have the treatment and support that will make work possible and rewarding." Practice your response many times with trusted others.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:****Explaining the issue of several brief jobs**

Another challenge is how to explain a pattern of several jobs of short duration, meaning that the jobs ended quickly. If you've had this kind of work history, some employers may wonder whether you'll be able to keep a job if they give you one. It is important to think about communicating directly with employers about this issue. You can do this through a cover letter or during a job interview, or both.

Before applying for a job, be sure to think about what you'll tell employers. For example, did you start jobs in the past without thinking through whether they matched your skills or interests? One big question you can think about answering for employers is: How will it be different this time? In other words, you'll want to tell the interviewer what is different about you or the job or the situation that will help you be successful in the job you're applying for. For instance, maybe your psychiatric symptoms are more under control than they've been for a long time. Or you've realized a specific activity that you enjoy, such as cooking, that the job you're applying for will allow you to do.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Explaining the issue of several brief jobs**

As with the previous activity, write a script about what you would say if any employer were to ask, “I see you stayed in this job or these jobs for only a short amount of time. Why is that?” And then practice, practice, practice your answer! Try it now:

Now practice what you would say in front of a mirror, and practice with people in your support network. You may also ask someone in your support network to set up a practice interview with you.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:****Things to think about if you consider yourself an older worker**

Some people who think of themselves as “older workers” often wonder whether their age will help or hurt their chances of getting a job. The answer is that it all depends on the specific job, as well as how you decide to deal with this issue. If you are discouraged about your older age and talk negatively about your age during an interview, this issue may work against you. However, if you embrace your older age and the fact that you offer unique and important things because of your life experience, this issue can work in your favor! You might consider talking with an employer about the fact that you’re an older worker and then highlight the positive things about it. Below we provide an exercise to help you think more about this.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Things to think about if you consider yourself an older worker**

Below may be some pros or positives about being an older worker that

you may choose to bring up during a job interview. Please check the box next to each statement that is correct for you.

- You are a hard worker and have an “old-fashioned” work ethic.
- You’ve had more life history and experiences than younger candidates, and this experience may help you view things in a different and more mature way than others.
- Although you may not know as much about technology as younger candidates, you are willing to learn and are excited about it.
- A job is so important to you. And since it has been a while since you’ve worked, you’re eager to prove to yourself and to everyone in your life that you can do it. All you need is the chance to show that you can succeed.
- Another positive about being an older worker is: _____

Once you’ve thought about positive things about yourself and being an older worker, we recommend that you be prepared to talk about these positive things during your job interview. It may help to practice what you will say.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

What to do if you’re getting interviews but no job offers

Getting invited for job interviews is excellent progress and shows that your hard work and efforts are really paying off. Try not to get discouraged if you do not get a job offer right away, though. It often takes several different job interviews before a person lands the right job.

If you find that you’re going on interviews but not getting job offers, you may want to talk about this with a counselor or employment specialist or other people you trust. You may want to practice your interview skills and ask someone for honest feedback about what you can change to do even better. Or you may consider changing the types of information that you’re sharing with the potential employer during the interviews. For example, it may be worthwhile to adjust what you’re disclosing to employers.

Sometimes a small change to your interview approach or the things you say during your interview can make a big difference in how you come across to potential employers. Below is an exercise to help you think more about this.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

What to do if you're getting interviews but no job offers

Please think about your current situation and the types of information you're sharing during your interviews. Is there anything that you might change about *what* you're disclosing or *how* you're disclosing your personal information or history? You may want to talk with someone about your ideas.

Below write down at least two changes that you can make to your interviewing approach.

1.	_____

2.	_____

It may be helpful for you to practice interviewing with your counselor or employment specialist (if you have one) or someone else you trust and who knows how to get a job. It's a good idea to ask that person for specific feedback about things that you can change to make the interview even better. If you'd like to practice interviewing, write down the name of one person whom you can ask for assistance:

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is "How do I explain gaps in my work history? Or having several brief jobs? Or being an older worker?" Your personalized activities identified the following possible next step:

- Practice the things you might say to a potential employer about your gaps in work history or having several brief jobs.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

What to do when I'm offered a job— talking about a start date and pay

If you've been offered a job, you'll need to evaluate the offer and think about negotiating a salary. The sections below are meant to help you think through this and other issues before starting a new job.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Talking about your pay

If you didn't talk about your possible pay during your job interview, it's important to talk about it now that you've been offered the job. For some jobs, the pay is already set, and the employer will tell you the pay when offering you the job. In other cases, the employer may ask you what kind of pay you're hoping for. Either way, being clear about exactly how much you will be paid is important before you start the job. Below are some examples and an exercise to help you think about how to handle the topic of pay or salary when you're offered a job.

EXAMPLES:

Below are some samples that you can use during this part of the hiring process.

Employer: "I would like to offer you the position. What kind of salary are you looking for?"

Possible answers:

"Thank you very much. I accept. I am hoping to earn a minimum of _____ per hour. Is that reasonable to you?"

OR

"I am very happy to hear that you would like to hire me. The minimum amount I will need to earn is _____ per hour/week/year. Is this possible?"

OR

“Thank you very much for the job offer. I am grateful for this opportunity and grateful that you will allow me to flex my schedule in order to keep my regular medical appointments. I will do my best to be successful and help the company reach its goals. I would like to earn at least what the job posting stated.”

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Talking about your pay**

Please think about what to say about your pay when the employer offers you the job. Write down your ideas below.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:****Talking about a start date**

Do you already know the start date for the new job? If you have not already talked about this, it's important to do so when you're offered the job. In some cases, the employer might ask you when you would like to start, and there may be some flexibility that allows you to start the job any day over the next couple of weeks. In other cases, the employer might want you to start as soon as possible, maybe even the next day.

Think about when you are able to start, and talk with the employer about this. For instance, are you able to start right away, or is there another job you need to continue for another week or two before you can start the new job? Below are some examples and an exercise to help you think about how to determine a start date when you're offered a job.

EXAMPLES:

Below are some examples that you can use during this part of the hiring process.

Employer: “I am glad that you will be joining our team. When will you be able to start?”

Possible answers:

“I will be able to start right away.”

OR

“The best time for me to start will be next Monday, if that is all right with you. That will give me time to prepare for my first day.”

OR

“My current employer requests that employees give a two-week notice. I would like to honor that commitment and start my new job on [insert date here]. Is this possible?”



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Talking about a start date

Please think about your current situation and when you would be able to start working once offered a job. You may want to talk with someone about your ideas. Write down below what you will say to the employer when offered the job.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “What to do when I’m offered a job—Talking about a start date and pay,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Practice talking with an employer about your pay. You may want to ask someone to practice and role-play with you.

- Practice talking with an employer about your start date.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

What are reasonable accommodations, and what's the best way to request one?

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Discussing reasonable accommodations

If you've been offered a job or you are considering a job, you may want to think about any reasonable accommodations that might help you perform your job. Reasonable accommodations are changes to the workplace or to schedules and assistance that help people with a disability to perform the essential functions of their jobs. Employers are required by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities such as mental illness or a serious physical disability. Please keep in mind that in some instances a request may not be granted if it would place an undue hardship on the employer.

Not everyone wants or needs to ask about reasonable accommodations. It depends on the job you get and your personal situation. For example, someone might ask for an extra 15-minute break in a 6-hour work shift to adjust to a new job. Or perhaps wearing earphones and listening to music would help with focus and productivity. Below we provide some examples of how to talk about reasonable accommodations as well as some exercises to help you think about your situation. Additional tips for requesting accommodations are available in Appendix G.

EXAMPLES:

During an interview or when being offered a job

Below are some examples of conversations with potential employers, including what you can say, that might occur at your job.

Employer: "You told me that you are in recovery from mental illness. I appreciate your openness with me. Based on the job description that I gave you, do you feel there is any way that your mental illness might affect your ability to perform the job as I described it? Is there any way that we need to make accommodations for you?"

Possible answers:

“No, not at all. I am very confident that this is a good job match for my skills.”

OR

“Based on your description of the job, I am very confident that it will be a good fit for me. The only accommodation we might need to consider is that I want to keep seeing my doctor, but she does not have evening hours. I only see her once a month and would have to leave early on appointment days. Would it be possible for me to come in early or stay late once a month in order to make up the time?”

OR

“I am nervous about starting work again, but I really do want to work because it is important to me. I am hoping that I can use a job coach, who would be someone from my program who can come to work with me, at least in the very beginning, to help me adjust and feel comfortable while I learn the position. I really do want this job and think my coach would help me get off to a good start. Would this be okay? I have her card if you are interested in talking to her.”

Employer: “You told me that you are in recovery from substance abuse. I appreciate your openness with me. Based on the job description that I gave you, do you feel there is any way that this issue might affect your ability to perform the job as I described it? Is there anything that I should be concerned about?”

Possible answers:

“No, not at all. I am very confident that this is a good job match for my skills.”

OR

“Based on your description of the job, I am very confident that it will be a good fit for me. The only thing that we might need to consider is that I attend a daily 12-step meeting that starts at 7 p.m. I know that we’ve talked previously about my hours being from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Would it be possible for me to come in each day at 10:30 a.m. and work until 6:30 p.m. so that I still work the same amount of hours but can also make it to my 12-step meeting? I’m really excited about this job opportunity and want to find a way to make it work.”

EXAMPLES:*On-the-job scenarios*

Once you begin your new job, situations can come up that require you to talk or negotiate with your supervisor and coworkers. Below are some

scenarios as well as possible responses that you can use or modify for your particular situation.

There may come a time when you feel the need to ask for special accommodations concerning your disability in order to keep doing your job. For example, you may find it helpful to take an extra break from time to time in order to practice deep breathing to help you manage anxiety. You might raise the issue with your supervisor as outlined below.

You: “Ms. Jones, would it be possible to discuss something about my job?”

Supervisor: “I have some time right now. How can I help you?”

You: “Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I really am enjoying my job, but sometimes I get afraid that I am not doing a good enough job. This makes me nervous, and I find that when I get nervous or anxious, it is very helpful for me to take a couple of minutes to take some deep breaths and refocus. I really do want to do a good job and think that this would help me. Would it be okay if I just took a couple of minutes here and there to regroup? I wouldn’t want you to think that I was goofing off.”

Supervisor: “I really do think that you are doing a great job, and your work sure is appreciated. I think this is a reasonable request as long as we are not talking about ten or fifteen minutes every hour or two. It might also be helpful if I were to talk to you more about your performance so that you are not worried about not doing a good job.”

You: “Thank you very much for understanding. I will be careful not to take too much time. And I think hearing from you about my performance will be very helpful.”

An employer may sometimes be either unable or unwilling to accommodate your request.

Employer: “I understand that you want to do a good job but get nervous sometimes. Unfortunately, I cannot allow you to take a break just any time. The other workers will start doing the same thing, and our production will slow too much. I hope that you will catch on and feel more comfortable.”

You: “I appreciate your taking the time to listen to my concerns. I understand your concern about what the other workers might see and do. I will continue to do my best.”

If you have been given an accommodation, coworkers might ask you about why you are getting special treatment.

Coworker: “Hey, how come you get to come in late every couple of Wednesdays?”

You: “Before I was hired, I made this arrangement with the manager. I come in late one day every two weeks and make up the time the following day. I usually come in early or leave later on.”

