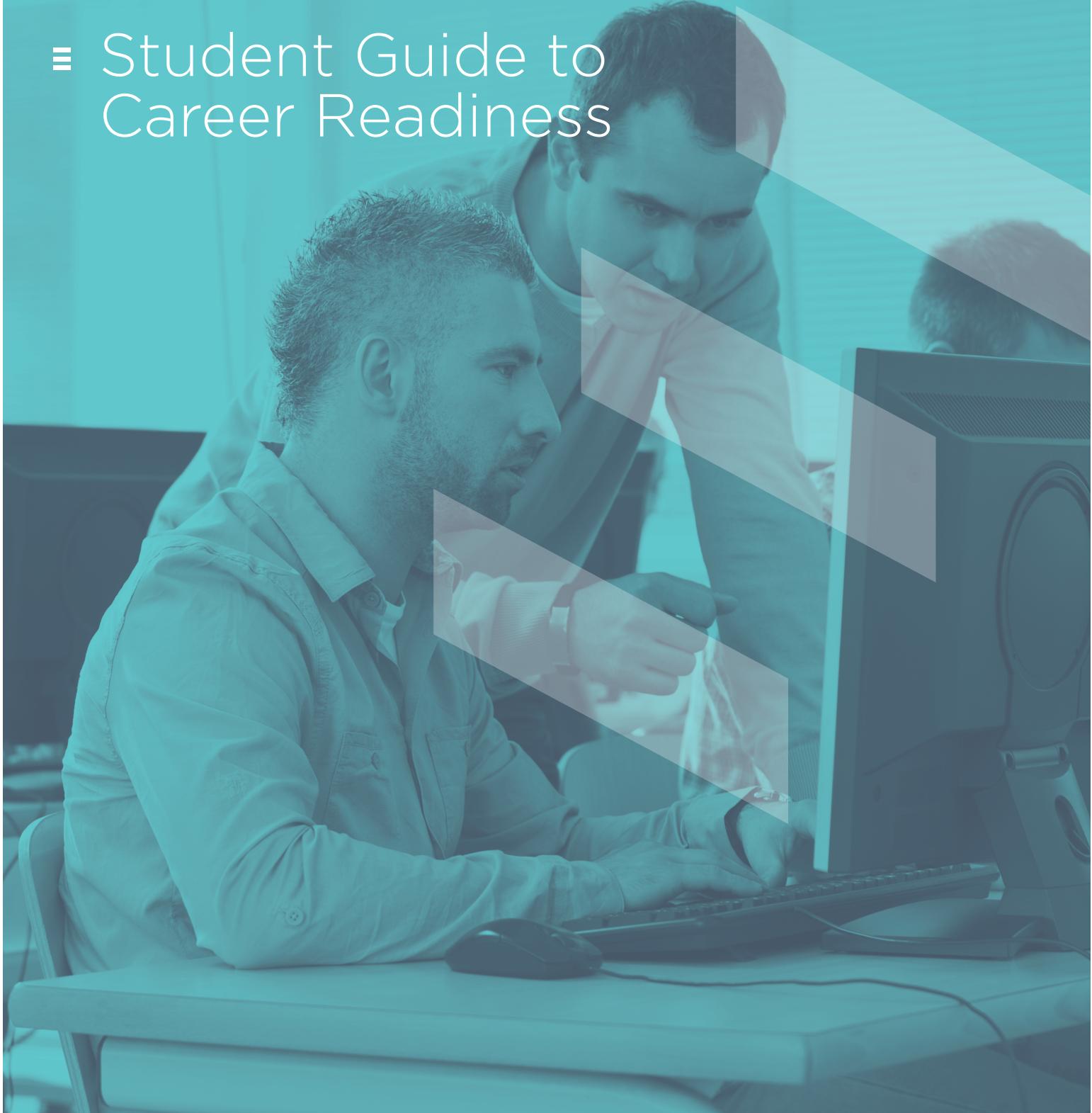


# ≡ Student Guide to Career Readiness





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## **“What Would it Be Like?”**

You are in the midst of training for a new career and likely find yourself wondering what it will be like after your training is over and you begin working as a skilled professional in the ever-changing technological field. You probably often think that all of your preparing, studying, and training is, of course, leading you down a new path, but where does it all lead and what is the destination really like?

When you make changes like the one you have decided to make, there can be a mixture of both excitement and apprehension. This curriculum is designed to accomplish many things that will benefit you, but one of the most important goals is to help you build your confidence so that you feel equipped and ready as you enter the workplace.

We hope that as your work through this module that you will gain confidence in what's ahead of you, from writing a resume to interviewing to developing positive habits in the workplace. You have so much to look forward to!

Important note: In order to maximize this handbook in preparing to be ready for your new career, you must be honest when evaluating yourself. Honest self evaluation can be difficult and uncomfortable. If you are honest in your responses, you will likely find that you discover weaknesses you never thought you had. While this may be uncomfortable, it is essential for personal growth. Discomfort sparks growth. Comfort does not. Embrace the negative, for when you do, you will strive to turn it into a strength.

### **Objectives**

- Understand many of the career options you have as a coder
- Learn how to accurately and honestly self-evaluate your thought patterns and habits
- Learn how important attitude and positive thinking is in all that you do
- Learn about and develop the core soft skills and values necessary for career success
- Learn how to search, apply, and interview for jobs in the tech industry

## **Preparing the Mind**

### Where Am I Now? Where Do I Want to Be?

When we embark on learning something new, one method that helps us take ownership, learn more effectively, and become truly engaged is to meditate on the topic. Before beginning this module, complete the following journal entries. The more honest and vulnerable you are in your journaling, the more meaningful the lessons will be for you. In relation to your knowledge and readiness for your new career:

# Where Am I Now?

## Where Do I Want to Be?



## ☰ Chapter 1: **Exploring Career Options in the Tech Field**

Congratulations! You have made the life-changing decision to become a skilled worker in the technological field. You will likely find, as you move through the coding program, that there are many fascinating career paths available for coders. As you learn about the technological world and the jobs available to those who have chosen this path, you will want to think deeply about what interests you, where your talents lie, and what will be required of you in fields or jobs that you would like to pursue. This chapter will outline descriptions and job requirements for the various positions for which you may qualify.

You will be provided:

- The name of the position
- Job description
- Coding languages needed for the job
- Other skills needed if you decide to pursue it

As you progress through the program, be sure to write down what interests you, what you need to do to move forward for a position of interest, questions you may have for your technical employment specialist, etc. From this point forward, your technical employment specialist will be referred to as your “TES.”

In the appendix located in the back of this handbook, you will find a job interest inventory, which is provided to you so that you can track interests you develop. You do not need to fill it out all at once; in fact, it would be most beneficial if you return to it every now and then as you learn more about coding, careers, and yourself throughout the year.

# What Jobs Are Available to a Coder in the Tech Field?

## **Web Designer**

**Job description:** A web designer does just that: designs websites and associated applications. A web designer must decide and implement how websites look and work, so he/she would need to have an eye for and interest in art. A designer will focus on all of the visual aspects of a company's materials: colors, logos, balance, symmetry, and how the website "draws people in" and captures their attention with very few mouse clicks. A designer is typically less concerned about the code and typically doesn't think in "CSS, JavaScript, or PHP." He/she thinks in the visual and how to tempt the viewer into exploring more, and the job may involve design of elements not only on a website, but also on other company materials. A designer thinks about a customer experience from a visual perspective. Time is money and too much complex code will lose the customer and then the much needed business for the site itself.

Coding Languages Needed: The top 10 coding languages used in web design are Java, Python, JavaScript, CSS, HTML, C++, PHP, C, SQL, Ruby, and Go.

Other Skills:

- An understanding of graphic design/visual aspects of a good website
- Maintaining and updating websites
- Good problem solving skills
- Good communication skills

## **Front-End Developer**

**Job Description:** A front-end developer is similar to a web designer; however, there is more focus on the code. When you finish with the coding program, you will likely be qualified for this position before being a designer. A front-end developer gets a lot of practice designing because the main objective of a front-end developer is working on the design of a website and its function and coding it to suit its use.

**Coding Languages Needed:** HTML, CSS, and Javascript, and jQuery are the most widely used languages in front end development. If you were to choose this as a career, you'd likely be exposed to and need to learn to use other tools and/or languages; however, if you can use these four languages well, you're off to a really good start.

Other Skills:

- Understanding of server-side CSS
- Graphic design applications such as Adobe Illustrator
- Good problem solving skills
- Good communication skills

## **Back-End Developer**

**Description:** A web developer is a person who focuses on building websites on the back end. Unlike a front end developer, a web developer focuses less on the visuals of a website and more on security and structure of the website.

**Coding Languages Needed:** Java, Python, NodeJS/JavaScript, CSS/HTML, C++, PHP, C, SQL, Ruby, Go, Swift, Typescript, Kotlin, C#, and Bootstrap

Other Skills:

- Good communication skills
- Good problem solving skills

## **Full Stack Developer**

**Description:** This job is a combination of front and back end work. People who have the ability and skills to “crossover” and perform both types of work are needed in the tech industry today.

A full stack developer is an engineer who can handle all the work of databases, servers, systems engineering, and clients.

**Coding Languages Needed:** You will need to know all of the languages and receive certification at the end of the program as a full stack developer. This topic is debated in the tech world, as most programmers are experts in certain languages and know a little in others. This may be true, but to be a full stack developer, one thing is certain: you have to have the ability to adapt. Knowing all of the languages and subsets of those languages is key because knowing what languages are capable of doing helps you adapt well to project objectives. As you learn and practice more, your “specialties” will emerge.

Other Skills:

- Good communication skills
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Time management skills

## **QA Specialist**

**Description:** QA stands for “Quality Assurance.” This position can also be called a QA Analyst. QA analysts are testers and problem solvers. They test websites and/or software for problems and document those problems so that they may be solved. QA analysts are the first in line to encounter any bugs that may crash software or cause a bad user experience. Then, they are tasked with methodically reporting the problems to the developers and programmers who created the program.

**Coding Languages Needed:** Java/JavaScript, Python, C#, PHP, Ruby, and Perl

Other Skills:

- Knowledge of quality assurance testing tools such as Selenium, Jenkins, New Relic, Wercker, GitHub, Text Shortcode, Postman, and Testing Whiz
- Keen attention to detail
- Excellent problem solving skills
- Good written and oral communication skills
- Ability to collaborate with a team

## Game Developer

**Description:** Game developers are software developers and engineers who create/write code for video games. Game developers may be involved in various aspects of game development, from developing the concept/story writing, to the coding and programming.