OR

“Every two weeks I have a regular appointment that I need to get to, so the manager has agreed to allow me to flex my schedule around the appointments. I make up the time during those weeks by staying late or coming in early on some days.”



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Discussing reasonable accommodations

Think about whether you need any reasonable accommodations from your employer. Please list the accommodations in the space below.

Now think about how you might talk with your employer about the reasonable accommodations you listed above. You may feel comfortable raising these types of issues with your supervisor, or this may be hard for you. Consider asking an employment specialist for help if you need it. Write down your ideas below about how you might make a request.

**NEXT STEPS:**

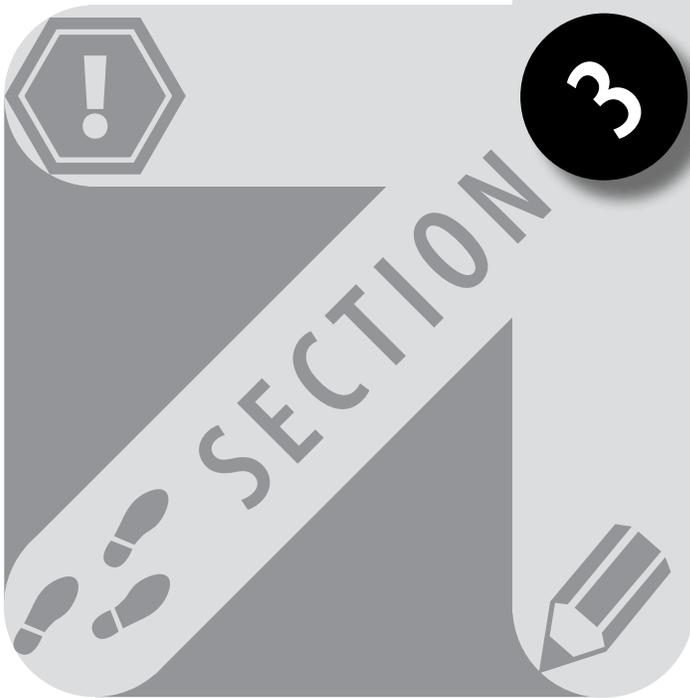
What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “What are reasonable accommodations, and what’s the best way to request one?” Your personalized activity identified the following possible next steps:

- Practice talking with an employer and asking about the reasonable accommodations that you need. You may want to ask someone to practice and role-play with you.
- You may want to contact the Job Accommodation Network, which provides free information on reasonable accommodations. If you explain your need, the staff can help you in how to approach your employer. Contact information: (800) 526-7234 (Voice) (877) 781-9403 (TTY) <http://askjan.org>.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

After Getting A Job



TOPIC:

Dealing with my concerns when I'm starting a new job



Just don't give up TRYING to do what you really want to do. Where there's love and INSPIRATION, I don't think you can go wrong.

ELLA FITZGERALD (1917–1996)
Jazz Vocalist

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Your concerns and what to do about them

You are about to start a new job. Sometimes people are so excited to begin a new job that they are not worried about anything. They are just eager to begin. More often, people have some concerns and questions about starting their new job. For example, they may wonder what it will be like to work at a new place and with people they have never met. They also might wonder how working might affect their psychiatric symptoms. Some people also may have concerns about having a new schedule and the commitment of a new job.

Concerns, worries, and fears before starting a new job are natural. Almost everyone experiences them at some point before their first day on the job.

Thinking about your biggest concerns, devising a plan for managing them, and identifying a support person in advance can be helpful. Dealing with your concerns before your first day will help you succeed, and you will be happier and healthier when you begin your job. Appendix H contains some tips to help you prepare for your first day of work. Below are exercises to help you identify your biggest concerns, how you'll manage them, and who can help.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Your concerns and what to do about them

This activity is designed to help you identify your biggest concerns about starting your new job. Perhaps you are concerned about getting along with coworkers or worried that your first couple of days will be overwhelming and aggravate your psychiatric symptoms. Try to identify the things that concern you the most, and this exercise will help you work through them.

CONCERN 1

The following is my biggest concern about starting my job:

How might this concern affect your ability to perform certain job duties?

Are there ways that this concern probably *will not* affect your work?
Please explain.

What are good ways to handle this concern or issue? Has anything worked well for you in the past? Below, please write down some possible solutions or ways to handle Concern 1 (above):

Now think about whether there is someone who can help you deal with that concern. Might someone be a part of your plan for dealing with your concern? Please write down the name of one possible support person below.

CONCERN 2

The following is another serious concern about starting the new job:

How might this concern affect your ability to perform certain job duties?

Are there ways that this concern probably *will not* affect your work? Please explain.

What are good ways to handle this concern or issue? Has anything worked well for you in the past? Please write down below some possible solutions or ways to handle Concern 2:

Now think about whether there is someone who can help you deal with that concern. Might someone be a part of your plan for dealing with your concern? Please write down the name of one possible support person below.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Dealing with my concerns when I’m starting a new job,” and your personalized activity identified the following possible next step:

- After identifying your two biggest concerns about starting your new job, think about how they might affect your job duties.
- Work out a plan to deal with your two biggest concerns about starting your new job, including identifying a supportive person to talk to.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Transportation to and from work

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Transportation

Once you have a job, you'll need to figure out how to get to and from work. But you can start thinking about transportation even before you get the job. Some people have their own car and can drive to and from work on their own. Others often ask friends or family members to drive them somewhere. Still others use public transportation, such as buses or the subway. Sometimes a combination of transportation choices will work. For example, a friend or family member might be able to take you to work two specific days a week, but you'll need to take the bus to work on the other days.

You will need to figure out ways to get to and from work that are the best fit for you. You may also find that someone you work with lives near you and might be willing to give you a ride; if so, remember to offer to pay for gas. Your coworker may not accept payment but will appreciate the offer. Some states also have commuting programs to help people carpool or find rides to and from work with other people. For example, if you live in New York, you may also consider trying to find a ride through Rideshare, a program of the New York State Department of Transportation. More information about Rideshare can be found at www.511ny.org/rideshare.

Getting to and from work can seem like a job itself. Things that are beyond your control can and will happen, and unless you are very lucky, there will come a time when you are late to work. Being late can be uncomfortable for both you and your supervisor. Below is an exercise to help you plan ahead for transportation (and see Appendix H). But first we provide some examples about what you might say if you arrive late to work one day.

EXAMPLES:

You: "I am sorry, Mr. Pinney, but the highway was shut down and the traffic was tied up for miles."

Employer: That is okay. I heard about the traffic and see that some of the others are still not here. Thank you for calling me from the road to let me know."

OR

You: “I am sorry for coming in late today, Mr. Pinney. I will try to not let that happen again.”

Employer: “I understand. You are hardly ever late, so let’s not worry about it.”

OR

Employer: “I noticed that you were ten minutes late this morning. I need you to be here on time in order to cover the front desk for early arrivals.”

You: “I apologize for inconveniencing you. I will make every effort to not let this happen again.”



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Transportation

You might already have a plan for getting to and from work. If so, please write down below how you will get to and from your job.

If you do not already have a way to get to and from your job, please take some time to think about your options. Perhaps you know someone who can give you a ride to and from work. Or perhaps you can take a bus or some other public transportation. Please write down your ideas in the space below:

Will you need to ask anyone for help with transportation? If so, please write down the names and phone numbers of two people you might ask for assistance:

Name: _____
Phone number: _____
Name: _____
Phone number: _____

Think about what specific kind of help you might need from them to help with your transportation plan, and describe it below.

In some cases, such as if a person helps you on a regular basis or “went out of their way” to help you with transportation, you might consider repaying them somehow. If you would like to, how might you repay them? If they won’t accept money from you, consider other ways to show your gratitude, like taking them out to eat or buying them a gift certificate to their favorite store. Show them how much you appreciate the support. Write down how you might show your gratitude here:



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

A backup transportation plan

It’s always a good thing to have a plan for getting to and from work. However, sometimes there will be unanticipated problems with that plan. For example, if the plan involves driving to work, what happens if the car does not start? Or, if you’re taking a bus, what happens if the bus comes a

few minutes early and you miss it or you're in the middle of the trip and you miss your transfer? We recommend taking some time to plan ahead and think about a backup plan. After all, you need to make sure that you get to go to work.

It may be helpful to talk with your support people when you are creating a backup plan for transportation. Below is an exercise to help you think about this.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

A backup transportation plan

Talk with people from your support team and think about options for a backup plan in case your main transportation plan fails. Write down all of the ideas you or others came up with below.

Now take some time to think about the backup options above. Which one makes the most sense for you and your job situation? Please write down the best choice for you here:

Does your backup plan involve another person? If so, write the name and phone number of that person below.

Name: _____
Phone number: _____

If your backup plan involves asking someone for a ride or other assistance, be sure to talk with that other person as soon as possible.

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Transportation to and from work,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Develop a plan for getting to and from work, and develop a backup plan in case your usual plan fails for some reason.
- If your transportation plan involves getting a ride from someone on a regular basis, offer to pay that person for gas or think of another way to show your gratitude.
- Suppose your transportation fails on a particular day and causes you to be late to work; think of what you will say to apologize to your supervisor and assure him or her that you will make an effort to not let it happen again.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Talking with people on my first few days of the job

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Helpful hints for talking with coworkers

In this section, we provide some helpful hints about how to talk with people you work with during your first few days on the job. We often want people to like us, and getting along with coworkers can help you enjoy and keep your job. And it might even help you make a couple of good friends and add people to your social life. A few tips on how to make a good first impression with coworkers are below and in Appendix H.

HOW TO START CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHERS

There are many possible ways to start a conversation with coworkers. Often you can simply introduce yourself to people, state your name, offer a firm handshake, and smile. Remember to maintain eye contact during these introductions. One possible topic to discuss with people is how long they have worked for your employer. You might also ask what kinds of things they do in their job. These are good topics because they are things related to the job setting that everyone can talk about. You can also let people know that you're glad to have the job and looking forward to getting to know people.

GOOD CONVERSATION TOPICS FOR YOUR FIRST DAY

After you have met people and the introductions are over, you may have the chance to talk with others throughout the day. This can happen when taking a break, including a lunch break. Sometimes, there are also chances to talk with others while you're working, if you are working near each other. We suggest bringing up topics that are not too personal. In other words, you want to ask basic questions about people's lives and tell them basic things about your life.

For the first few days, it's probably best to avoid personal questions. People differ about how much personal information they wish to share with others at work. For example, your mental health is part of your personal information, and talking about it is up to you, but it's probably a good idea to hold off on mentioning it until you know your cowork-

ers better. If you chose to disclose your mental health issue to your employer, either for a reasonable accommodation or for another reason, we advise that you weigh the pros and cons of disclosing to coworkers carefully.

Here are some good conversation topics that you can use to get to know your coworkers better:

- The types of things people do for fun when they are not working
- Hobbies or special interests
- Weather
- Books
- An activity that you just did recently
- Sports and sporting events
- Current (nonpolitical) events in the local or national news
- Special events taking place in the community (for example, festivals)
- Movies or popular TV shows
- Music

TOPICS NOT TO DISCUSS WITH COWORKERS

There are five topics that raise controversy and probably should not be discussed with coworkers, especially after just meeting them. Even after you get to know your coworkers better, talking about the following topics may offend someone or make people feel uncomfortable. It is wise to be very cautious about discussing:

- how much money people make
- religion
- politics
- sex
- serious health issues

By avoiding these topics, you help improve the chance that people will want to talk with you and get to know you better. This will then let you get to know them better. Making friends or just getting along with coworkers can really add to your happiness while you're at work.


PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Helpful hints for talking with coworkers

How would you handle it if someone brought up religion, politics, or sex during your first few days on the job? For example, if someone said, “Hey, I can’t stand the President of the United States. What do you think?” It’s perfectly okay to say, “I hear you. I’d actually prefer not to talk about politics in the workplace.” Or “I hear you. I’m not really too into politics.”

How might you handle it if someone brought up a topic that you didn’t want to discuss?

Below, please list the topics that you would feel most comfortable raising with others.


NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Talking with people on my first few days of the job,” and your personalized activity identified the following possible next steps:

- Plan ahead for what you want to talk with others about when you are getting to know new people at work.
- Aim for general, easy conversation topics as you are getting to know your coworkers, and avoid personal questions.

- Know the five controversial topics to avoid, at least until you know your coworkers better.
- Even if you have disclosed your mental health issues with your supervisor, you will want to weigh the pros and cons of disclosing your condition with your coworkers.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Important considerations for the first month of a new job



*What is the recipe for **SUCCESSFUL** achievement? To my mind there are just four essential **INGREDIENTS**: Choose a career you love, give it the best there is in you, seize your opportunities, and be a member of the team.*

BENJAMIN F. FAIRLESS (1890–1962)
Steel Executive and Humanitarian

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Dealing with issues that may arise during the first month

As you may already know, the first month of a new job is really important. It can also be a stressful time as you learn your job responsibilities and get to know other people. During the first month, your employer and coworkers will get a good idea of your style of working and your work skills and attitude. You may meet some new people, so the first month will also let your supervisor see how you get along with others. You may also want to be

aware of your own stress level and how it may or may not affect your health and wellness.

This period is also a time for you to consider what help you might want or need from your support team. One way to do this is to make a list of any problems you have experienced at work and any concerns you might have about returning to work. You can use the list and suggestions below to help you get started.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Dealing with issues that may arise during the first month

Some issues that may arise during your first month are listed below. Please read each item and think about whether you have any problems or concerns in these areas.

- **Handling stress and problem solving.** You might want to ask for help in this area if you have trouble handling stress or get really overwhelmed by things. Working in a new job with new people can be stressful for everyone. Think about how you handle stress and new situations. Do you often do well and solve problems pretty easily? Or do you struggle a lot? You know yourself best. What are ways you successfully manage stress?
- **Maintaining wellness.** Think about how well you manage or maintain your wellness, including your mental health and any physical health issues you may have. If you decide you'd like help in this area, there are many resources available to you. For example, you can access the resources below online if you have access to a computer. Or, if you have a support team, you can talk about these resources with an employment specialist, counselor, psychiatrist, or other member of the team:
 - Wellness Recovery Action Plans have been used by many people for dealing with mental health and other kinds of health challenges. For more information, you can go to the following website: www.mental-healthrecovery.com
 - *Wellness Self-Management* and *Wellness Self-Management Plus* workbooks can help you help yourself. These workbooks can be accessed at the following website: practiceinnovations.org/CPIInitiatives/WellnessSelfManagementWSM/tabid/189/Default.aspx
 - Resources for managing your wellness that were developed by Dr. Patricia Deegan and her team. You can find these at: www.patdeegan.com

- **Maintaining concentration, memory, and speed.** You may decide that you need help to stay focused, to remember certain things, or to do things more quickly or more slowly. Do your job responsibilities mean that you need to have better concentration and memory than usual? If so, and if you'd like help in this area, be sure to list it below as one of your concerns.
- **Performing specific job tasks.** Think about the specific things that you are asked to do while on the job. For many people, some tasks may be pretty easy, but others are really hard. You can ask your support people for ideas to help you with specific tasks that are hard for you.
- **Dressing for work.** It is possible that dressing for work does not worry you at all. If you know what to wear and have the right clothes, there's no problem. On the other hand, sometimes people are not sure what they should be wearing. It may be that they know what they should wear, but they don't have the right clothes. You might not have a lot of money to buy new clothes. If this is a concern for you, please be sure to list it in the exercise below.
- **Handling money.** Are you able to plan ahead and save a little money for when you need it? Or do you spend money as soon as you get it and then find yourself wishing you hadn't? You're the best judge of how well you handle your money! When starting your job, be sure you have accurate information on when you will receive your first paycheck and what period it covers.
- **Getting along with supervisors.** Your relationship with your supervisor is an important one. Having a good relationship with him or her can help you be successful on the job, and you may enjoy going to work more. How well have you gotten along with other people in positions of authority or power in the past? How do you usually get along with someone who is supervising you or whom you "have to answer to"? This will be an important area for getting help if you think you need it.
- **Asking supervisors for feedback.** Some people find it hard to ask a supervisor about how they are doing on the job. They sometimes don't know how to bring up the conversation. If this is true for you, be sure to list this as an area where your support team can help.
- **Getting along with coworkers.** Think about how well you have gotten along with your coworkers in the past. If you've never had a job, think about how well you get along with new people whom you need to spend time with. How does it usually go? Do people tend to ignore you? Are you able to have conversations with them? Do you make new friends? Is there

a lot of conflict or arguing? Your support people are there to help you figure out how to get along with coworkers if you ask them to.

- **Managing personal appointments with your work schedule.** If going to work seems stressful to your personal life because your work schedule disrupts a usual routine, you may consider rearranging your personal schedule a bit. By making some small adjustments to your personal appointments to support your work schedule, you can make your work day go more smoothly. For example, consider scheduling dental and medical appointments on a day you are not working. This way you won't need to worry about getting to work late or leaving early and figuring out transportation to and from the appointment. Or maybe you need to request a day off to attend an appointment. You may decide to ask others for some help in this area. That's up to you.
- **Managing leisure time and other responsibilities with your work schedule.** Once you begin working, your leisure time takes on a new meaning and may feel more valuable. Time off is important for resting up and recharging and preparing for another week of work. But grocery shopping, laundry, and housekeeping—all things that support the working life—may seem to compete for your time. How well do you plan your days off? Think about whether you could use some help managing your leisure time and other responsibilities.
- **Securing reasonable accommodations.** Think about whether you need any reasonable accommodations from your employer. Are there certain things that you can ask for, such as an extra 15-minute break for your 6-hour work shift to help you better handle the stress of your job? Perhaps doing your job while wearing earphones and listening to your own music helps to keep you balanced, relaxed, and productive and helps you control symptoms. You may feel comfortable raising these types of issues with your supervisor, or this may be hard for you. Consider asking a counselor or employment specialist for help if you need it. You may also refer to the section about reasonable accommodations that can be found by looking in the table of contents of this resource book.
- **Other things.** There may be other areas that your support people can help you with. You know yourself best. Think about whether there are other things that you've needed help with in the past or might need in the future.

Now give some thought to the problems or concerns you have that might affect your job, especially during your first month. Make a list of the problems and concerns below. Remember that no problem is too big or too small.

All that matters is that it is important to you.

My problems and concerns are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now think about how you might handle or manage the concerns that you identified above. What do you think might help you? What has helped in the past that might help now? List your answers below.

You may wish to talk with someone, such as an employment specialist or counselor, about your concerns and how to handle your first month at your new job. Or another possibility is to involve other people on your support team to help. The choice is up to you. The next section of this workbook encourages you to think more about supports that may help you keep your job.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Important considerations for the first month of a new job,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Think about what feels challenging in the early days of your new job, and examine your past for similar experiences with these challenges and clues for what may help you achieve success.
- Consider talking with your support team for additional assistance.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Contacting supports when the job becomes challenging

Finding a job can be a long and challenging process. Starting and keeping a job can present a whole different set of challenges. With a good plan and the right supports in place, you can make your employment as positive and rewarding as possible. Many people return to work and have little or no problems at all. Still others may struggle to adjust to their new routine and responsibilities. This section of the resource book includes suggestions and exercises for putting an employment support plan in place.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Who are your supports?

Your supports are people you would like help from on your path to employment. To figure out who your supports might be, ask yourself the following questions: Who are the people who are important to you? Who is rooting for you to do well at work and in your recovery? Do you know anyone with special skills or knowledge like managing benefits or staying well and handling stress? These are some of the people you might want on your support team. If you don't know anyone with these skills, start asking around. Many people like to be helpful.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

Who are your supports?

Make a list of people you might want to have on your support team. Provide a reason why this person would be helpful and supportive.

Person 1: _____

Phone number: _____

Reason I want this person on my support team: _____

Person 2: _____
Phone number: _____
Reason I want this person on my support team: _____
Person 3: _____
Phone number: _____
Reason I want this person on my support team: _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

How your supports can help you

In an earlier section of this resource book, you may have identified some problems or concerns you have about work or keeping your job. If you have not done so, you may want to complete the topic “**Important considerations for the first month of a new job.**” Or you can make a list of your biggest concerns now. Once you make a list of your problems or concerns about work or keeping your job, you can begin thinking about how your support people can help (Appendix I contains additional information on using supports). Sometimes old habits or patterns of behavior can return and interfere with work or school. Discuss your list with your support team, and brainstorm together to find ways to avoid or resolve any of these concerns. Make a list of “If *this* happens, we will do *that*” scenarios. Remember that we all grow and change.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

How your supports can help you

Now think about how the support people in your life can help you with the problems and concerns you wrote down earlier. Do you want them to brainstorm with you about how to handle things or solve problems? Do you want them to help you think about how to avoid or how to change certain behaviors? Would it be helpful to check in with each other every week to discuss how you’re handling a challenge or concern? The ways that they might help you is up to you! Please write down some ways that your support people might be able to help:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Other supports

Everyone needs some kind of support to be successful on the job. Maybe you would like help managing your money or figuring out how to save money each month for the things you need. Or you might have a medical condition that involves regular doctor’s appointments that need to be planned around your work schedule; do you need help figuring out appointment times that work with your schedule or how you will get to and from these appointments and to and from work? Maybe you need a different kind of support. Think about the stresses or problems you are facing and what might help you be successful at your job, and then think about the people who have agreed to support you and how they can help. An exercise below asks you to think about your life and the types of supports and resources you may need to succeed in your job.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Other supports

Identify other types of job supports that you might want or need to help you be successful, as well as whom you might approach to ask for this support. For example, an employment specialist, psychiatrist, counselor, friend, mentor, or member of the clergy may be helpful to you in the ways you identify.

TYPE OF SUPPORT	WHOM TO ASK	HOW TO CONTACT

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

How can you reach out to your supports when you need them?

What might get in the way of reaching out?

There are many ways that you can reach out to your support team. For example, you can make contact through an employment specialist, you can call people on your support list, you can talk with them at a meeting that may already be planned, or you can send them an e-mail. Sometimes reaching out for help may be challenging, and sometimes those challenges come from within. You might feel reluctant or embarrassed to ask others for help, for example. Or, when you decide to reach out, people may be busy and not answer the phone. Keeping in mind that reaching out may not go perfectly, talk with your support team about how to handle this. Below are some exercises to guide you.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

How can you reach out to your supports when you need them?

Here is a list of common ways that people reach out to their support team to ask for help. Please look through the list and check the way or ways that you would like to reach out to them. It's important to remember that you can choose to reach out to different people in different ways.