**Coding Languages Needed:** According to [www.gamedesigning.org](http://www.gamedesigning.org), the 6 best languages for game development are C++, C#, Java, HTML 5, CSS3, JavaScript, and SQL

Other Skills:

- A passion for video games
- Wide-ranging knowledge of gaming trends
- Strong analytical frame of mind
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Creativity
- Communication skills
- Being a good “story-teller” is helpful because typically video games follow a storyline

## SEO Specialist

**Description:** SEO stands for “Search Engine Optimization.” A Search Engine Optimization Specialist is responsible for analyzing, reviewing, and implementing websites that he/she wants optimized to be picked up by search engines, like Google.

An SEO does this by developing content in the website to include keywords and/or phrases that will increase traffic to a website.

An SEO specialist also conducts various testing methods in design, layout, and advertising techniques in order to generate traffic to the website. He/she would need to know about keyword searches people use when seeking out information or products, SEO copywriting, and the behaviors of search engines.

**Coding Languages Needed:** It is debated whether or not SEO specialists need to be proficient coders; however, all sources say that knowing some code is a foundational skill

for this position. You will be leaving the program with the coding skills necessary, but you will want to look closely at the other skills for this job.

Other Skills:

- Analytical/Problem solving skills
- Speaking, writing, and communication skills
- Adobe or Google analytics so that you can analyze data
- Excel or other spreadsheet program
- Adaptability
- Time management
- An ability to socialize for business purposes

## **DevOps Engineer**

**Description:** DevOps Engineers are called this because they bridge the gap between developers and operations teams. A DevOps engineer is a professional who works with software developers, system operators (SysOps) and other production IT staff to oversee code releases.

The DevOps approach to software development requires frequent changes to code versions, which means frequent deployment and testing of programs. Although DevOp engineers rarely code from scratch, they must understand the basics of software development languages and be familiar with the development tools used to create new code or update existing code. A DevOps Engineer's tasks may include preparing test data, analyzing results, troubleshooting problems and communicating issues back to development.

Generally, a DevOps position is not a starting position; however, people from all backgrounds can work toward this position if they find it interests and suits them. People with programming backgrounds are absolutely able to move into this position as their career progresses.

**Coding Languages Needed:** Go, Python, Ruby, Scala, C/C++, JavaScript, and PHP

Other Skills:

- Knowledge of and how to use containers
- Knowledge of both Windows and Linux Administrator
- Adaptability
- Good communication skills
- Integration tools such as Jenkins, Bamboo, Hudson, and ThoughtWorks
- Good problem-solving skills, both technical and staff related

## **UX Designer**

**Job Description:** “UX” stands for “User Experience”. A UX designer’s job is difficult and complex to describe. We will provide a basic description here, and if you find yourself interested, we can certainly provide more information to you.

A UX designer is a person who helps design apps and websites to be “user friendly.” These days, people of all ages are using the web, from toddlers to the elderly. A UX designer understands how people interact with websites and works to make the experience easy and enjoyable. When company websites or apps combine these two elements, their product or service sells well. A UX designer must understand the audience to which a company is selling. For example, a cosmetic company’s target audience is women, but the age of the women can vary; therefore, a UX designer must be able to research and understand what web/app experiences suit the target audience. He/she must also be able to test a website/app’s effectiveness when it’s being used by the public.

UX design happens in “steps”:

- Research
- Imagining and designing for different fictional “persona.” For example, if you are designing an app for a local restaurant, you may invent a man named Terrance, who likes to order his weekday lunches on apps so that it’s ready for pick-up and he doesn’t spend too much time away from work. Keeping Terrance in mind, you begin designing his online “experience.”
- Work out “information architecture” on paper. This is when you draw the layout of his experience in what are called “wireframes.” These sketches usually are reviewed by a team.
- User testing and revising
- Wireframes are converted into mockups. Mockups include the final imagery, color, and type. The main focus is the look and feel; they should be as close to perfect as possible and show exactly what the design will look like when brought to life so they can be used as a guide when development starts.

As you can see, the *main* job of a UX designer is not coding; it’s designing. This may not be an entry level job, but it is a possibility once you gain experience in creating websites if it interests you!

Coding Languages Needed: Java, C, Python, Swift, HTML, Javascript, and CSS. The main reason you would need to know how to code in a UX job is so that you know what is possible when designing websites or apps.

Other skills:

- May use design software such as Sketch, Invision, Principle, and Adobe creative suite
- Must be adaptable and understand people
- Good communication
- Work well in a team environment
- Problem-solving skills
- Some business knowledge is very helpful

## **UI Designer**

Job Description: UI stands for “User Interface.” Like the UX design position, it is complex to describe, and even tech professionals find that UX and UI overlap a bit, but there are some differences. Both positions do have the same end goal: to create a user-friendly experience online which are downloaded on both smartphones and computers.

A UI designer focuses on the user’s visual experience. He/she determines how a user interacts with an interface - be it an app, a video game or a website. It’s all about how the user navigates from point A to point B via different visual touch points on the screen. For example, some apps require tapping a button while others have the user swipe through pictures.

The job of a UI designer is to design all the screens through which a user will move, and to create the visual elements - and their interactive properties - that make this movement possible.

Like a UX designer, it is important for a UI designer to understand how the human mind works. He/she must know what people will instinctively do without instruction. For example, a real estate company loads a photo gallery of a home for sale on their website or app. On the right side of the first photo, a UI designer may place an arrow knowing that a person will automatically click on the arrow to see more of the photos.

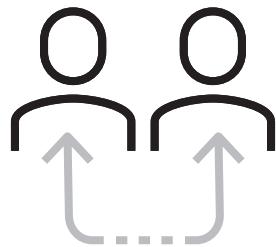
In a “nutshell”: UI developers combine programming, psychology, and creative design to create intuitive controls for software.

You will likely hear or see the word “intuitive” in both the UX and UI design jobs often. Intuitive is defined by dictionary.com as using or based on what one feels to be true even without conscious reasoning; instinctive. Both of these design jobs help create experiences online that people can interact without thinking a lot. In other words, they make the experience easy. \* Create a breakout box in final development for this information

**Coding Languages needed:** A UI designer must be skilled in all of the front end languages including HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. He/she must also be fluent in modern app programming languages such as Java, .Net, AJAX, PHP, XHTML and Ruby.

Other skills:

- Adobe Creative Suite programs, e.g., Photoshop, Illustrator, and Flash & Flex to mockup UI elements.
- Use responsive web design
- Be able to conduct user testing
- Good communication skills
- Must be able to work with a team
- Problem solving skills



## ☰ Chapter 2: What Are Soft Skills and Why Do I Need Them?

Let's begin this chapter by distinguishing the difference between hard and soft skills.

**Hard skills** are the job-specific skills and knowledge you bring to a career. These are skills you gain through education, training, certification, and even on-the-job training. In the coding program, you are learning many of the hard skills you will need for a position in the tech field.

**Soft skills**, on the other hand, are your personal attributes, personality traits, and how you socialize and communicate. Soft skills characterize how a person interacts in his or her relationships with others. Soft skills can include but are not limited to traits such as: adaptability, creative thinking, motivation, problem solving, time management, communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Employers place a lot of emphasis on soft skills because they are just as important in most cases as the hard skills.

One other type of skills are **transferable skills**. These are skills you have acquired throughout your life and various other jobs. You already bring some skills to your life and career. Even though working in the technological industry is brand new for you, you still have skills that may be helpful in your new field.

“Soft Skills  
get little  
respect, but  
will make  
or break  
your career.”

—Peggy Klaus

In today's society, many people place a great deal of emphasis on education and training. There is a lot of pressure on young people to go to college and get a degree (or more!). Yet, many college graduates are leaving school ill equipped to handle the workplace. They have the education and training, so why are they struggling?

They lack soft skills.

On the other hand, there are many people who aren't "cut out" for college and seek to get training in a trade. Sometimes these workers lack the formal education Americans seem to respect so much; however, many are very good with people and have a strong work ethic. For example, an honest mechanic who communicates well with his customers can be wildly successful because he treats his customers and employees so well.

While having training or education in the field of your choice is important, we often overlook how important soft skills are.

- A business major who understands how to draw up a business plan but doesn't communicate well with people will struggle to build his business.
- A computer programmer who can't seem to get along with others will struggle.
- A shipping manager who is regularly late to work, even by 15 minutes, will likely find himself out of a job.
- An art director who does not understand how to resolve conflicts will not be very successful because her job requires her to work with a team.

Do you see a connection? No matter how much code you can write, if it is not backed by solid soft skills, you will likely have trouble getting promotions, and may even struggle to hold down a position.

**The big idea is this:** It doesn't matter what your background is. It doesn't matter that you have made mistakes in the past. Nor does it matter if you do or don't have a college degree. What matters is that from this day forward, you understand that developing yourself as a mindful individual who is honest, straightforward, and can get along with others is KEY to your success.

Persevere instructors will provide you with the hard skills and training to become a full stack developer. Your TES will help you develop your soft skills and a plan for pursuing your career.

In the end, though, you must take this time to truly and honestly take a look at yourself and decide what areas you are proud of and what areas you feel may need some work. Most successful people have the following mindset: "How can I make myself better?"

## A Healthy Soft Skill Set

During the Career Readiness course, you will be learning about the following soft skills (and more):

1. **Communication**—The ability to convey and receive ideas and thoughts to and from others in a positive, well thought out, understandable manner.
2. **Teamwork**—The ability to compromise and work well with others.
3. **Conflict Resolution**—The ability to solve relational issues when they arise in a positive manner that is solution oriented.
4. **Problem Solving**—The ability to face challenges in a positive manner that is solution oriented rather than falling into a "victim mentality."

5. **Time Management**—The ability to get things done in a timely manner; to approach tasks in an organized manner, and be on time to appointments and with deadlines.
6. **Adaptability**—The ability to change course when needed. Someone who is adaptable is able to change actions and behaviors to suit a situation.
7. **Positive attitude**—The ability to look at things through a positive lens, even when it's difficult. A person with a positive attitude chooses to look at the “bright side.”
8. **Respect**—The ability to recognize and treat others well, even when they are different from yourself or you feel don't “deserve” respect, especially when they are in a position of authority.
9. **Decisiveness**—The ability to make thoughtful, timely decisions.
10. **Empathy/Compassion**—The ability to see things from another person's point of view; showing understanding and thoughtfulness to those around you.
11. **Patience**—The ability to wait for an outcome or give people space to figure things out without losing your temper.
12. **Tolerance**—The ability to recognize, respect, and learn from differences in other people's choices, belief systems, backgrounds, and lifestyles.

Before digging deep into the soft skill chapters, let's do a self-evaluation. This will help you prepare your mind for what is to come. Give each adequate thought and be honest with yourself.

### **Soft Skill Self-Evaluation**

Take a look at the following soft skills that employers find important. For each one, rate where you feel you are by using the following scale:

1. I don't have this skill at all
  2. I may have this skill a little but need a lot of work
  3. I am adequate with this skill
  4. I am pretty good at this skill
  5. I am excellent at this skill
- 
1. Communication: I am able to communicate well with others through speaking and writing. I am friendly and easy to talk with. Others seem to understand me well.

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Reflection:

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2. Teamwork: I am able to work well with others to accomplish a goal, even when there are different opinions and/or personalities.

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Reflection:

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3. Conflict Resolution: When disagreements occur, I am able to stay calm, process what is really going on, communicate in a respectful manner, and work in a positive direction to solve the problem rather than just wanting to be “right.”

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Reflection:

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4. Problem-Solving: When difficulties arise, I am able to process what the problem is, come up with a solution, and work toward the solution without feeling like I or my life is out of control. Problems are part of life and I choose to solve them rather than allowing them to make me feel like a victim.

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Reflection:

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5. Time Management: I am able to manage my time well. I plan ahead and don’t wait until the last minute to do things. I am rarely late and am able to accomplish what needs to be done in a reasonable amount of time.

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Reflection:

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6. Adaptability: I am able to adapt to different people, settings, and situations. When things change, as they often do, I do not panic. I evaluate what needs to be done differently and change my approach.

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Reflection:

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7. Positive attitude: I generally have a positive outlook on life. I have the ability to look at difficulties in a positive way and see the best in people and in situations. When I find myself being negative, I am able to turn it around.

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Reflection:

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8. Respect: I believe respect is important and give respect to those in authority, even when I don't feel like it or feel they necessarily deserve it. I believe that respect is earned and seek to earn others' respect while respecting others and their differences.

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Reflection:

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9. Decisiveness: I am able to make decisions when needed. I may stop and take some time to evaluate my choices and actions, but do not avoid making decisions, even the difficult ones.

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Reflection:

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10. Empathy/Compassion: When others are going through something, I try and put "myself in their shoes." When I see someone upset or going through a hard time, I feel sad for them and seek to comfort him/her. When I see someone happy and successful, I want to celebrate with him/her.

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Reflection:

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11. Patience: I am patient when waiting in line or for something to happen. I am also patient with people; I don't get frustrated easily.

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Reflection:

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12. Tolerance: I understand that all people have different viewpoints, belief systems, lifestyles, and backgrounds and choose to respect and even learn from those differences rather than fighting or trying to convince others that their choices or beliefs are wrong.

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Reflection:

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After completing the self evaluation, how do you feel? If you feel good about it, congratulations! Just remember to stay humble and continue to improve, as all people can grow and improve in areas.

If you have a lot of work to do, don't be discouraged. By completing the evaluation, participating in the program, and being honest with yourself, you are taking steps in the right direction. This is positive! Any guidance or support you need in any of the soft skill areas can and will be provided to you.

Which soft skill do you feel is your “best”? Explain.

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Which soft skill do you feel you need to work on the most? Explain.

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## ☰ Chapter 3: Effective Communication: The Holy Grail of Workplace Success

When you were reading the career path options in chapter 1, you likely noticed that one of the skills that is needed for all of them is good communication. It is an essential skill in the workplace and even in our personal lives. People who communicate well tend to be happier, have stronger connections with others, earn promotions, and enjoy general success in their lives. Good communication skills are not something we are born with; it is learned. If you have struggled to communicate effectively in the past, it does not mean you must accept it for the rest of your life. Communication is a skill, and skills can be learned and practiced.

Communication is the exchange of ideas or emotions through various means: speaking, writing, body language, and active listening.

Taking in others' communication happens through all of our senses, but the main ones are through our ears and eyes. We hear what people are saying through the words they choose and their tone and/or volume. We see what people are saying through their facial expressions and body language. The same is true when you are communicating with others. They will perceive what you are saying through various means; therefore, it is important that you are honest and direct while being kind and mannerly.

Have you ever been talking to someone and what he/she was saying was friendly and kind; however, when you look at his/her face and body language, something feels "off"? Perhaps his/her forehead is creased, mouth is turned down, and arms are crossed? Why does it feel "off" when this happens?

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These days, communication is really fast and easy and is conveyed using many methods: talking & listening in person or video/phone calls, text messages, email, online platforms such as messaging and social media, body language, and many others.

Just because communication is quick and easy doesn't mean you should always communicate quickly and it doesn't mean it's always easy. This chapter will help you develop your communication skills so that you are thoughtful about what you say and write, how you respond to others, and what messages you are sending others when you communicate through non-verbal means, such as body language.

### **Advantages of Good Communication in the Workplace**

Good communication....

- Helps prevent misunderstandings
- Provides clear direction and clarity about what's expected
- Helps people get along better; people are more likeable when they communicate well
- Helps people perform at their very best level
- Helps resolve conflict
- Helps establish clear boundaries between people and in the organization

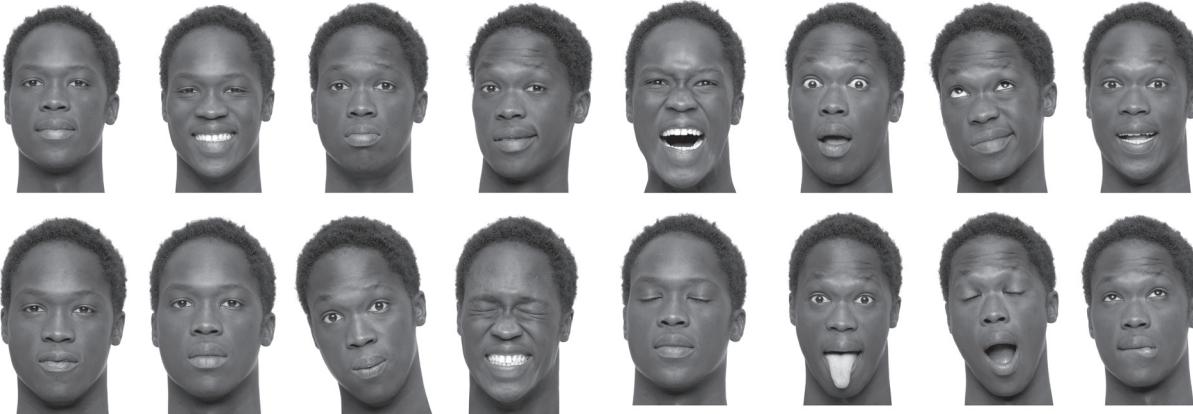
## The 4 Main Types of Communication

[www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

**Verbal communication** is the use of language to transfer information through speaking or sign language. It is one of the most common types of communication, often used during presentations, video conferences and phone calls, meetings, and one-on-one conversations. Verbal communication is important because it is efficient and people can respond in a natural way.

When speaking to someone in the workplace, try and do the following:

- Use a strong, confident speaking voice. When you are presenting your ideas, make sure that everyone can hear you. Don't be timid, or you are sending the message that you don't believe your ideas are worthwhile, and if you don't, it's likely others won't either. Be sure not to come across as loud, obnoxious, or arrogant though. Practice speaking using a volume that others can hear, but is not loud. Overly loud talkers can be interpreted as being aggressive or attention-seeking.
- Use active listening skills. Active listening is when you are genuinely listening to everything someone is saying without distraction or a need to respond/interrupt. You should always avoid formulating a response while someone is speaking. This is as important as your own speaking skill because conversations are never one-sided.
- Avoid filler words. It can be tempting, especially during a presentation or a situation in which you are nervous, to use filler words such as "um," "like," "so" or "yeah." While it might feel natural after completing a sentence or pausing to collect your thoughts, it can also be distracting for your audience. If you are presenting to a group of people in a formal setting, be sure to practice. Present to a trusted friend or colleague who can call attention to the times you use filler words. Try to replace them by taking a breath when you are tempted to use them. Practicing builds confidence and removes the need for filler words.



**Nonverbal communication** is the use of body language, gestures and facial expressions to convey information to others, and believe it or not, one half of our meaning when we are speaking is conveyed through our facial and body language.

It can be used both intentionally and unintentionally. For example, you might smile unintentionally when you hear a pleasing or enjoyable idea or piece of information. Nonverbal communication is helpful when trying to understand others' thoughts and feelings.

Body language can be considered "closed" or "open." If a person is displaying "closed" body language such as crossed arms or legs, or hunched shoulders, he/she might be feeling anxious, angry or nervous. If they are displaying "open" body language with both feet on the floor and arms by their side or on the table, they are likely feeling positive and open to information.

When using your own body language in the workplace, try and practice the following:

- **Notice how your emotions feel physically.** Throughout the day, as you experience a range of emotions (anything from energized, bored, happy or frustrated), try to identify where you feel that emotion within your body. For example, if you're feeling anxious, you might notice that your stomach feels tight. Developing self-awareness around how your emotions affect your body can give you greater mastery over your external presentation.
- **Be intentional about your nonverbal communications.** Make an effort to display positive body language when you feel alert, open and positive about your surroundings. You can also use body language to support your verbal communication if you feel confused or anxious about information, like using a furrowed brow. Use body language alongside verbal communication such as asking follow up questions or pulling the presenter aside to give feedback.
- **Copy nonverbal communications you find effective.** If you find certain facial expressions or body language beneficial to a certain setting, use it as a guide when improving your own nonverbal communications. For example, if you see that when someone nods their head it communicates approval and positive feedback efficiently, use it in your next meeting when you have the same feelings.

Let's take a look at some images that portray people in the workplace. For each image write a "story" or scenario that explains what is going on and how the people are feeling. The first one is done for you as an example.



Tina and Mark work together as a team. Tina said that she would like to collaborate with Mark about one of her ideas. She began telling Mark her idea, but Mark interrupted her so that he could throw in his ideas. Tina turned her body away from him out of frustration. He continued talking, never realizing how disrespectful and rude he was being.







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**Written communication** is the act of writing, typing or printing symbols like letters and numbers to convey information. Emails and chat room platforms like Slack are a common form of written communication in the workplace. Written communication can be good for documentation and/or reference when you have a lot to remember; however, it can be a poor form of communication in some cases because things can very easily be misinterpreted.

Here are some tips to remember when writing in a work setting:

- **Keep it simple.** Written communications should be as simple and clear as possible. While it might be helpful to include lots of details when giving instructions, you should look for areas where you can write as clearly as possible for your audience to understand.
- **Don't assume that the receiver will read the tone as you intend it to be read.** When you are talking with someone, you have the benefit of them hearing and seeing both verbal and nonverbal communications, but be careful when you are trying to communicate a certain tone when writing. For example, attempting to communicate a joke, sarcasm or excitement might be translated differently depending on the audience. Instead, try to keep your writing as simple and plain as possible and follow up with verbal communications where you can add more personality.
- **Take time to review your written communications.** This is REALLY important! Setting time aside to re-read your emails, letters or texts can help you identify mistakes or opportunities to say something differently. For important communications or those that will be sent to a large number of people, it might be helpful to have a trusted colleague review it as well.