- I can call a support person on the phone
- I can talk with my support person at a weekly meeting that I have already set up
- I can e-mail my support person
- I can text my support person
- I can meet with my support person in a public place (such as a coffee shop) where we see each other several times per week

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

What might get in the way of reaching out?

In the space below, please think about what might get in the way of talking with your support people or someone you trust about the challenges you

are facing in your job. For example, you might write things like, “When I’m depressed, I tend to shut down or not want to be with people,” or “When I’m using too many drugs or too much alcohol, I don’t think clearly, and I don’t realize when I need some help.” The important thing is that you think about the things that get in the way for you. You know yourself better than anyone else.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Sometimes a job doesn’t work out

Sometimes, even with supports, things can go wrong with the job. Maybe it wasn’t such a good job match after all. Maybe the tasks weren’t interesting enough, or maybe they were too difficult. Maybe your supervisor’s expectations were more than you were able to meet. Perhaps your employer experienced financial problems that required letting some employees go, including you. For these and other reasons, people can lose their jobs. If this happens to you, it will be important to view this as a learning experience that can lead to your personal growth and better work experiences in the future.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Sometimes a job doesn’t work out

If you have recently lost a job, this exercise can be helpful to you.

Is there anyone whom you would like to speak with who can help you learn from this experience? If so, please identify this person:

What will you tell this person?

What are your “lessons learned” that can help you with your next job?
How do you want your next job to be different?

What is a good next step toward finding another job?

How might you explore this topic further?



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Contacting supports when the job becomes challenging,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Identify your support people and know why you chose them.
- Think about the specific support you are looking for.
- Contact your supports and ask for help with your issues.
- If your job doesn't work out, ask a support person to help you think through what happened and what you can learn from the experience to help the next job go better.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Workplace protections: What are my rights as a worker?

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Workplace rights and protections

Today's workplace has specific and important protections in place for employees. You can increase the satisfaction and benefits of your work experience by becoming aware of your rights and the kind of safe and dignified environment you should expect from your workplace. Remember that you are in charge of your own employment. Having good information about your rights can make your experience more positive and productive.

It is important to keep in mind that the protections for workers as described in this section are available only to workers who are employed with legitimate and legal companies. Employers who hire people “off the books” or “on the side” are not bound by these laws, and their workers will not benefit from any of these protections and benefits. In fact, working “off the books” leaves workers vulnerable not only in the event of job loss but also to losing Social Security assistance if caught working “off the books” (without properly reporting income to the Social Security Administration), meaning loss of their monthly Social Security check as well as health insurance. It is also possible that such workers will be charged with fraud and need to pay back any benefits received.

DISCRIMINATION AND THE WORKPLACE

Workers benefit from state and federal laws that protect them from workplace hazards or environments that might be unsafe or unpleasant. The laws protect workers from being discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, skin color, gender, sexual orientation or identity, age, religion, place of birth, and more. Did you know that it is illegal for an employer to ask a job searcher if he or she has a disability? In the United States, workers are protected from potential hostile social environments, bullying, and demands for sexual behavior by supervisors and coworkers. One example of the laws protecting people is called the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), which protects people with physical and mental health problems from discrimination. If you have a disability, you may choose to talk with your counselor or employment specialist for further information about these topics. Detailed information about discrimination, including information about the ADA,

can be found at the U.S. Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov.

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Laws protect workers from being placed in potentially dangerous situations or from using materials, chemicals, and tools and equipment that can cause injury. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates workplace safety and health of employees. It requires companies to follow specific safety rules and provide equipment such as ear, eye, and skin protection to workers who work with certain chemicals and equipment. Some examples of this are that companies that use certain chemicals are required to provide eye wash stations and even showers for workers who might become accidentally exposed to harmful material. Machines that employees must use in their jobs must have certain safety features. The orange vests and hardhats that construction workers wear are good examples of how companies protect their employees from accidents. Under OSHA regulations, employers are required to provide employees with a list of potentially hazardous materials that will be used or found in the workplace. This protection is important because it allows the employee or potential employees to make informed decisions about whether they want to work in a particular environment. You can find detailed information about the protections required for the industry you want to work in on the OSHA website at www.osha.gov.

FAIR LABOR PRACTICES IN THE WORKPLACE

Laws also protect workers from unfair or exploitive workplace conditions. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires employers to provide workers with a minimum wage, standard overtime pay when applicable, accurate record keeping of the time employees have worked along with the amount that they were paid, and protection of children from situations in which their well-being is in danger. Different standards apply to different industries. It can be helpful to learn more about your industry workplace rights by visiting the U.S. Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that requires employers under certain conditions to provide job protection and unpaid leave for some medical conditions and family situations that workers might have. Some examples of protection can include coverage for personal or family illnesses, pregnancy, and time needed to arrange adoptions or foster care. The rules for qualifying for FMLA benefits are very specific. For example, factors such as the number of people a company has employed, how long you have been employed by the company, and even the distance you have to travel to get to work are all important. To learn the details of your specific situation, you can visit the U.S. Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov/whd/fmla.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:****Workplace rights and protections**

Are you interested in learning more about any of the workplace rights and protections that were discussed above? If so, please list the ones that you want to know more about in the space below.

Next, you may wish to talk with someone you know who has correct information about workplace rights and ask how you might obtain more information. List the people you want to talk with below.

Now please think about your next steps in obtaining more information about your rights. Please write down your ideas below.

Keep in mind that the Internet is a good place to turn to if you want assistance with learning about your workplace rights and protections. The U.S. Department of Labor website is a good place to start. If you live in New York, another resource is ACCESS-VR, or the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services—Vocational Rehabilitation, and your local One-Stop Employment Center. Mental health program employment staff can also assist you with learning about your workplace rights and protections.

How might you explore this topic further?

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Workplace protections: What are my rights as a worker?” and your personalized activity identified the following possible next step:

- If you are interested in learning more about ADA, OSHA, FLSA, and FMLA protections of your rights as a worker, talk to someone you trust or access this information on the Internet on the U.S. Department of Labor website.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Talking with employers about getting a promotion or a raise



Asking what I considered an IMPOSSIBLE salary when I didn't want to work for someone has boosted my PAY again and again.

ETHEL WATERS (1896–1977)
American Actress / Vocalist

Perhaps this is your situation now: You have learned your new job, and you are doing it well. Choosing, getting, and keeping your job presented many challenges, and you are thriving. Your success may mean that you are now ready to take a step toward more responsibility and opportunities with your company. By looking to the future and considering this possibility, you can focus your current performance and maybe even seek a well-deserved promotion or raise in your salary. Most people want to make more money over time or be appreciated by others for the work they do. This section of the resource book includes information and exercises about asking for a promotion or raise.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

Seeking a promotion or salary increase

Perhaps you are thinking about a salary increase or a promotion. It's natural to get excited when you think about making more money. And most people feel good about succeeding in getting a promotion. Salary increases and promotions typically require doing a really good job for a long period of time, such as one or two years or more. It's also important to have a good relationship with your supervisor and to be able to communicate well with him or her.

After you've been in the job for a while, consider letting your supervisor know that you are interested in taking on more responsibility. Then you might wish to talk about how you may work toward a promotion. In some cases, your supervisor might recognize that you're doing a good job and offer you a salary increase or promotion without your bringing it up. In many cases, getting these things will involve asking for them. But before approaching your supervisor, you might try to find out how raises and promotions are typically handled at your place of business. In some work settings raises are based on yearly performance evaluations. Raises are sometimes based on individual performance and sometimes are the same for all employees.

When asking for a salary increase, a good strategy is to first talk with your supervisor about your accomplishments on the job. What have you done well so far? Be prepared to share specific things you do really well. Share examples of how you have really "come through" and met your work goals on a regular basis. You can let your supervisor know your strengths, and politely ask him or her to consider giving you a raise. Please keep in mind that some employers may not give you an answer right away. They may ask for some time to think about your request. Below are some examples and an exercise that asks you to consider how you might talk with a supervisor about a promotion or salary increase.

EXAMPLES:

You have reached your one-year anniversary on the job, and you feel it is time to ask for a raise or a promotion.

You: "Mr. Lu, I would like to talk to you about a raise. I have been working here for a year and feel that I have been doing a very good job. My performance evaluations have been very good, and I have prepared a list of my accomplishments to share with you."

OR

You: “Hi Ms. McGrath, I would like to talk to you about my salary and about the possibility of getting a raise in pay. I have been getting consistent positive feedback from you and my coworkers and feel that I have contributed a lot to the success of our department. I have prepared a list of my accomplishments if you would like to take a look.”

OR

You: “Mr. Wiltshire, I feel that I have mastered my job and contributed a great deal to the company over the past year and think that I am ready to take on more responsibility. I would like to be considered for a promotion to _____ .” [insert job here]



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Seeking a promotion or salary increase

Think about how to have the conversation with your supervisor about a salary increase or promotion. What kinds of things will be important for you to keep in mind? For example, what are your strengths, and what tasks do you do well at work? List your accomplishments, productivity, and skills that are important information for a salary review.

Sometimes the most difficult part of the conversation about a raise or promotion is the very beginning. Please use the space below to think about and write down the way you can start the conversation. What things might you say first?

Once the conversation has started, what else do you want to say to your supervisor? For example, what other information do you want him or her to have? What exactly might you say when asking for the salary increase? How might you end the conversation? Please write down your ideas below.

You have given some thought to your strengths, how you might begin the conversation, and what you want to say. Now it's a good idea to practice the conversation with others!



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Talking with employers about getting a promotion or a raise,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- Practice how you would talk with an employer to seek a raise or promotion. It may be helpful to ask someone to practice and role-play with you.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

How do I know if I want to end my job? And how do I appropriately end a job?

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

How successful and satisfied are you with this job?

How happy are you with your current job? Sometimes people are successful at their current job but do not feel happy or satisfied because they wish they were doing something else. Sometimes the job is not a good match for them. This can make them not want to work much, and they may be really unhappy with their job.

On the other hand, many people feel satisfied because their job is a great match for them. Still others may have already quit or lost their job because it wasn't working out. There is no right or wrong way to think about your job satisfaction or how successful you are. Below is an exercise to encourage you to think about how satisfied and successful you are with your job.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

How successful and satisfied are you with this job?

Think about your current job. Are there things that you do or things that you hear from others that make you feel successful on the job? If so, please list some of them here:

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____

List three accomplishments that indicate that you're successful in your job:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

[Note: Have you updated your resume with your recent accomplishments and experience? Now may be a good time to do so.]

Are there things you do or feedback you hear from others that make you feel like you're *not* successful in your job? If so, please list some of them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now think about how happy you are in your current job. Which statement below best describes how you usually feel about your job? In other words, how do you usually feel at work?

- I'm really happy and satisfied going to work and doing my job. I'm glad to do what I do.
- I'm kind of happy going to work and doing my job.
- It depends on the day. Sometimes I'm happy going to work, and other days I'm unhappy going to work.
- I'm not that happy going to work and doing my job.
- I'm really unhappy and unsatisfied going to work and doing my job. I wish I had a different job.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Is it time to consider finding another job?

Figuring out whether you are happy and satisfied with your job is important. Keep in mind that every job often has parts that we like and parts that we don't like as much. Hopefully the good outweighs the bad. You may

decide that you want to stay at your current job if you are happy and satisfied with your work, if you are paid fairly, if you get along reasonably well with your supervisor and coworkers, and if you are able to succeed with your job. However, perhaps you are not happy or not doing very well handling your job responsibilities. Or you might feel that the pay you receive is much less than a fair wage for the type of work you do.