- **Keep a file of writing you find effective or enjoyable.** Reading often and modeling after good writing is one of the best methods to improve. If you receive a certain pamphlet, email or memo that you find particularly helpful or interesting, save it for reference when writing your own communications. Incorporating methods or styles you like can help you improve over time.

### Becoming Aware of Tone in Written Communication

Let's take a look at some brief sample emails and evaluate them. The first one is done for you.

**Email sent:**

"If you don't get that to me by 1:00 this afternoon, we are going to miss the deadline."

**How it could be interpreted:** "Stop being so slow. If we miss the deadline, it will be your fault."

**A better way to say it:** "Today's 1:00 pm deadline is particularly critical. It's very important that I get your much-needed feedback today, so we can deliver it on schedule. Thanks for your help!"

**Email sent:** "That's not what we agreed to in our meeting."

**How it could be interpreted:**

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**A better way to say it:**

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**Email sent:** "Yesterday you said the deadline was two weeks from now, and today you say that it is four days earlier. Which is it?"

**How it could be interpreted:**

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**A better way to say it:**

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To convey your intended email emotional tone, consider these tips:

- Make sure when you are writing an email that you consider what your relationship is with the receiver. Adjust your level of writing formality to match the relationship. For example, if you've made a good friend at work, an email might be much less formal than if you are writing a response to your supervisor.
- Remember that email is more than just the transmission of information. It is about managing a relationship from a distance, which is very common in the tech industry. Consider leading with small talk like you would if you were talking face to face. For example, "I hope you enjoyed the long weekend," or "I'm looking forward to working with you on this project."
- If you think there is room for misinterpretation of your message, take the time to craft the email to make sure your message is more likely to be received with your true intention. This might make the email longer, and it may take you longer to write, but the payoff is worth it.
- Do not use text speak like "lol" or "BTW" unless you know the person really well. The same goes for using emoticons. These days, when people text, they shorten words: LOL stands for "laugh out loud" and BTW stands for "by the way." Emoticons are also used in texting. They are small cartoon pictures that express an emotion. Most people use these, but written communication at work is not the place for them. Here is an example of some emoticons, also called emojis:



- Be careful with sending copies of the email to others, as different interpretations can be made about what copying people on the email implies. There are two types of copies: "carbon copy," which lists everyone at the top, and "blind copy" which hides one receiver from the other. Sometimes people see copying emails as "tattling." Also, you must remember that a person who is blind copied may reply, forgetting that they were a blind copy.
- Do not type in ALL CAPS. It is the same as screaming at someone.
- Don't overuse punctuation!!!! Lots of exclamation points or question marks implies a nasty, sarcastic, or angry tone.
- If you are not sure about the tone of an email you are sending, have someone else read it and give you feedback before you send it. If no one else is available for a tone check, park the email in your draft folder and come back and review it a couple of hours later before sending it.
- Most importantly, know when to pick up the phone or meet face-to-face to discuss an issue. Do not ever try to solve problems with another person over email, especially when you are angry or hurt. It's tempting to take care of conflict or disagreements over email because it's easy and one-sided. Reject the temptation to do so.

**Visual Communication** is the act of using photographs, art, drawings, sketches, charts and graphs to give others information. Visuals are often used as an aid during presentations to provide helpful context alongside written and/or verbal communication. Because people have different learning styles, visual communication might be more helpful for some to consume ideas and information.

Here are a few tips to help you develop your visual communication skills:

- Ask others before including visuals. If you are considering sharing a visual aid in your presentation or email, consider asking others for feedback. Adding visuals can sometimes make concepts confusing or muddled. Getting a third-party perspective can help you decide whether the visual adds value to your communications.
- Consider your audience. Be sure to include visuals that are easily understood by your audience. For example, if you are displaying a chart with unfamiliar data, be sure to take time and explain what is happening in the visual and how it relates to what you are saying. You should never use sensitive, offensive, violent or graphic visuals in any form.

**Active Listening:** Listening well is one of the most important components, or parts, of good communication, both personally and professionally. A person who is an active listener is one who is fully engaged in listening, not only to the words being spoken, but to the meaning behind them. This means that it takes full concentration...no distracting thoughts or the formulating of a response while someone is still talking.

*Active listening* is different from hearing. Hearing is just on the surface; you hear sounds and tone, but it isn't really "sinking in." Have you ever been sitting in a classroom in which the teacher is speaking and you find yourself hearing the sounds, but tuning out what the teacher is actually saying? This is hearing. Listening to the teacher would mean facing him/her, possibly taking notes, and actively engaging in processing the information the teacher is passing along.

*Active listeners* remain neutral and non-judgemental. This means that the active listener does not take sides or form opinions, especially early in the conversation. He/she is also patient with pauses and periods of silence when the other person is trying to carefully craft what he/she wants to say. There is no need to fill silence during active listening.

*Active listeners* are not tempted to jump in with questions or comments whenever there is a pause. Active listening allows the other person time to explore their thoughts and feelings; pauses give them that time and helps them feel heard and respected. Active listeners are not busy in their minds with formulating responses. If you are busy coming up with your response while someone is still talking, you are only hearing, not listening.

When you are actively listening to someone, your body language is also very important. Here are some tips for showing that you are actively listening to someone:

- **Smile.** Small smiles can be used to show that the listener is paying attention to what is being said or as a way of agreeing or being happy about the messages being received. Combined with nods of the head, smiles can be powerful in showing the speaker that messages are being heard and understood.
- **Eye contact.** It is normal and usually encouraging for the listener to look at the speaker. Eye contact can however be intimidating, especially for more shy speakers – gauge how much eye contact is appropriate for any given situation. Combine eye contact with smiles and other non-verbal messages like head nods to encourage the speaker.

- **Posture.** How you sit or stand when listening can tell a lot about how you are listening to someone else. The attentive listener tends to lean slightly forward or sideways when sitting. Other signs of active listening may include a slight slant of the head or resting the head on one hand. Avoid folding your arms in front of you, as this is a “closed” posture.
- **Mirroring.** Mirroring is a fascinating way to connect with another person. Mirroring is when a listener mimics or copies facial expressions and/or body language of the speaker. These reflective expressions can help to show sympathy and empathy in more emotional situations. Attempting to consciously mimic facial expressions (i.e. not automatic reflection of expressions) can be a sign of inattention, though, so make sure this is natural rather than forced.
- **Minimize distractions.** The active listener will not be distracted and therefore will refrain from fidgeting, looking at a clock or watch, doodling, playing with their hair or picking their fingernails. If you are engaged in a conversation, make sure you don’t bring your phone. If you do happen to have your phone, silence it and place it upside down so that any activity on the phone is unknown until the conversation is over.

There are also verbal clues that you are actively listening to someone. When you do the following, you are sending the message to the speaker that you are actively engaged:

- **Use some positive words of encouragement,** but don’t go overboard. It is good to encourage someone when he/she is speaking. Using words like “very good,” “I like it,” or “yes” can be positive, but if overused, it sounds distracting or even condescending. If you want to encourage, sometimes it works better if you add to the positive words and elaborate on what is specifically good about what they are saying.
- **Remember key points and/or ideas.** During a long conversation, it would be almost impossible to remember all of the details; therefore, remembering key points and repeating them back at the right moment shows that you have been listening well. If it is a long conversation that is detailed, it is not rude to make brief notes as the person speaks, particularly if it is someone giving you directions.
- **Questioning.** The listener can demonstrate that they have been paying attention by asking relevant questions and/or making statements that build or help to clarify what the speaker has said. By asking relevant questions, the listener also helps to reinforce that they have an interest in what the speaker has been saying.
- **Reflection.** Reflecting is closely repeating or paraphrasing what the speaker has said in order to show comprehension. Reflection is a powerful skill that can reinforce the message of the speaker and demonstrate understanding. You can say something like this: “So what you are saying is...” or “Let me see if I am hearing you correctly. You said...”
- **Clarification.** Clarifying involves asking questions of the speaker to ensure that the correct message has been received. Clarification usually involves the use of open questions which enables the speaker to expand on certain points as necessary. A clarifying question might sound something like, “What do you mean by...?”
- **Summarization.** Repeating a summary of what has been said back to the speaker is a technique used by the listener to repeat what has been said in their own words. Summarizing involves taking the main points of the received message and repeating them in a logical and clear way, giving the speaker a chance to correct if necessary.

Think of a time when it was clear someone wasn't listening to you when you were telling him/her something meaningful or important. Describe the situation:

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How did you know the person wasn't listening well?

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How did it make you feel?

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Did it affect how you felt about the other person? How so?

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# Barriers of Good Communication

Because good communication is so important in the workplace, it is crucial to acknowledge and understand some of the barriers that may get in the way of effective communication, so that they can be addressed when needed.

Here are some of the top barriers to good communication:

- **Lack of confidence.** Lack of confidence is a major problem faced by many in the workplace. This problem exists among all employees at all levels. Lacking confidence is a great communication barrier and is present in many forms like shyness, awkwardness, discomfort and so on. It not only affects the overall collaboration of people in an organization, but it can also cause employees to hesitate when setting boundaries, asking questions, offering ideas, and sharing opinions.
- **Stereotypes and generalizations.** When we stereotype a certain kind of person based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or culture, we make assumptions about that person that may not be true at all. This can be very harmful to communication and company culture. Make sure you don't hold on to preconceptions because what you are assuming could only be one part of their personality or might not exist at all.
- **Being unclear.** When someone is speaking, everyone listening might have their own interpretation of the information, especially if it is unclear. For example, if a supervisor is giving unclear instructions and the team leaves the meeting to go take care of their part of the project, many mistakes can be made, which leads to frustration and conflict.
- **Body language.** Remember, body language in a face-to-face conversation lends half of the understanding of what is being said; therefore, if what you are saying and your body language don't agree, it breaks trust and makes your message unclear.
- **Infrequent or irregular conversations.** In order to communicate effectively, you must communicate regularly; try connecting with people on a daily basis, especially if you work remotely. If conversations are irregular, you might not develop enough confidence in addressing people if you need any help regarding work. This barrier can be overcome by arranging daily meetings and/or having lunch together.
- **Ineffective listening.** When people don't listen, they miss out on important information and can discourage the speaker. And when someone is speaking and he/she knows someone is not listening, it causes distrust and frustration.
- **Dishonesty.** When someone speaks and is dishonest, his/her co-workers will pick up on it or discover it later. When this happens, trust is broken and they are not likely to listen in future conversations, even when the speaker is being honest. Dishonesty in the workplace makes for a toxic environment and can even result in someone losing his/her position.
- **Avoiding the “hard conversations.”** When people avoid delivering “bad” or disappointing information, it causes distrust in an organization. Difficulties arise, and they must be dealt with in a professional manner; therefore, do not keep secrets or avoid having conversations with the people involved.
- **Gossip.** When you talk about others behind their backs or disclose personal information about a co-worker to others without their explicit permission, this breaks trust. Inevitably, word gets back to the person being talked about. It is hurtful and causes people to withdraw, thus making future positive communication very difficult.