If you're not happy and you think the job you have is not a good match for your skills and interests, it may be time to consider finding another job. It's a good idea to talk with someone you trust about the pros and cons of quitting one job to find another. If possible, it's also a good idea to try to find a new job before quitting so you can avoid a gap in income and a gap on your resume. Many people use this strategy: they "line up" a new job, and after they have been offered the new job, they talk with their current employer about ending the current job. Below we provide an exercise to help you think about whether to consider finding another job that's better for you.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Is it time to consider finding another job?

Please list the PROS and CONS of keeping your current job and the PROS and CONS of finding another job, as you see them now.

PROS of keeping current job:

- _____
- _____
- _____

CONS of keeping current job:

- _____
- _____
- _____

PROS of finding another job:

- _____
- _____
- _____

CONS of finding another job:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Now please consider all of the PROS and CONS above and whether one or more of the lists has more items or items of greater importance to you. It might help to talk with someone like a counselor or employment specialist about your pros and cons. What are your thoughts about whether making a move to another job makes sense for you right now?



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

How do I end this job?

It has been said that the two best days of any job are your first day and your last day. Moving on is a very natural and healthy thing to do and is not uncommon in today's job market. Just as you carefully planned the discussions you had with your employer before you got the job, it is important to plan what you will say to your employer before you leave. This is because there are ways to end the job that will help your employer feel positive toward you. You may even receive a good reference for your next job. This means that your supervisor will say good things about you or write a letter of recommendation for you to give to your next potential employer. Here are some approaches for ending your job in a positive way:

- Talk directly with your supervisor about your decision to end the job.
- Give the employer a fair amount of time between when you give notice that you are resigning and your last day of work, with two weeks being standard for most jobs.
- Tell your supervisor some reasons why you want to end this job and look

for another job. This can be hard and make you feel nervous, so it's important to think about what you want to say.

- Talk with your supervisor about how to handle your job responsibilities during the time you have left to work at the job. Should you keep working the same as always during your last few days? Or does your supervisor want you to take some time to show someone how to do some tasks of your job? Or maybe there is a specific project or two to focus on. Having a conversation about this is a good idea.

There are also ways to end the job that are not as good and that we suggest avoiding. For example, not talking with your employer in person about wanting to stop working is a bad idea. Simply not showing up to work once you've decided to quit is another bad idea. Not giving the employer advance notice, such as one or two weeks, before your last day of work, is considered unprofessional. These types of things tend to make a supervisor feel disrespected, and he or she may believe you lack courtesy. Your supervisor also may be less likely to give you a good recommendation or say good things about your performance if a potential employer asks about your work history. Below are some examples and an activity to help you think about ways to end your current job.

EXAMPLES:

You: "Ms. Roth, I am going to be leaving the company for another job. I found an opportunity that fits nicely with my career plans and interests. I am grateful for having the opportunity to contribute to this company and feel that the experience has helped me to grow and move on. I hope I can count on you as a reference in the future."

OR

You: "Mr. Walden, I want to tell you that I will be resigning from my position. I have found a job that really matches where I want to be in my career. They are willing to be flexible for my start date, so I am able to give you up to 6 weeks to replace me if you need it. I wouldn't want to leave you in a jam. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you, and I am hoping that I can count on you to be a reference for me."



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

How do I end this job?

Many people leave their jobs on bad terms. You spent a lot of time and effort on this job, and you want to make it count for something. Therefore,

how you leave this job can be just as important as the work you did on the job. It will be helpful to think about what you might say to your employer when you decide to end your job. You may wish to consider including the following points:

- I am grateful for the opportunity to work here
- I am grateful for the experience
- I liked the environment and coworkers
- I feel that this job has helped me develop professionally
- Thanks again for the opportunity
- I would appreciate it if you would be a reference for me

In the space below, please write down what you might say to your employer when you decide to have a conversation about ending your job.

Please refer to Appendix J for a sample letter of resignation that you can revise and give to your employer.



NEXT STEPS:

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “How do I know if I want to end my job? And how do I appropriately end a job?” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next step:

- Talk with someone in detail about the pros and cons of ending your current job. This is an important decision, and you’ll want to make sure you take the time to make the right decision for you.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

TOPIC:

Planning for my next job and/or developing a career path



Optimism is the FAITH that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without HOPE or confidence.

HELEN KELLER (1880–1968)
American Author, Political Activist, and Lecturer

Some people find that once they are working at a job they like, they sometimes begin thinking about how to get a next job that they may like even more. Or they begin considering how they might plan for a career. Others are happy with the job they are working at now and don't want to make any changes. There is no right or wrong choice. It's your life, and the decisions you make about work are up to you. Keep reading this section if you want to think more about a next job or what planning for a career might be like for you.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

What kind of education or training do you need to advance?

Some people find that in order to “move up” and receive a promotion from their employer, they need to build their skills or knowledge. A lack of skills or knowledge can get in the way of being promoted. Perhaps this is something that has happened to you. It’s a good idea to think about what kind of education or training you might need to help you move up to an even better job in the future.

Start by thinking about what kind of job you’d like to get next. Then think about what skills, experience, or knowledge you’d need to do well at that job. Do you have those skills now? If not, try to keep a hopeful attitude. Talking with your coworkers or an employment specialist or someone else from your support team can help you figure out what kind of education or training you might need. This might be a good time to request benefits counseling to find out how your benefits will be affected by a promotion or different job. Remember that all people can benefit from learning new things to help us grow and change.

**PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:**

What kind of education or training do you need to advance?

We suggest talking with your support people or someone you trust about the kind of education or training you need to move up. In the space below, please write down the ideas that you and your support person come up with.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

What do you want to be different with the next job?

Any time you start thinking about a new job, it’s a good idea to think about your past jobs. What would you like to be different about your

next job? What did you like about your past job or jobs? What did you dislike? Making a list of things that you did not like about your last job can help you think about what you want to be different about your next job.

It may be that everything was fine with your last job and that you simply want to do something different or something that you think you'll enjoy more. We all want a job that matches our interests, abilities, schedules, and so on. You're the best person to think about what kinds of things you'd like to be different with your next job.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

What do you want to be different with the next job?

Think about the things you like at your current job that you would also like to have as a part of your future job. This can be things like your schedule, something about the location or job setting, your pay, or something specific about one or two things you do at your current job. Be creative. Don't be afraid to dream and write down ideal situations that reflect your true values.

These are the things that I like at my current job (or that I want in my dream job) that I would like to be a part of my future job:

Now think about the things you don't like at your current job that you *do not* want to be a part of your next job.

I do not want the following to be a part of my next job:



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

How can you find another job? Who can help you?

Once you have chosen to find another job, the next step is to find that job. There are many ways to go about finding another job. And it's a good idea to ask someone for help. We suggest you go to the topic "**Developing a plan and finding a job**" in this resource book for details and exercises about finding your next job.

One of the ways that many people find a job is by talking with family, friends, or acquaintances. These people can provide "leads" or ideas about a possible job opening. You do not need to try to find a job all by yourself. In fact, many people have some kind of help from another person. It will be important for you to choose whom you want to work with to find a job. The decision is up to you.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

How can you find another job? Who can help you?

Here are some common ways for people to begin looking for another job. Please check all of the ones that you'd like to try next.

- Search through job ads in newspapers.
- Look online for available jobs.
- Go out into the community with an employment specialist to talk to potential employers.
- Get job applications.
- Ask someone to tell all of their friends and coworkers about me and the fact that I am looking for a job.
- Ask people about any job leads they hear about that match what I want to do.
- Other: _____

- Other: _____

Now please list one or two people you might want to help you find another job. Provide a reason why this person would be helpful. Please keep in mind that one good resource that may be available for you is an employment specialist.

Person 1: _____

Phone number: _____

Reason I want this person to help me: _____

Person 2: _____

Phone number: _____

Reason I want this person to help me: _____



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Do you want to plan for a career?

Maybe there is something specific that you've always wanted to do. Or maybe working has started you thinking about what it would be like to develop a career. It's never too early or too late to start planning for a career. Planning for a career involves many steps, such as

- thinking about your interests, skills, and abilities;
- making some decisions about what you want to do;
- deciding what your career goals will be; and
- thinking through next steps to help you move toward your career goal.

For example, do you need additional training? What might be the next job that will help you get one step closer to your career goals? Talking with others is a good way to get some feedback about how to begin planning for a career.

Some people may not be interested in having a career, and that's okay. They may be happy with their current job. They may even want to find a different job that will be rewarding, but they do not want to have to plan for a career. Take the time to think about yourself, your interests, and your work life. You may or may not decide that you want to plan for a career. The choice is up to you.



PERSONALIZED ACTIVITY:

Do you want to plan for a career?

Think about the type of job or job activities that would make up your dream job. Below please think about how your current job compares with your dream job. In what ways is this job leading you toward the type of career or advancement that you want? In what ways is this job not leading you toward the type of career you want?

In what ways is your current job leading you toward the type of career or advancement that you want?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

In what ways is your current job *not* leading you toward the type of career or advancement that you want?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

Below please write down your ideas about whether you want to start thinking about and planning for a career. Be sure to ask for input from people you trust in your life. Please write your thoughts here:

Four horizontal lines for writing.

It's also okay if you are happy with your current job or if you do not wish to plan for furthering your career. All of the choices about your life, your job, and your career are up to you!

**NEXT STEPS:**

What would you like to do to make more progress with this topic? This topic is “Planning for my next job and/or developing a career path,” and your personalized activities identified the following possible next steps:

- You may consider talking with your support people or someone you trust about the kind of education or training you need to move up.

You may have additional ideas about helpful next steps.

My next steps will be:

ABCDE EFGHIJ

APPENDIXES

A BASICS OF BENEFITS COUNSELING

B SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

C SAMPLE RESUMES

D SAMPLE JOB APPLICATIONS

E INTERVIEW TIPS

F SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

G SAMPLE SCRIPTS AND A LETTER
REQUESTING AN ACCOMMODATION

H STARTING THE NEW JOB AND PREPARING
FOR THE FIRST DAY OF WORK

I USING SUPPORTS

J SAMPLE LETTERS OF RESIGNATION

APPENDIX A:

Basics of benefits counseling

Many people worry about what will happen to their Social Security and other benefits when they begin working, and there is good reason for this. Benefits can make up a portion or even all of a person's income. The rules and regulations can seem very complicated and even overwhelming. The good news is that benefits counseling and planning assistance are more available today than ever before. With good benefits counseling, people do not need to become experts themselves in order to work and manage their benefits.

Here are some tips for working with a benefits counselor or employment specialist, if you choose to do so:

1. Ask about the benefits counseling available at your program (if you are enrolled in a program).
2. Provide your counselor with as much benefits information as you have. Additional information about your benefits can be obtained by visiting your local Social Security Administration (SSA) and Department of Social Services office.
3. Inform both the SSA and employment specialist or benefits counselor of any changes in your income (for example, raises and changes in hours). If you get both Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income, make sure both departments are informed of all changes to avoid overpayments of benefits.
4. Remember that you are allowed to earn as much as you would like. There are no limits to how much you can earn, but it is important to understand how earnings will affect your benefits. The key point to remember is that you will need to manage both your income and benefits. This is where a benefits counselor can be very helpful. Many people have accountants, tax preparers, and representative payees, so working with a benefits counselor is common.
5. Keep track of your hours worked and wages earned. Share this information with your benefits counselor.
6. It is good practice to double check that all of the numbers that you and your employment specialist are using to help inform your decisions are

accurate. One way to do this is to check all of the facts and numbers with the staff at the local SSA office. Ask the SSA staff for a receipt for all of your visits, and make a note of what was discussed during the visit. This can be very helpful during future visits as well as for working with your counselor.

7. Check the SSA website at www.ssa.gov. The frequently asked questions (FAQ) section can be particularly helpful.
8. If you choose not to work with a benefits counselor or an employment specialist, you can visit the local Social Security office and ask about Work Incentive Liaison (WIL) services available in your area. You will be able to access benefits planning and assistance in regard to your employment and benefits. If you happen to be a resident of New York, there is also helpful information on the NY Makes Work Pay website at: www.nymakesworkpay.org

Please remember the following:

1. Many people work and still receive SSI/SSDI.
2. As of this writing (2013), people can earn over \$45,239 per year (if they lost their SSI due to earned income) and still maintain Medicaid.
3. As of this writing (2013), people receiving SSDI can earn up to \$1,040 per month and still maintain SSDI.

Many benefits counselors have certification, which means they have received special training and education about benefits. They are typically connected to a wide network of benefits specialists. They can help working people to manage their benefits while working and earning a paycheck. Everybody's benefits situation is different, and finding a personal benefits expert can help address any fears or concerns you might have about losing benefits if you are working. With the help of a benefits counselor, you can concentrate on the important things like getting the job done.

APPENDIX B:

Sample cover letters

When sending out a resume, it is common practice to include a cover letter that lets the employer know you are applying for a position and which position it is. This is also an opportunity to let the employer know about any special skills or experience you have that would make you a good candidate for the job.

If you do not know of a specific position or opening at a company, you may wish to send your resume under a cover letter to an employer in order to express your interest in working for that organization.

Communication in today's business environment is faster than ever. The trend today is to keep cover letters brief and to the point. On the following pages, we have included sample cover letters that you can use as a starting point.

There are many different formats for cover letters. You can use the formats provided, blend them to your liking, or make up your own. This is a way to express yourself and to make an impression on an employer, so pick a format that feels comfortable to you and represents your unique skills and abilities. It is a good idea to have a friend or someone from your support network check your letter before sending it out. Typographical errors and misspelling can remove an otherwise good cover letter from an employer's consideration, so the more eyes that see your letter, the better. You might also consider sharing your cover letters with the people who will be your references so that they are reminded about your strengths and skills.

Sample cover letters also can be found online. Books are available that include samples of letters in different formats that fit particular industries and positions.

Copy and save the cover letters you send out in order to follow up on what you have sent and to remind yourself of what you wrote so you can be prepared for an interview.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER 1

This is an example of a traditional cover letter. Substitute your information for the information in this sample. Edit as needed, and you will soon have a professional-looking letter.

Joe Jobsearch
123 Main Street
Anytown, NY 14108
914-555-1234
jobsearch@webstar.net

December 21, 2011

Ms. Nancy Provencher
Director of Human Resources
Human Resources Department
Brixton Hospitality, Inc.
400 Langley Avenue
Rome, NY 13440

Re: job 3373

Dear Ms. Provencher:

I am writing to express my interest in applying for the position of front desk clerk as posted on the Brixton Hospitality website. I am an experienced hotel professional with years of hospitality experience ranging from small bed and breakfasts to medium-sized national hotel establishments. I have enclosed my resume for your review.

This position will allow me to utilize my significant lodging and hotel experience in increasing guest satisfaction and repeat bookings. My outgoing personality is matched by my high-energy approach to customer service. I possess a substantial degree of experience with online reservations and telephone protocol.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my skills and experience can contribute to the success of your organization. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Joe Jobsearch

Enclosure *(This alerts the recipient that a resume is attached.)*

SAMPLE COVER LETTER 2

A job seeker can add bullet points to the cover letter in order to highlight special skills and accomplishments. You may want to try this approach by adding your own information to this format. Even if these points are covered in your resume, this approach can make your letter stand out from the stack of resumes that may be on an employer's desk.

Joanne Jobhunt
211 Fox Terrace
Newfane, NY 14108
716-555-1234
jjhunt@webstar.net

July 17, 2012

Mr. Rejean Pelletier
Vice President
Maple Leaf Logistics
444 Bryan Highway
Ripley, NY 14775

Dear Mr. Pelletier:

I am a highly skilled office management professional with a strong background in the trucking industry. I have extensive experience in a broad range of office management duties, from accounting to supervision of clerical staff. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to your company's growth and success.

I have a proven record of effective management in fast-paced environments, and I thrive in outcome-based, high-activity organizations. I have enclosed my resume for your review. Some of my key strengths and accomplishments include

- excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to effectively work with both executive and line staff;
- strong organizational skills, with the ability to design and implement effective data storage systems;
- highly developed conflict resolution skills, with the ability to equitably assess workplace issues and develop mediation plans;
- exceptional strength in managing concurrent projects to completion; and
- proven track record of increased office productivity and profitability.

From researching your organization, I see that my skill set and experience match the objectives of your business plan. I would like to meet and discuss how I can contribute to the success of the company. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joanne Jobhunt

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER 3

If you have a limited work history or just want to get to the point with an employer, this sample cover letter may be the one for you. Line by line, add your information until your letter takes shape. You may find that you have more to add.

Your name
 Your Street Address
 Town, State Zip
 Phone
 E-mail Address

Date

Name of Person
 Title or Title
 Name of Department
 Name of Company
 Street Address
 City, State Zip

Dear Ms./Mr./Last Name of Person: *(Use "Hiring Manager" if you don't have a specific name)*

I am writing to apply for the position of _____. I am interested in starting/continuing my career with your organization and have attached my resume for your review.

I have experience with _____ and am interested in _____.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss how I might make a positive impact on your company. I can be reached during the day at (555) 555-5555 and at (555) 111-1111 in the evening. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
 (Your Signature)

Your Full Name Typed

Enclosure

APPENDIX C:

Sample resumes

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

(Jobs are listed in order by date, starting with the most recent job.)

Paula Brokaw

333 Varela Avenue
Bearsville, NY 12409
home phone: 631.555.1234 mobile: 631.555.0000
e-mail: pbrok@netweb.com

Experience

February 2009–July 2010

Prep Cook, Café LaRoux

- Set up and maintained salad bar
- Prepared hors d'oeuvres
- Made sauces and soups from scratch
- Assisted line cooks during lunch and dinner rush
- Expedited serving line

August 2007–February 2009

Dish Washer, The Cow Hop

- Used Sudtron industrial dishwashing machine
- Scrubbed pots and trays
- Stacked dishes and glassware
- Maintained silverware station

April 2006–August 2007

Cart Caddy, Moss Glen Country Club (seasonal)

- Charged golf carts
- Transported carts for rental and tournaments
- Performed routine maintenance (non-technical)
- Maintained storage barn

Education

Henry Lee High School: General diploma

References available on request

FUNCTIONAL RESUME

(The job objective is listed first, followed by a summary of qualifications and experience without dates.)

Paula Brokaw

333 Varela Avenue
Bearsville, NY 12409
518-555-1234
pbrok@webstar.net

Objective: Position as a Line Cook in a mid-range American cuisine restaurant

Summary of Qualifications

- Experienced commercial kitchen professional
- Skilled in soup and sauce preparation
- Able to perform high-volume line food preparation
- Full knowledge of kitchen support service

Professional Experience

- Experienced in wide range of food preparation
- Knowledgeable in kitchen line maintenance
- Skilled in guest service and hospitality
- Positions held at Café LaRoux (prep cook), The Cow Hop (dish washer)

Technical

- Trained and skilled in use and maintenance of Sudtron industrial dishwasher
- Certified food handler
- Culinary Arts certificate

Practical

- Worked successfully in high-volume restaurant
- Skilled at interacting with both staff and customers
- Knowledgeable in kitchen protocol

Education and Credentials

- Culinary Arts Certificate, Wyoming County Community College
- Henry Lee High School: General Diploma
- CPR certified
- Wyoming County food handling certificate program

References

Available on request

APPENDIX D:

Sample job applications

We have included a sample job application as well as a blank one for your use. It is important to tell the people who will be your references that you are looking for work and that they can expect to be contacted by potential employers. Talk to your references about the kind of work you are looking for, and coach them about what you want them to tell an employer about you, such as special skills or experience you might have. It is important to verify the contact information of each of your references.

SAMPLE APPLICATION

EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

- Please complete this application by printing in ink or typing.
- As an equal opportunity employer, we do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, religion, color, age, gender, national origin, marital status, or disability.
- Please indicate if you will need an accommodation to complete the application or interview process. Yes No

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS

PERSONAL DATA

Date: October 22, 2011

Name: Harrison, Jordan Rae

Present Address: 88 Juniper Road, Birdsall, NY 14822

Phone: 518-555-1234 E-mail address: jrh@web.com

EDUCATION

SCHOOL NAME	DEGREE ATTAINED	MAJOR STUDIES
Castleton State College	B.A.	History
Yates County College	A.A.	Art History
Millard High School	General Diploma	General Studies

continued on the next page ►

► *continued from the previous page*

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (Please start with your most recent position)

Company Name: Mendon Arts, Inc.

Dates: (From/To (MO/YR)) 3/09–5/10

Address: 44 Ridge Road, Swain, NY 12345

Phone number: 555-555-0123

Job Title/Description of Duties: Paint maker. Mixed acrylic paints to order. Used Spectramix machinery.

Starting Salary or Hourly Wages: \$8.50/hour

Ending Salary or Hourly Wages: 10.25/hour

Name of Supervisor: Sara Hoover

May we contact supervisor? Yes No

Reason for Leaving: Layoff

Company Name: Polar Electric

Dates: From/To (MO/YR) 6/07–1/09

Address: 6 Mooney Ave., Bradford, NY 54321

Phone number: 555-444-010

Job Title/Description of Duties: Battery Assembler. Assembled multi-cell batteries.
Used Sealright heat sealer and soldering iron.

Starting Salary or Hourly Wages: \$8.25/hour

Ending Salary or Hourly Wages: \$9.00/hour

Name of Supervisor: Kim Jones

May we contact supervisor? Yes No

Reason for Leaving: Layoff

Company Name: Slater Industries

Dates: From/To (MO/YR) 3/05–10/06

Address: 344 Plymouth Street, North, NY 18888

Phone number: 777-333-0345

Job Title/Description of Duties: Assembler and sewing technician.
Sewed and assembled dog leashes. Assembled dog and cat collars.

Starting Salary or Hourly Wages: \$8.50/hour

Ending Salary or Hourly Wages: \$9.00/hour

Name of Supervisor: Burt Beck

May we contact supervisor? Yes No

Reason for Leaving: Company went out of business

continued on the next page ►

► *continued from the previous page*

Additional Information That Could Help You Qualify for This Position

(examples include licenses, certificates, classes, equipment skills)

I am computer literate and can speak Spanish. _____

References

(preferably people who know about your work and training)

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
Gordon Stone	23 Slate St., Baker, NY 19876	789-987-0987
Nina Sanchez	240 Crane Road, Adams, NY 19877	789-444-5555
Judy Lee	17 Merton St., Adams, NY 19877	789-568-0909

By signing this application, I certify that all of the information that I have provided is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize present and former employers to release job-related information and data about me.