- **Lack of feedback.** When your opinion is needed, provide it. If someone needs your help, give it. When you provide feedback to those around you, they feel confident and are more likely to work harder because they have clear direction.
- **Not asking questions.** Never be afraid to ask questions and/or seek help. It is not a sign of a lack of intelligence. It sends the message to others that you care and that you want to improve.
- **Over-reliance on email and messaging.** What did people used to do before email was invented? They talked. Pick up the phone, as email is impersonal and can be easily misunderstood.
- **Fear of emotions.** Avoiding hard conversations because they may be emotional will not make a problem go away; in fact, it can cause the issues to grow and become more intense. It is common for people to say things like “let sleeping dogs lie”, which means to ignore it. Remember that ignoring emotional topics does not help solve anything.
- **Working remotely.** Technology has made it possible for people to work from home or away from a central office. When people work remotely, they must be very diligent about reaching out to coworkers by scheduling phone calls, even if they are an informal “catching up” time.

After reading the most common barriers to communication, what are the top 3 you feel are ones you may have to work on when you enter your new career? Explain each.

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# Using Proper Language at the Workplace

As we have seen, communication is a key component to success in the workplace. The words we choose to use and how we say them is an important part of establishing a reputation at work.

When you are hanging out with friends, you likely speak and act differently than you do around your parents and/or children. For example, you might be someone who uses a lot of curse words and slang around friends, but you'd want to avoid using that same language around children. The same is true with our word choices and mannerisms in the workplace. One must use more formal language and mannerisms in a professional environment.

Our ability to change our communication style according to who we are around is called **code switching**.

**Code switching** is a very helpful skill to have when dealing with multiple types of people and groups. Adapting our language and mannerisms to the culture around us is helpful because we are able to gain respect from and connect to those around us when we adapt to the environment.

When you are with friends, it is typically ok to use slang words, local dialect, and even curse words if it is widely accepted by the group. In the workplace; however, this is inappropriate if the culture in your workplace doesn't condone bad or informal language.

Here is an example of what it looks like to adapt language:

## Language Levels

<b>Formal</b>  I observed the lovely lady and longed to tell her of my admiration for her. Therefore, I sent her a beautiful bouquet of roses to express my love.	<b>Informal</b>  I watched the pretty girl and wanted to tell her how much I liked her, so I sent her some flowers.
<b>Slang</b>  I sized up this gorgeous chick I saw and wanted to tell her how blown away I was by her, so I scored her some flowers.	<b>Illiterate</b>  Like, I seen this here girl, you know. I like her, but ain't never told her yet. I brung her some flowers though.

All of the examples in the chart are conveying the same basic information; however, some would be appropriate among peers and/or friends, while others would be more appropriate in a workplace setting.

Most people flow between the informal and slang level of speaking. When starting a new position, you want to err on the side of caution and speak between a formal and informal manner. Once you know the culture of your workplace, you may find that you can relax a little and speak informally, and even use a little slang. You do not, however, want to ever sound illiterate, so avoid using language that is grammatically incorrect at all times.

## Chapter 3 Big Ideas:

1. Learning how to communicate well in the workplace is essential.
2. There are four main types of communication: speaking, writing, body language, and visual.
3. While writing can be effective communication, verbal communication is always more effective.
4. When writing, be sure to review and check for the possibility of an email, etc. transmitting the wrong tone.
5. Active listening is one of the most important ingredients to good communication.
6. You will encounter barriers to good communication. Work to solve them.
7. Work language and communication is more formal than when we are with friends and peers.

### **Be Mindful of What You Say**

*In the course of your conversation each and every day,*

*Think twice, try to be careful of what you have to say;*

*Your remarks may be picked up by someone's listening ear,*

*You may be surprised at what some people think they hear.*

*Things that you innocently say, or try to portray,*

*Can be changed, and greatly exaggerated along the way.*

*Many stories change for the worse as they are retold*

*So try to keep any questionable remarks "on hold".*

*May I give you all some very sound advice?*

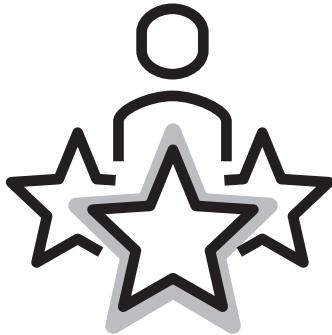
*When you speak of others, regardless of who is around,*

*If you have nothing good to say, don't utter a sound.*

*You may find that an innocent remark, in the end,*

*May lose you a close and valued friend.*

—Henry Lesser



## ☰ Chapter 4: Becoming a Top-Notch Team Player

Building strong communication skills naturally leads into the teamwork and conflict resolution chapter because in order to be a strong team member who knows how to resolve issues when they arise requires communication skills. Be sure to review the previous chapter and build on that knowledge as you progress through the following chapter.

Before beginning, take a moment to “journal” about your experiences with being on a team, whether it be through sports, work, or another setting. Write down what your experience has been working or playing with a team. Was it positive? Negative? Why? If you have never been part of a team, what do you imagine it to be like?

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Whether a company is large or small, the building of a business never happens in the hands of one person. It takes teamwork.

The need for the ability to work in a team has grown as the technological era has emerged. Back during the Industrial Revolution, most workers had manufacturing jobs that only required individuals to know how to do one task, and they typically performed the task alone or with a partner.

In the “information age” of today, this is less true. Workers today are able to contribute to the workforce in new ways, exchange ideas quickly and efficiently, and many people are not tasked with just one job...they can have many responsibilities within their organization. This is why workers in the world today must know how to work well with others. When they do work well in teams, everyone benefits.

### **Benefits of Effective Teamwork in an Organization**

- **Teamwork creates unity in the workplace.** An environment rich in teamwork promotes an atmosphere that builds friendship and loyalty. These close-knit relationships motivate employees because they feel connected and supported by other individuals. All people bring to work with them different talents, weaknesses, communication skills, strengths, and habits. Therefore, when a teamwork environment is not encouraged, this can pose many challenges in achieving the overall goals and objectives. This creates an environment where employees become focused on promoting their own achievements and competing against their fellow colleagues. Ultimately, this can lead to an unhealthy and inefficient working environment.

*When teamwork is effective, the whole team is motivated and working toward the same goal in harmony.*

- **Teamwork offers different perspectives and ideas.** We all bring our own skills, intelligence, ideas, talents, and perspectives to the workplace. When a team works together effectively, the collaboration creates a safe environment for the sharing of ideas, and the more ideas, the more innovative the team is in accomplishing common goals. We learn from others when we accept that they see things differently from ourselves.

*More talented minds working together means more innovation and creativity.*

- **Teamwork improves efficiency and productivity.** When teams work well together, everyone becomes more efficient and productive. This is because it allows the workload to be shared, reducing the pressure on individuals. It ensures that tasks are completed within a set time frame. It also allows goals to be more attainable, enhances performance, improves job satisfaction, and increases work pace.

*When a group of individuals works together, compared to one person working alone, they promote a more efficient work output and are able to complete tasks faster due to many minds working together on the same goals and objectives of the business.*

- **Teamwork provides great learning opportunities.** Working in a team enables us to learn from one another's mistakes. You are able to avoid future errors, gain insight from differing perspectives, and learn new concepts from more experienced colleagues. Additionally, individuals can expand their skill sets, discover fresh ideas from newer colleagues, and come up with more effective approaches and solutions for the tasks at hand.

*The best way to learn is to learn from others around you, and learning should be a lifelong endeavor.*

- **Teamwork creates great energy in the workplace.** When people accomplish things together, there is a feeling of celebration for a job well done. This feeling of accomplishment is contagious and people want to experience more of it. It energizes them and makes for a fun, energetic work environment.

*Good teamwork is energizing.*

- **Teamwork builds an environment of trust.** Relying on other people builds trust, and teamwork establishes strong relationships with coworkers. Despite occasional disagreements, an effective team enjoys working together and shares a strong bond. When you put your trust in a coworker, you are establishing the foundation of a relationship that can endure minor conflicts.

Trusting your teammates also provides a feeling of safety that allows ideas to emerge. It helps employees open up and encourage each other. Open communication is key when working on a team and produces effective solutions in difficult group projects.

Without trust, a team crumbles and cannot succeed on assigned projects. Great teams build each other up and strengthen individual members to create a cohesive group. By working together, employees learn that wins and losses affect everyone on the team. Teamwork builds confidence in each other's distinct abilities.

*Good teamwork builds trust, an important ingredient in an efficient workplace.*

## What Makes a Good Team?

Putting a diverse set of people together to accomplish a goal can be challenging. People are all different and come with their own experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and quirky personalities. Even though it is challenging, it is very possible. And when a great team learns to work together well, the payoff is HUGE. So what makes up a good team? What qualities does a good, effective team have that struggling teams do not?

Great teams typically embody the following qualities:

- **They communicate well with each other.** There's the "communication" word again! It's really THAT important. A good team communicates openly with each other, sharing their thoughts, opinions and ideas with members of their team, as well as taking into consideration what others have to say. Communication is essential for keeping track of progress and working together efficiently on tasks. Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings that can mean work is left incomplete/incorrect or conflicts can arise.
- **They keep their focus on goals and results.** Good teams set team goals based on outcomes and results, rather than just on the amount of work being done. Once a clear plan is in place, team members can then set about how they are going to achieve their goals as a group, as well as what each individual's contribution will be. This provides everyone with clear direction and gives them something to aim for both individually and collectively.
- **Everyone does their "fair share."** All members of an effective team contribute their fair share of the workload and fully understand what their responsibilities are and where they fit in with the running of the business. They feel a sense of belonging to the team, are committed to their work, and really care about the success of the company.

- **All team members offer their support.** In an effective team, all members are always willing to assist and encourage others when they need a helping hand with work.
- **Team members are diverse.** In an effective team, everyone is unique and able to offer their own experiences and knowledge that others may not possess. Diversity is needed so that all of the required skills are covered by somebody on the team and each individual can be assigned a particular role based on his/her strengths and skills. A variety of personalities, age groups, cultures, etc. can also bring creativity and a broad range of ideas to the table.
- **They are organized.** Organization is very important for a business to run smoothly. Successful teams have an organized approach for accomplishing tasks. Individuals may be responsible for organizing their own work and time, but teams should meet regularly to review procedure and provide updates on how things are going.
- **They have fun.** All work and no play creates burnout among workers and productivity decreases. Teams who work particularly well together enjoy each other's company and get together outside of the office from time to time to socialize and have some fun. Building a positive relationship with colleagues can make for a much more relaxed environment and reduce conflict. Doing some social things together also helps each team member understand each other better. Our work lives are only a fraction of who we are and what our lives are like. Knowing a bit about our coworkers' lives outside of work helps build the relationships even more. \*\*\*NOTE: If you do ever go out on social outings with your team, be sure to avoid over-drinking or getting out of control. Even though your team may become friends, be sure to remember that work outings require you to still remain within certain professional boundaries.