Applicant Signature: _____ (signature)

Date: _____ 10/22/11

Applications that are not signed and dated will not be considered.

BLANK APPLICATION

EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

- Please complete this application by printing in ink or typing.
- As an equal opportunity employer, we do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, religion, color, age, gender, national origin, marital status, or disability.
- Please indicate if you will need an accommodation to complete the application or interview process. Yes No

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS

continued on the next page ►

▶ continued from the previous page

PERSONAL DATA

Date: _____
 Name: _____
 Present Address: _____
 Phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

EDUCATION

SCHOOL NAME	DEGREE ATTAINED	MAJOR STUDIES

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (Please start with your most recent position)

Company Name: _____
 Dates: (From/To (MO/YR) _____
 Address: _____
 Phone number: _____
 Job Title/Description of Duties: _____
 Starting Salary or Hourly Wages: _____
 Ending Salary or Hourly Wages: _____
 Name of Supervisor: _____
 May we contact supervisor? Yes _____ No _____
 Reason for Leaving: _____

Company Name: _____
 Dates: From/To (MO/YR) _____
 Address: _____
 Phone number: _____
 Job Title/Description of Duties: _____
 Starting Salary or Hourly Wages: _____
 Ending Salary or Hourly Wages: _____
 Name of Supervisor: _____
 May we contact supervisor? Yes _____ No _____
 Reason for Leaving: _____

continued on the next page ▶

▶ *continued from the previous page*

Company Name: _____

Dates: From/To (MO/YR) _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Job Title/Description of Duties: _____

Starting Salary or Hourly Wages: _____

Ending Salary or Hourly Wages: _____

Name of Supervisor: _____

May we contact supervisor? Yes _____ No _____

Reason for Leaving: _____

Additional Information That Could Help You Qualify for This Position
(examples include licenses, certificates, classes, equipment skills)

I am computer literate and can speak Spanish. _____

References
(preferably people who know about your work and training)

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER

By signing this application, I certify that all of the information that I have provided is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize present and former employers to release job-related information and data about me.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Applications that are not signed and dated will not be considered.

APPENDIX E:

Interview tips

- 1. Research:** Learn as much as you can about the company and industry you are interested in. Internet searching, trade magazines, and an employment specialist can all be sources of information.
- 2. Develop questions:** Once you have learned about the company and industry, think of some questions to ask during an interview. This will not only provide you with good information—it will also let the interviewer know that you are well prepared and thoughtful about the interview. You may also learn that this is not the job or company for you.
- 3. Rehearse:** Practice interviews can never take the place of the real thing, but practicing can help you to be more comfortable when an interview comes your way. Talk to a counselor, an employment specialist, or other people in your support network who might be able to help you practice.
- 4. Map your course:** You may want to double-check the route to your interview. If you are going to take public transportation, double-check the schedules. You may want to purchase your tickets or fare card in advance in order to avoid the stress of a last-minute rush. If your trip runs smoothly, you will be more relaxed for the interview. You may even decide to make a practice run by going to the location of the interview, especially during the time of day that you will be interviewing. Traffic patterns and traffic can vary greatly at different times of the day, so plan to play it safe and allow yourself extra time.
- 5. Prepare your clothes:** You might find it helpful to try on your interviewing clothes several days before your interview. By doing this, if something does not fit or look right, you will have time to buy or borrow something suitable for your interview. Ask people from your support network to review your outfit.
- 6. Prepare your body and mind:** Get a good night's sleep and have a healthy breakfast or lunch. Do the things that ground you, keep you calm, and help you to focus. Examples may include meditating, praying, or singing. Whatever helps you feel your strongest, do it.

7. **Being on time really means be a little early:** It is a good idea to arrive five to ten minutes before your scheduled interview time.
8. **Bring copies:** You sent your resume and cover letter and filled out the application, but this is no guarantee that the interviewer will find them. It is always wise to bring copies of these with you. Carry your copies in a nice folder or agenda. You might want to include some paper and a pen for taking notes during the interview.
9. **All that glitters:** When it comes to jewelry, a good rule of thumb is “less is more” for an interview. Dangle earrings should be switched for studs. If you are going to wear a necklace or pendant, think small, think conservative. Any jewelry should simply accent your outfit, not draw attention.
10. **Wrapping up:** Be sure to obtain the interviewer’s contact information so you will be able to both follow up on the interview and send a thank you letter. Ask him or her for a business card so you can spell the name correctly in your letter.

APPENDIX F:

Sample thank you letter

It is a good practice to follow up your interview with a thank you letter. This not only shows the employer that you are grateful for being granted an interview for the job but also is an opportunity to restate your interest in the job and remind the interviewer who you are. If the competition for a particular position is strong, a good thank you letter can tip the scale in your favor. Many employers expect serious job candidates to follow up with a thank you letter.

On the following page, we have provided a sample thank you letter. You may wish to use the same format or design one on your own. In any case, because the letter will be an expression of your thoughts and feelings, try to design one that makes you comfortable. Just as with cover letters and resumes, it is a good idea to have a friend or people from your support network check your letter before you send it out. Typographical errors or misspellings can hurt your chances of further consideration.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

An effective thank you letter should be brief and to the point. By entering your information line by line, your thank you letter will begin to take shape.

Date
Your Name
Street Address
Town, State Zip
Your phone number
Your e-mail address

Interviewer's Full Name
Interviewer's Title
Department (if applicable)
Company Name
Street Address
Town, State Zip

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr.:

I am writing to thank you for interviewing and considering me for the position of _____. I very much appreciate that you took the time to tell me about your organization and your plans for growth and development. I am particularly interested in the new _____ project that you described to me.

Your thorough description of the job responsibilities make me confident that I possess the skills and experience to make a positive contribution to the _____ unit/team at _____ Inc., and help move the company toward its projected goals. I am very interested in beginning/furthering my career with your company.

As you requested during our meeting, I am enclosing a list of references that you may contact with regard to my skills, experience, and achievements. Thank you once again for your time and consideration. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
(Your Signature)

(Your Name Typed)

Enclosure: Reference material

APPENDIX G:

Sample scripts and a letter requesting an accommodation

Just as some people wear glasses to read or use step stools to reach items in the kitchen cabinet, tools can be devised or adjustments made to a particular job that can help a worker perform that job better. These adjustments or *accommodations* can be requested by a job applicant when applying for a job.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a civil rights act that was passed by the U.S. Congress in order to protect the workplace rights of people with disabilities. This law guides employers and workers in negotiating and designing *reasonable accommodations* in order to make some jobs “do-able” for workers who might have certain conditions. Some examples of workplace accommodations include ramps for people who use wheelchairs, Braille signs for people who are visually impaired, and modified application tests for people with learning disabilities.

Some people who are in recovery from mental illness might request a flexible work schedule so that they can continue to see a particular doctor or therapist they like. Other people may request that a job coach or other support person visit them on the job from time to time. Every person is unique, and accommodations should be adjusted to fit an individual’s condition, situation, and needs. Employment specialists can help in designing and requesting accommodations for people who feel that an adjustment will help them to perform the main functions of the job.

A good place to find information about reasonable accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act is askjan.org. This site also describes what questions employers can and cannot ask during a job interview.

In this appendix you can find sample scripts and a sample letter that you can use when requesting an accommodation for a job that you are applying for. You may use these “as is,” or you can modify them to fit your particular needs and style. If you plan on asking for an accommodation in person, you may want to rehearse what you plan to say in advance. If you prefer to provide the employer with a letter, it can be helpful to have someone review the letter in order to make sure that it is clear, to the point, and free of misspellings and typographical errors.

SAMPLE SCRIPTS OR EXAMPLES OF REQUESTING AN ACCOMMODATION**SAMPLE 1:**

Brian (Job Applicant): Hello Mr. Reo, I am very interested in taking this position. I feel that I will make a big contribution to the company. I would like to request that we modify the work schedule as it was described to me if this is possible. You see, I have a monthly medical appointment at an office that closes at 6 p.m. If I work until 5:30 p.m., as you described, I will not make it in time for an appointment. My hope is that I can leave an hour early once per month. I would like to be able to make up the time by either staying late or coming in early on another day. I really do not want to change my current treatment arrangement. I feel that by maintaining my routine, I will be a better employee.

SAMPLE 2:

Mr. Markowski (Employer): I would like to offer you the position as a management trainee in our purchasing department. The salary will be as discussed, and we hope to have the position filled by the end of the month because the busy season is right around the corner.

Kelsey (Job applicant): Thank you very much for the offer. I accept. I really do feel that I will be a good fit for the position, and I look forward to making a big contribution to the department and company. Part of my plan to be a valued and productive employee is taking care of myself. This plan includes a regular monthly medical appointment that helps me maintain my health. Unfortunately, the medical group where I receive services is only open until 6 p.m. during the week and is not open on weekends. I am very happy with the service I receive there and would not want to have to switch providers. Would it be possible for me to either come in early or stay late in order to make up for the time I would take to go for an appointment?

Mr. Markowski: I don't see any reason why we could not make this schedule adjustment. I understand that people have lives outside of work, and so I try to be as flexible as possible in order to keep our employees happy and healthy. This is a rather simple workplace adjustment and should be no problem at all. All I ask is that you coordinate your schedule changes with your supervisor, Ms. Rafalko. I will tell her about our agreement so that she knows to expect to hear from you about monthly schedule adjustments. Thank you so much for being up front with me about this.

So, I welcome you to our team! I look forward to working with you and to hearing good things from Ms. Rafalko. So, when will you be able to start?

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

Mr. Motta (Employer): . . . and so that is the job description. Does this sound like a job that you would like to have?

Alyssa (Job applicant): Absolutely. I feel very confident that I will be able to learn all of the parts to the job and be a productive member of the team. I do have one request that I hope will be okay with you. I am a bit nervous about starting a new job and really do want to get off to a good start. Would it be possible for me to have a “job coach” come in to help me get used to my new position? I work with a program that provides support to people who are new to working or concerned about learning a new job quickly enough.

Mr. Motta: Can you tell me more about what this job coach will do?

Alyssa: Sure. My job coach is Ben. Ben helps people get their start in new jobs. He helps me make transportation arrangements, and he can help me focus on what I need to learn to be a good employee. He also provides me with support and encouragement. If Ben were to come in to work with me for the first couple of days to help me feel comfortable enough that I know what I am doing, I feel that I will get off to a very good start. I really do want this job.

Mr. Motta: This doesn’t sound like it will be a problem. I would like to learn more about what Ben would be doing and how we can fit this into the work schedule.

Alyssa: I have Ben’s card right here. He’s very nice and really knows how to help people get used to new jobs. He told that he will be happy to talk to my new employer before I even start. Would this be okay?

Mr. Motta: I don’t see why not. Maybe we can set up a meeting so that I can learn more about your job coach’s role and how we can accommodate your request for his assistance. How does that sound?

Alyssa: Thank you very much. I really do feel that with some extra support, I will be able to make a big contribution to the company. Getting off on the right foot is very important to me. I really do appreciate that you are willing to work with me on this.

Mr. Motta: Great! I’ll call Ben to set up a meeting.

Alyssa: Thank you so much.

Mr. Motta: Welcome to the team!

SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING AN ACCOMMODATION

March 18, 2014
3967 Alpine Drive
Your Town, RI 12345

Marchant Industries
516 Paumanok Way
Busyville, RI 00000

Attn: Ms. Sherri Pinney

Dear Ms. Pinney:

I am writing to both accept your offer for employment at Marchant Industries and request your consideration for a workplace accommodation. I want to thank you for inviting me to join the team at Marchant. I am honored by your offer and look forward to becoming a valuable part of the team. This is exactly the kind of job I had hoped to land, and so I am very eager to begin making my contribution to the company.

In order to become the best employee I can be, I am requesting that you consider providing me with a workplace accommodation that I hope will seem reasonable and fair to you and the company.

My start at Marchant will be the first time that I have worked in seven years. I have been out of work and on disability during that time. In order to return to work and get up to speed as quickly as possible, I am requesting permission to make use of a job coach.

It is my hope that my job coach will be allowed to visit me at my work site in order to provide me support and guidance in my effort to become a highly effective employee. Specifically, my job coach would learn the essential functions of my job and assist me in learning and retaining the core, episodic, and job-related tasks that I will be responsible for. By working with a job coach, I feel that I will become a more productive member of the team in a shorter period of time.

If this sounds reasonable to you, I am happy to provide you with the name and contact information of my job coach. His name is Dave Barden, and he works at Valley Rehabilitation Services, 111-222-3333. He told me that he would be happy to meet with us in order to discuss his services and how he might help me to become a productive member of the company.

Thank you again for your offer for employment. It is my hope that you will find my request for accommodation reasonable as well as helpful. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your name

APPENDIX H:

Starting the new job and preparing for the first day of work

1. **Sleep:** Try your best to sleep well the night before your first day on the job. If your job requires you to wake up at a different time than has been typical, you may consider waking up at that time for a few days before your first day of work. In other words, you might consider training your body to wake up at a new time.
2. **Clothing:** Take an inventory of your closet. Try on the kinds of clothes that you will be wearing at your new job. Mark your calendar for a laundry day to make sure that you always have clean and appropriate clothes for work.
3. **Food:** Bringing your lunch to work can save a lot of money and can also be a way for you to meet and spend social time with your coworkers. This can take some planning, so think about marking your calendar for grocery shopping times. Preparing your meal the day before work can help you avoid the stress of rushing right before going to your job.
4. **The commute:** The trip to your new job during rush hour can be a very different trip than when you interviewed for your job. It can be helpful to make a test run to your new job for the day and time that you will be starting work. If you are going to be taking public transportation, you may want to buy your tickets or fare card in advance rather than during the busy rush hour, which can delay your trip. Make sure that you have train and bus schedules. If you plan to drive to work, you may want to gas up your vehicle the night before. As soon as possible, identify a friend or relative who may be available to help you get to work during bad weather, cancelled trains, car trouble, or any other interruption. These interruptions *will* happen and are a natural part of working. Backup plans can help make your experience more pleasant and manageable.
5. **Who's who?** It can be helpful to bring a pocket-sized notebook for your first few days at work. You can jot down names of coworkers, where to get material and supplies, whom to ask for certain things, and anything else that will help you get up to speed in your new surroundings. By reviewing your notes after work or on the way home, you can familiarize yourself and feel more confident about your new opportunity.

6. **Ask questions:** If you do not know something, ask someone. Coworkers are people too, and many people like to show off what they know, especially about their jobs. By asking questions about the job and workplace, you will learn faster and coworkers will appreciate your interest and willingness to be a part of the team.
7. **Listen:** There will be a lot of information coming your way when you begin your new job. The more you listen to what people tell you, the more you can learn. Sometimes, it is helpful to check your understanding if you receive a lot of information at once. For example, you can say, “Let me check my understanding of what you’d like me to do,” and then you can summarize what you heard or identify where instructions may have become unclear. This conveys that you want to do your job well and gives the other person an opportunity to clarify.
8. **Blend in:** Be mindful of the way people interact and behave in the workplace. Try to match what they do and how they do things. Avoid making suggestions right away. Your coworkers have been there longer than you and can resent a “newbie” or “rookie” (which is how some people refer to a new person at work) who may seem to be challenging the way business is being done. There will be time for you to share your good ideas once you have blended in with the others and become part of the team.
9. **Think “team”:** Look for ways to pitch in and become a part of the crew at work. Offer to help if you see an opportunity. Be mindful that your coworkers may have routines for things like who sits where at lunch, using the microwave or coffee machines, and lining up to punch in and out of the time clock. Try to observe these routines, and do your best to join in at a pace that is comfortable and respectful for everyone.
10. **Avoid the complainers:** Coworkers can be a source of support and assistance, or they can be a headache. Keep your eyes open, and be watchful for the complainers. By avoiding these people, you can stay positive and focused, which your supervisor and coworkers will appreciate, and your job will be more enjoyable without the negativity.
11. **The onion rule:** Just as an onion has many layers to it, you have layers of personality. Your sense of humor, style of socializing, hobbies, habits, and other personal traits define the unique person you are. It can be a good idea to be mindful of this when starting a new job. You will have plenty of time to let your personality shine through, but not too fast. Take the time to think about “layers” that you may or may not want to reveal to others, especially when starting out. Have you ever met some-

one who told you their whole life story right away? It can make people feel uncomfortable.

- 12. Request a meeting with your new supervisor:** Meeting with your supervisor soon after you start to establish goals and understand expectations can make your new job a positive experience. Some things you might want to ask are, “How often will we meet to discuss my progress?” “How will I know how well I am doing?” and “How often will I have the chance to meet with you?” This can show a supervisor that you are serious about doing a good job.
- 13. Using supports:** Arrange, in advance, some time to connect with an employment specialist or any other people in your support network. You can celebrate starting your new job or troubleshoot any problems or concerns that you might have.
- 14. Express appreciation:** If a coworker helps you to learn your new job or helps you to learn the ins and outs of your workplace, let that person know how much you appreciate the help. This can help you to quickly fit in with the team.
- 15. Take care of yourself:** You have come a long way. After your first day of work, reward your efforts by doing something nice for yourself. You might want to plan something in advance to look forward to, such as taking a walk in a nice place, stopping in that special coffee shop—anything to celebrate this special day. Go ahead, you deserve it!

APPENDIX I:

Using supports

- 1. Planning Ahead:** It is never too early to start thinking about the kind of support you will want or need when you begin working. Begin by identifying the people who you feel will be supportive of your work goal. Talk with your support team members, including an employment specialist, if you have one, about how to design the best support strategy to meet your needs.
- 2. Strengths and challenges:** Identify both strengths and challenges you might have with keeping and succeeding at your job. Identify the supports who will remind you of your strengths and encourage you through your challenges. Try to anticipate any concerns that might arise.
- 3. Play it safe:** Many people require more support at the beginning of their new job than later on. A good rule of thumb is to plan on more support than may be necessary during the first two weeks of work. You can always scale back the level of support, but without enough support to ensure a good solid start, the job may not go well and may be difficult to hold onto.
- 4. Your network:** By identifying the people and groups of people who can support you in your work goals, you can create a safety net to give yourself the support and courage to move forward.
- 5. Rally the troops:** Now that you have identified a network of support for your employment plans and wishes, meet with these folks in order to share your strengths and challenges along with any concerns you might have about starting your new job. Discuss ways in which they might help you along in your efforts to make the most of your employment experience. If possible, you may wish to meet as a group. You also might want to provide the people in your network with a copy of your follow-along plan. You may even plan to meet again or meet regularly. Remember, this is your plan, and you are in charge.
- 6. Flexibility is important:** Very often, once people begin working, their needs for support change. A person might need more support at some times than at other times. There might be times when you prefer to “go it alone,” for example, and keep your support network at a distance. In this case, as a courtesy, you may want to inform the people in your network when you are beginning this strategy.

7. **Dollars and sense:** If you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or both, you may need additional support and assistance during certain times. The Social Security rules of earning income are sometimes based on time. If you have included a benefits counselor in your support network, you may want to use a calendar together to plan when you will work to manage and maximize your benefits. Remember that reporting all earned income is required when receiving SSI or SSDI. An employment specialist or benefits counselor can help you learn to do this. It is a good idea to check in with your benefits counselor regularly. Don't be bashful about seeking assistance to work out your benefits. It is very common for working people to have accountants, financial advisors, and tax preparers. Benefits counselors can help you manage the details of your benefits so you can concentrate on your new job.
8. **Moving on:** If you are like a lot of today's working people, you might already be thinking of where your job might lead you to. It can be helpful to share these ideas with friends and your support network in order to increase your chances of moving on to a bigger and better job, if this is one of your goals for the future.
9. **Branching out:** Once you are working, you might find that there are groups or associations of people in the same industry that meet or network. There might be trade magazines or online resources that can be helpful in furthering your career. By keeping informed of changes and innovations within your industry, you can increase your opportunities for advancement and career growth.
10. **Celebrate:** By planning in advance to celebrate certain accomplishments, you will have something to look forward to. For example, you might want to schedule dinner with someone from your support network after your one-month and two-month anniversaries, and so forth. By doing this, you can take the time to reflect on your success and progress as well as celebrate your hard work.

APPENDIX J:

Sample letters of resignation

Moving from job to job is a very natural and healthy path for people to be on. At times, a person will find a job that he or she loves and will stay with it for a long time. At other times, people choose to move on to another position after a short period of time. No matter what, collecting references can be very helpful to you in looking for that next good job.

Many people report leaving jobs without giving advance notice to the employer. Some people report that they simply stopped showing up for work. Leaving a job you dislike can be a positive thing to do, but leaving on bad terms can hinder your ability to find another job. Employers can be inconvenienced, lose business, and even be angered when employees leave without notice. A little courtesy can avoid souring a relationship with a soon-to-be ex-boss and preserve a reference that can help you move ahead in your career.

You can use the following examples of a resignation letter and resignation e-mail as a model for your own letter. These examples offer a worker the opportunity to leave on a positive note. Have a friend or someone from your support team check your letter before sending it to your employer.

Your best job ever just might be your next job. Maximize your chances of landing that next job by securing your references.

SAMPLE LETTER OF RESIGNATION

December 2, 2012

John Nelson
123 Blank Street
Your Town, VT 05751

Dora Sell
Battery Assemblers Unlimited
999 Long Street
Small Town, VT 05091

Dear Ms. Sell:

I am writing to inform you that I will be terminating my employment with BAU effective January 2, 2013.

I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to work for BAU. The skills that I developed

continued on the next page ▶

► *continued from the previous page*

and the experience of working with this professional team will continue to be an asset to my career development. I am especially grateful for being given the opportunity to work on the MilSpec 3967 project. It was a pleasure being a part of both the assembly and quality assurance teams.

Murray McGrath was especially helpful as my supervisor. He was patient, taught me a lot, and always listened to my ideas and concerns. I will miss working with the crew.

I wish the company continued success.

Sincerely,

Deanne Nurjyzer

SAMPLE RESIGNATION MESSAGE VIA E-MAIL

If your employer typically uses e-mails, you might want to consider the following example as a termination notice:

Date: October 10, 2014

From:

To:

Re: Resignation

This is to inform you of my intention to terminate my employment at LastCo, effective November 23, 2014.

Please advise me about the procedures for handing in keys, uniforms, and tools.

Thank you for the opportunity to work for LastCo. I learned a lot and am grateful for the experience.

Sincerely,

Deanne Nurjyzer