## What Can You Do?

Now that you understand the benefits of great teamwork and what elements make up a good team, you may be thinking, “That’s all great, but what do I need to do?” There are many ways that you can work on being a good team member. Here are some tips:

- **Let others help you.** One of the biggest pitfalls many professionals fall into is feeling they need to have all of the answers. Helping others is great. However, allowing others to help you is just as important. By opening up to your colleagues, you can be more authentic, more approachable, and benefit from their wisdom. Even better: When you allow someone to help you, you are helping him/her feel better about him/herself, too.
- **Listen well.** Sometimes we focus too much on what actions we should take rather than how we make people feel. One of the most powerful gifts we can give to another human being is to truly understand them -- and the best way to do this is to listen to them. If you listen well, your path to becoming a great team member will be clear.
- **Recognize and celebrate the genius and accomplishments of others.** Many of us feel the need to place focus on our own talents and accomplishments, but when we step outside of ourselves and begin to recognize the talents of others, people are drawn to us. People like to be recognized, and if you’re the one complimenting them, you have paved the way to developing a positive relationship.

- **Be respectful and fair to all team members.** When you assume the worst about someone and begin to treat him/her differently, a withdrawal occurs because others don't see you as safe. When people feel safe and equal around others, they respond with positive actions and words. Being respectful of those around you and treating them fairly helps develop trust.
- **Know when to lead and when to follow.** Typically, teams are made up of some people who naturally want to lead while others like to take a "back seat" and follow. If you are a natural leader, it is tempting to fall into this role all the time; however, that is not wise. Sometimes the quiet team member who typically follows needs to feel the satisfaction of taking the lead on something. Likewise, if you are someone who doesn't typically take the lead, try it out on occasion by asking something like, "I know I typically stay quiet in situations like this, but this is one time I'd like to jump into the driver's seat. Are you guys open to that?"
- **Have good intentions.** This simply means that you should approach your team with honesty and goodwill, avoid making negative assumptions about them, and be genuine.
- **Share your talents freely.** You have strengths and skills that come naturally to you; we all do. Share those gifts freely; for example, a task that comes easily to you and may only take you ten minutes to complete may save a fellow team member a whole day's worth of work and frustration if it does not come naturally to him/her. Nothing builds trust and connection like helping someone out of a challenging situation, especially when it is done freely and without expectation of repayment.
- **Volunteer to do tasks or work that the team finds unappealing.** Many successful people have done "grunt work" to get a leg up. The hard or unappealing tasks need to get done and actually build character. If you offer to do work like this every now and then, you are sending the message that you are dedicated to accomplishing overall goals and are willing to do whatever it takes.
- **Be positive.** Positive people are easy to be around. They tend to increase the energy around them; therefore, give energy rather than draining people's energy with negativity. See the opportunity, not the problem. Look for what's right, not what's wrong. Acknowledge people's positive attributes rather than gossiping. Stay away from judging things as good or bad, right or wrong -- simply acknowledge they are different and move forward. Seeing the bright side of situations and those around you is a choice.
- **Adapt and adjust the way you approach things according to your team members' personalities and preferences.** Don't assume that others work and interact they way you do. Instead, observe others. Do they prefer emails to calls? Do they want to chit-chat before meetings? Do they need to discuss something before making a decision? If your answers are different, consider flexing to their preferred work style. You will get more done, and people will be more drawn to work with you. If you are rigid, team members will avoid you.
- **Accept feedback from your team members.** No one is perfect, yet when someone provides helpful feedback, we often become defensive and hurt if it is not 100% positive. But this is unrealistic. What good is feedback if it is not meant to improve a product, person, or outcome? Be open to and even ask for feedback. Avoid becoming defensive; if you feel hurt on the inside, keep it to yourself and take the time to process your feelings. After a little while, you will likely see things from the other person's perspective, and you will be grateful someone cared enough to help you improve. (So be sure to thank him/her later.)

- **Remember that your team members are humans.** When we are at work, we sometimes forget that all team members have personal lives that include family, friends and social situations, along with struggles, pain, and grief. Getting to know some personal “tidbits” about team members helps build relationships. If someone becomes a parent, you can celebrate. If someone loses a loved one to cancer, you can help comfort him/her, or even help pick up some work slack while they are away and grieving.
- **Avoid casting blame.** The blame game never has any winners. No good ever comes from throwing a team member “under the bus”. In fact, it makes you look petty and breaks the trust in the group. If you start casting blame on others, even if something technically was their fault, it breaks down the team. In these cases, it is best to stay quiet and let the truth be revealed on its own.
- **Don't just cooperate, collaborate too.** Cooperation simply means that two or more people are working together to accomplish a goal. Collaboration takes it a step further. Collaboration is asking, “How can I help you?”, “What ideas do you have in relation to this project?” and it is saying things like, “You bring such genius to the table when it comes to JavaScript,” and “I am open to all of your input.”
- **Create your own and honor others' boundaries.** Healthy boundaries make for healthy relationships. For example, you may have a part of your life that you would like to keep private. If others are questioning you or pressing for information, remind them in a kind way, “I like to keep that to myself. Thank you for respecting my privacy.” And the same is true of others. You may have a team member who simply does not like sitting really closely to other people. In this case, you would strive to make sure you sit or stand outside of her discomfort zone.
- **Keep a sense of humor.** In high pressure or remote situations, we can sometimes take ourselves and things too seriously. When you make a mistake, learn to laugh at yourself. Do not make fun of others in an attempt to make something funny though. A sense of humor does not have to come at the expense of others' feelings.
- **Accept that conflict can and will likely occur.** When people are working closely with one another, especially in high stress situations, conflict will likely occur. Stay calm and recognize that conflict is a part of life. It does not have to derail everything. When conflict erupts, be sure to take a break, calm down, process the information and your part in it; then return to discuss in person what might have caused the breakdown so that each of you can prevent the same thing from happening again.
- **Follow through with your promises, commitments, and what you say you are going to do.** If you fail to do something you've promised to do or miss a deadline, your team will lose trust and respect for you. If you do accidentally break a promise or commitment, be sure to acknowledge and own it, then apologize sincerely without offering excuses. One way to build trust in this area is to “under promise and over deliver”. This means that you are conservative in your promise, and then do more. For example, restaurants often do this when estimating wait time for a table. They may give a 30 minute wait time, knowing that it is not likely. Therefore, when they are able to give you a table in 20 minutes, you are pleasantly surprised.
- **Learn to apologize.** We all make mistakes. Rather than sulking or casting blame, own up to your mistakes and apologize. A real apology is one in which the person takes full responsibility for his/her actions. An apology that sounds like this: “I'm sorry you got your feelings hurt,” is not a genuine apology because blame is being cast on the other person's reaction rather than the action that caused it.

After reading and learning about some things you can do to become a good team member, answer the following questions thoughtfully and honestly.

1. Are you a person who likes to do everything on your own, even when it's a struggle, or are you willing to ask for and accept help?

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2. What is the most challenging part of listening well to others?

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3. How does it make you feel when someone compliments you for your talents and/or accomplishments? Do you feel you are able to recognize other people's talents easily or is this something you are unaccustomed to doing?

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4. Would you consider yourself a natural leader or more of a follower? (Do not look at these as either good or bad. It takes all kinds of people and personalities to make teams work.) Explain.

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5. What's the first thing you notice about someone when you meet him/her? Do you tend to focus on the negative things and become critical or do you choose to focus on the positive things? Explain.

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6. Do you consider yourself a positive person or a negative person? Do you dwell on how terrible things are or do you try to turn things around and see the benefit of difficult people and situations? Explain/give examples.

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7. When someone gives you feedback about something you've done and it's not all positive, how do you react? Do you accept it as helpful or do you tend to get defensive? If you tend to get defensive, what can you do to change the way you look at feedback?

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8. Everyone around us is struggling with something. Sometimes people are enduring things we cannot even imagine. How do you think remembering this fact will help you in the workplace?

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9. Have you ever had someone "throw you under the bus" and blame you for something? How did it make you feel?

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10. Are you able to laugh at yourself and your mistakes or you tend to take things really personally? What benefits do you believe can be enjoyed by learning to have a sense of humor about things, even when they are difficult?

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11. Are you able to apologize easily? If not, why?

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12. Our beliefs about ourselves drive outcomes. This means that what we believe usually comes true. If you believe you do not deserve forgiveness, it likely will not come your way. With that thought in mind, do you believe that you can be or learn to be a good team member? Go beyond saying yes or no. Expand on this, describe your strengths and note areas you may want to work on.

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## Conflict Resolution

Let's face it: Arguments happen. People sometimes disagree. Fights erupt. It's an uncomfortable part of life, but one we all deal with. Before reading about how to become effective at resolving conflict, reflect on how you typically deal with conflict now.

1. Do you tend to pick fights?	Yes	No	Maybe
2. Are you a peacekeeper?	Yes	No	Maybe
3. Do arguments make you uncomfortable?	Yes	No	Maybe
4. Do you typically blame yourself?	Yes	No	Maybe
5. Do you typically blame someone else?	Yes	No	Maybe
6. Do you struggle to control anger?	Yes	No	Maybe
7. Do arguments make you emotional?	Yes	No	Maybe
8. Are you sensitive?	Yes	No	Maybe
9. Do you yell in an argument?	Yes	No	Maybe
10. Do you shut down in an argument?	Yes	No	Maybe
11. Do you hold grudges?	Yes	No	Maybe
12. Do you forgive easily?	Yes	No	Maybe

13. Describe how your family handled arguments when you were young. Were there lots of conflicts in your home? Or did your family tend to avoid conflict? Has this affected how you view and handle conflicts?

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14. When you get into a conflict, do you place more importance on winning and/or being right, or on resolving the conflict through understanding and/or compromise?

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15. When you have a conflict with someone, it's resolved in your mind when... (Check all that apply):

- The other person apologizes to me.
- I accept the whole thing as my fault and apologize.
- Both parties apologize and own up to their own contribution to the conflict.
- I win the conflict by making sure I'm right.
- I give up and give in to everything to make the conflict end.
- The other person and I come up with a solution that works for both of us.

16. After looking at your answers, what areas do you think may be positive for you in dealing with conflict and what areas may pose more of a challenge?

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# Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a normal part of life, both personally and in the workplace. It can be terribly uncomfortable; however, it can be helpful in making necessary changes within your home or work environment. When things are comfortable, we see no need to change; when things get difficult, we tend to look for solutions. Conflict can help us grow into better people if we choose to look at it positively and face it head on (without aggression).

- When conflict remains unresolved, though, it can result in feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, hopelessness, depression, and other negative emotions. It can result in behaviors such as physical or emotional withdrawal, resignation from jobs, the ending of personal relationships, aggression, and sometimes even violence.
- The workplace is the perfect breeding ground for conflict because:
- There are periods of high intensity and/or stress.
- The workplace is full of very diverse individuals who haven't necessarily chosen to work with a certain group of people.
- Many people do not have strong communication skills.
- Many people focus on being right rather than solving a problem.
- There are many types of different relationships to manage in the workplace: peer to peer, worker to supervisor, worker to clients, etc.
- Sometimes people's roles are not well-defined.
- Lots of changes occur in the workplace.
- There may be a lack of strong management.
- There has been an increase in people working remotely, which makes communication more challenging.

There are two main types of conflict in the workplace: **situational conflict and personality-based conflict**.

**Situational conflict** arises when a situation becomes difficult for two or more people to sort through.

**Example 1:**

Samuel and Miguel share a printer at the office. Sam regularly ties up the printer by sending large jobs to the printer that take a long time to complete without asking Miguel if he has anything that needs to go to the printer. Because of this, Miguel's work is halted until Sam's print job is complete.

**Example 2:**

Keisha cannot complete her work until she receives a report from Jack. Keisha believes that Jack procrastinates until the last minute. This causes Keisha to have to rush to complete her work, and she feels it reflects badly on her to their boss. It also causes her a tremendous amount of stress. Jack feels like Keisha puts too much pressure on them both and sets unrealistic deadlines. As the conflict increases, both Keisha and Jack lose motivation and their productivity decreases.

In both situations, one person's work processes differ from the other, resulting in decreased productivity.

What do you think should be done to solve example 1?

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What do you think should be done to solve example 2?

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In both cases, it might be wise to present the issue to a supervisor in a non-confrontational way. All parties should avoid waiting until expressing anger is more important than finding a solution. A supervisor can be a great resource for helping two people talk things out and arrive at a solution that works for everyone.

**Personality-based conflict** is conflict that arises simply because two people are very different from each other and don't know how to manage those differences. This type of conflict is more complicated and more difficult to solve, but it is possible.

**Example 1:**

John and Elijah are computer programmers who work side by side at a workstation. John is loud and boisterous. He brags about his accomplishments and takes the credit for things he may not have even done. John regularly talks loudly on personal calls during the day. Elijah is more reserved and quiet. He concentrates best in a quiet environment and John is disruptive all day long. Elijah is becoming more and more frustrated but knows that John will not be receptive to his asking him to quiet down at the workstation. The resentment grows until Elijah just doesn't want to work there anymore.

**Example 2:**

Tina likes to gossip about co-workers. One day, Tamara walks into the employee break room and hears Tina saying terrible, personal things about her to another co-worker, and to make matters worse, the things she says aren't even true. Tamara is not seen, so she leaves the break room silently, returns to her desk, and cries out of frustration and hurt. She is unable to work productively for the rest of the day and isn't sleeping well at night because she wonders how many people think this way about her. Her productivity decreases, she becomes unmotivated, and she considers looking for another job.

Why do you think personality-based conflicts are harder to solve than situational conflicts?

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Personality-based conflicts are complex because they are rooted in the core values, mannerisms, choices, and internal makeup of the individuals involved. Personalities are hard, and sometimes impossible, to change. However, our behavior and how we choose to display our personalities can. So how are these conflicts solved?

- **Work toward a solution quickly.** Do not wait until resentments build up and tempers flare to a point in which those involved are so hurt and angry that they are unable to see that a solution is possible. This affects productivity and morale in a company. Do take enough time to calm down, but don't wait until more incidents happen to begin working toward a solution.
- **Before approaching the person with which you are struggling and/or a supervisor, come up with some proposed solutions.** If you only approach people with problems without any ideas for solutions, you are asking that others solve problems for you. Even if your solutions won't work, it will appear as if you are solution-oriented rather than just wanting to vent.
- **Avoid trying to get others on your side.** If you tell other coworkers about the situation in an attempt to gain supporters, you are contributing to the growth of the problem rather than helping solve it.
- **Talk it out.** Find a time to schedule a talk with whomever you are struggling. Be sure that it is face-to-face so that you have the benefit of body language and tone being understood. If you do not feel comfortable doing this on your own, you can request the presence of a supervisor. Those in leadership positions know the importance of conflict resolution and can perhaps add an outsider's viewpoint. Be sure that you use active listening skills with both your coworker and your supervisor.

*We are not called to BE right.*

*We are called to DO right.*

When talking out an issue, focus on using “I” language rather than “you” language. Here are some examples:

“You” Language	“I” Language	Explanation
“You always speak to me like I am stupid.”	When we talk, sometimes I feel like you see me as less than you.”	Using “you” in this case is very accusatory; after all, the person might not know he/she is doing this and might not mean to do it. Also, using “always” is likely not accurate.
“You are so arrogant. You take credit for things you did not do. And by the way, you are such a loudmouth that I cannot get my work done.”	“I am someone who needs a quiet workspace to get my work done, and when you’re talking on the phone loudly, I struggle to be productive.”	In this case, you want to avoid attacking someone’s character by calling him arrogant. Leave that out altogether. Also, never call someone a name like “loudmouth”. Address the issue that is directly affecting you.
“You gossip all the time. The other day I heard you talking about me, and it was all lies. I refuse to work with liars.”	“The other day, I walked into the break room and overheard a discussion that hurt my feelings and made me angry. I heard some things said about me that were hurtful and untrue.”	Instead of attacking the other individual, tell about your experience and how it made you feel. Again, avoid name-calling. Additionally, using the word “refuse” makes you look rigid and uncompromising.

- **Remember that the only person you have control over is yourself.** If the person you are talking with about an issue grows angry and defensive, you do not have any control over it, nor does that take away any of your power. The only thing you have control over in a conflict is how you choose to react and handle yourself: this is where your power resides. If you allow yourself to lose your temper, name-call, curse, or be combative, it affects how your supervisor and others see YOU, not the other person. Losing your temper will also not lead to a solution; it will only make you look bad.
- **Try to get to know your co-worker better as a person.** Oftentimes, we forget that all people are dealing with issues in their lives. This can sometimes spill over into work relations. For example, someone who is taking care of a parent with cancer will be under great stress. The pressure, lack of sleep, financial burdens, and so on, can make a person feel out of control, and sometimes it spills into the work day. Knowing your

coworkers better and remembering that we are all struggling in one way or another can help reduce the risk of tension and can even solve problems when they arise. Practice compassion.

- **Let go of the need to be right or “win.”** When we focus our attention on being right, we often lose out on opportunities to learn something new that will help us develop relationships better. Being right isn’t all it’s made out to be...in fact, it often leads to further conflict and deterioration of relationships. Take ownership of anything you may have done to contribute to a problem. This should also not be conditional based on the other person apologizing or owning up to their part. Remember, you do not have control over someone else’s actions or character, only your own.
- **Be an active listener, even when you are emotional.** If your emotions are high, this should be a strong indication that it is time to take a breath and listen. There may be things that you have been doing to contribute to the conflict that you were unaware of. You may be tempted to defend yourself; do not do so. Just listen.
- **Learn to identify your emotions.** Anger is an emotion that is secondary to a deeper one. Typically, our anger is masking something else like pain, betrayal, lack of trust, lack of confidence, shame, or fear. If you learn to recognize that anger is secondary to something else going on, you will be well on your way to controlling anger if it has been a problem for you. When you feel yourself growing angry, stop yourself and ask, “What am I really feeling here?” This may take practice, but this level of self-awareness will create such positive results, that you will want to continue practicing, and eventually, it will come naturally to you.

## Managing Emotions

One of the most important take-aways from this chapter is that you are in control of your emotions and reactions to things. It is extremely important to learn how to manage your emotions so that they do not control you.

Tips for managing your emotions at work:

- Try and leave personal matters and issues at home. When you commute to work, use that time to tell your mind to let go. One way to do this is to envision a box with a lock on it. Place whatever is bothering you in the box and lock it. Tell yourself you can take it out and deal with it after work. This is called compartmentalizing.
- Learn some deep breathing/relaxation techniques. When you are stressed out, without knowing it, you tend to take shallow breaths and longer pauses between breaths, causing muscles to become tense and brain activity to decrease. Learn to recognize when this is happening and practice mindful breathing and relaxation techniques.

### Mindful Breathing/Relaxation Techniques

Take a deep breath in (as far as you can). Hold it. While you are holding it, countdown from 6 to 1. Release the breath. While you release, countdown from 6 to 1 again. Repeat as many times as needed.

Get into a quiet place and practice slowly relaxing specific parts of your body. Start with your toes. Feel the muscles and tension and release it. Move to your feet, ankles, lower legs, knees, upper legs, hips, waist, and so on. At each body point, tell your brain to let go of the tension and wait to feel it drop away. Do not move on to the next part until you feel a difference. Remember to breathe deeply as you are doing this.

Breath deeply in through your nose. Release the breath slowly through your mouth.

Remove yourself from a situation (if you can) and take a small walk outside. Sunlight and being outside in open space helps calm anxiety and frustration.

Close your eyes, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. While doing this, create an image in your mind that relaxes you, such as a mountain stream, a thunderstorm, the ocean, or any other relaxing image. Pretend like you are there and enjoy the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations, such as sun on your skin.

- Take a brief break from whatever is causing the rise in emotions. If you can step away, do this. However, sometimes stepping away is not the best choice. If this is the case, stop and count to 10, breathe deeply, and proceed.
- Get plenty of exercise and sleep, keep a diet low in caffeine and sugar, and stay away from substances like alcohol and/or drugs.
- If you become angry at work, never make a big decision or respond to someone in anger. These days, quick communication over an email or text is very tempting. Avoid using any “quick fix” when you become anxious or angry.
- Know your triggers. Be aware of the things that annoy or trigger you. When you are aware of them, you are able to better recognize why you may be getting angry or emotional. You can also plan ahead for a mindful response rather than negative reaction. For example, if you know that people who talk with their mouth full drives you crazy, plan ahead for how you will handle a lunch out with coworkers.
- Treat others the way you want to be treated. When we approach people with kindness, compassion, and tolerance, we feel good about ourselves. This feeling of satisfaction with ourselves helps us feel calm and confident in tricky situations.
- If you do ever let your emotions get the better of you, be quick to apologize.

This chapter would be incomplete if we didn't address something you may face in the workplace as an ex-offender in relation to teamwork and conflict resolution.

When people lack information and/or understanding, they can sometimes react to it poorly. You may encounter this when you get into a new position. If you choose to be open about your felony conviction, you will likely find that most people are going to be really supportive and kind to you. You may find, though, that some people may appear nervous, standoffish, or judgmental.

Do not take this personally. It is not personal, even though it will feel like it is.

It is likely that they simply don't have enough knowledge about the justice involved or have preconceived notions about ex-offenders, etc. It is your job, through your own good behavior, manners, and communication skills, to show them who you are rather than feed into their beliefs by acting out, being disrespectful, impatient, or rude.

Here's the reality of the situation: Some people might be watching closely, thinking that you will act out or be a poor team player because of your past. If you take this personally and let it get you angry, you will be feeding into their assumptions.

In these situations, it is best to prove their assumptions wrong. You can only do this by monitoring your reactions and approaching all situations mindfully. Over time, you will win the "critics" over if you accept things as they are and work hard to change attitudes over time. In fact, you will likely make some good friends along the way who will later tell you how much they've learned from you.

Feeling awkward and uncomfortable at a new job is the case for everyone. If you choose to accept this and work through it rather than attaching the discomfort to your criminal past, you will arrive in a comfortable, competent place in your new position; you just have to be patient with those around you and let relationships develop in a natural way rather than forcing them.

What do you believe the general public thinks about ex-felons?

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Do you believe that this is the case with a little, some, most, or all of the general public?

*a little    some    most    all*

Do you have control over what other people think or believe?

Yes   No

You have control over how you feel about and react to people's prejudices or assumptions about you. What types of things can you do to make sure your actions and words do not feed into preconceived notions about ex offenders?

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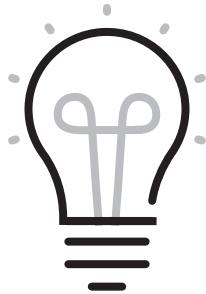
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## Chapter 4 Big Ideas

1. Teamwork is much more common in the workplace these days than it used to be; therefore, learning to work well with other people is very important.
2. Good teamwork increases productivity and energy in the workplace.
3. Good communication and respect are key to effective teams.
4. There are two main types of conflict in the workplace: situational and personality-based.
5. Conflict is part of life; learning how to resolve conflicts is a skill that can be practiced and mastered.
6. The only person you have control over is yourself.
7. Managing your emotions will help you prevent some conflicts before they arise and resolve conflicts when they do arise.
8. Some people in the workplace may have stereotypes of ex-offenders. It is important not to take this personally and to strive to prove stereotypes wrong.

After reading this chapter, you likely have a lot to think about. In the spaces below, journal about your reactions to this chapter. Do you believe it will be helpful to you? Why or why not? What parts struck you the most? Is there anything that bothered you? Excited you? You may also want to write notes here about things you really want to remember.



## ☰ Chapter 5: Problem Solving 101

Have you ever played with a Rubik's Cube or a puzzle similar to it? The Rubik's Cube was invented in 1977 and became wildly popular in the 1980's.

When the Rubik's Cube first hit the market, most people were stumped as to how to solve it. Only a select few were able to crack the code. There were some who just would not give up. They spent day and night working to break the code of the puzzle. Most people, though, got frustrated with it and stopped trying. Or they tore the stickers off and stuck them back on to make it look as if they had solved it.

Over time, more and more people were able to figure out how to solve the puzzle. They began doing tutorials for others on YouTube and writing coaching books so that more people could enjoy the satisfaction of seeing all the colors aligned on the faces of the cube. Now, even children are able to solve their Rubik's Cube puzzle if they have the desire to learn.

The Rubik's Cube phenomenon shows us some things about problem solving. One, there are problem solvers and those who tend to give up easily. Two, the ease of finding information these days has allowed for even more problem-solving. And three, real problem solvers share their knowledge with others. Finally, successfully solving problems is satisfying.

Before progressing through this chapter, let's start by evaluating your skills and attitude toward problem-solving.

### **Problem Solving Self Evaluation**

For each statement, check the box in the column that best describes you. Please answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be), and don't worry if some questions seem to score "in the wrong direction". Remember, honest self-evaluation is the key to improvement.

<b>Self-Observation Statements</b>	<b>Not at All</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Very Often</b>
I easily recognize when I have a problem.					
I know when I have completely solved a problem.					
I can usually see more than one solution to a problem.					
I always check to make sure I understand the problem.					
People seek my advice about their problems often.					
I suggest ways of solving problems to others.					
I seek out resources that will help me solve problems.					
I ask for other people's advice when facing a problem.					
I try and come up with multiple solutions to choose from before jumping on the first one.					
My solutions take into account the possible consequences.					
I listen to other people's suggestions and take note of them.					
I think about how I will know when the problem is solved.					
I can solve problems on my own.					
I can solve problems with other people.					

I stay calm when my solution doesn't work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I stay calm when others don't agree with my solution.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
If my solution doesn't work, I find out why.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Scores for each column:** \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

After completing the chart above, calculate a score for yourself. For each checkmark, assign it a point value based on the following guidelines:

Not at all = 1   Rarely = 2   Sometimes = 3   Often = 4   Very often = 5

**What is your total score?** \_\_\_\_\_

This score is going to serve as your baseline score. It doesn't matter if your score is low right now; your goal is simply to improve the score over time. Be sure to save and use this handbook as you progress in your career. Another copy of this self evaluation is provided to you in the appendix so that you can re-evaluate your problem-solving skills when you've gained more experience. Remember, the goal is improvement, not perfection.

Problem solving is a core human desire and is the basis for human evolution. Problem solving is the method we use to understand what is happening in our environment, identify things we want to change and then figure out the things that need to be done to create the desired outcome. Problem solving is the source of all new inventions, social and cultural changes, and changes in the marketplace. It is the basis for continuous improvement, communication, and learning.

Problem-solving is:

- the process of observing what is going on in your environment
- identifying things that could be changed or improved
- diagnosing why the current state is the way it is and the factors and forces that influence it
- developing approaches and alternatives to make changes
- making decisions about which alternative to select
- taking action to implement the changes

and finally, observing the impact of those actions in the environment

Humans learn how to solve simple problems from a very early age (learning to eat, walk, and communicate). As a person goes through life, problem-solving skills are refined, matured, and become more sophisticated, which enables us to solve even more complicated problems.

Problem-solving helps us exert some control over our environment. It is empowering to solve problems.

- So why do so many people struggle to face and solve problems?
- Problems are something we don't particularly like. Let's face it: It's not fun.
- They are time-consuming.
- They seem to show up during the worst times.
- They force us to think about our uncertainties.
- When one is solved, another one seems to show up. (It seems never-ending, right?)

This is why some people are resistant to solving problems. They just want problems to "go away." Or they try and solve them quickly, only to find out there was a better solution they didn't see because the process was rushed.

**Do you feel that you embrace problems or resist them? Explain.**

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**Think of a time you had a problem that you tried to avoid or "wish away." Discuss the problem and what happened as a result of your avoidance. How did you feel when it was all over?**

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**Now think of a time you faced a problem head-on. Describe the problem, how you solved it. How did you feel when it was all over?**

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When solving problems, avoid wishing them away or taking “shortcuts.” There is a method to solving problems. If you practice this method, you will become much more comfortable and skilled in solving life’s problems, both at the workplace and home.

**Follow these 7 steps when facing a problem or challenge:**

1. **Identify the problem.** Ask yourself what the problem is. There may be multiple issues within a single situation. Make a list of these issues and define why each one is a problem to you. Focus on behaviors rather than on yourself or another person.  
**Example 1:** Instead of, “The problem is that I am stupid.” Try this: “The problem is that I easily allow others to betray or disappoint me, because I trust people too quickly.”  
**Example 2:** Instead of, “He can’t seem to finish his part of the project because he’s an idiot.” Try this: “There is clearly something blocking the way of him completing his part of the project.”  
**Example 3:** Instead of, “The company gave us these crappy computers that always need to be rebooted.” Try this: “A computer needing to be rebooted all the time may have a virus.”
2. **Define your goals.** What kind of outcome would you like? Be sure not to set broad goals like, “I want to be happy.” Be more specific, like, “I want to be able to have lasting, fulfilling relationships.” When you define your goals, you are better able to figure out how to get there. It’s much easier to figure out strategies for having lasting, fulfilling relationships than just “being happy.”
3. **Brainstorming.** Take time to brainstorm possible ways to resolve the problem. Do not rush this process. People often want to prevent and solve problems before they even appear. Write down all ideas, even the ones that seem absurd or bizarre. Try to find 4-6 varying alternatives when resolving a particular problem.
4. **Assess your solution ideas.** For every solution you formed in the previous step, weigh the positive effects and negative consequences that each solution would bring. For every and any option, determine its advantages and its risks.
5. **Choose a solution.** After carefully weighing all solutions, choose one. The best solution is not necessarily the option with the most pros and/or the least cons. Think about what means more to you, which solution can highlight the positive effects that matter the most to you, and which solution produces the mildest consequences. When you decide on a solution, it is important to create a timeline of when you intend to achieve your ultimate goal.

6. **Execute your chosen solution.** Don't worry about failure. In this phase, concentrate on the journey that will lead you to your goal- don't worry yourself with potential problems. Worrying has never solved anything. Accept that your solution may or may not work. If it does, great. If it doesn't, you can try something else; the failure is not a reflection of who you are or what you're capable of.
7. **Evaluate the outcome.** It's time to evaluate your success. If you were successful, congratulations! If not, no worries. Maybe you didn't choose quite the right solution or the situation changed. You will have definitely learned something. Take this newfound knowledge, return to the beginning steps, and try again.

In the appendix, you will find a problem-solving worksheet. In the beginning, if you do not feel comfortable practicing these 7 steps, use the worksheet to help you. Oftentimes, people who write things out and see them on paper process the information more effectively.

### **How to Improve Your Problem-Solving Skills**

A skill is something that can be learned, practiced, and mastered; therefore, even if you feel you are not a master at problem solving now, you are able to improve and, over time, become good at it.

Here are some tips for improving your problem-solving skills:

**Continue to learn and acquire knowledge in your field.** When we know more, we are able to do more. For example, if you are a front-end developer, the more you keep up with cutting-edge technology in the field, the better equipped you are to handle coding issues as they arise.

**Seek out opportunities to problem-solve.** Gone are the days when you shy away from a problem. By putting yourself in new situations, you will naturally be exposing yourself to new opportunities to problem-solve. If you spot a problem in the classroom while learning to code or later as you intern, etc., volunteer to help find a solution.

**Solve practice problems.** Practice and role-play can be useful tools when learning to develop your problem-solving skills. You can find professional practice books for your industry and problem-solving scenarios online. Practice how you might solve those problems and determine if your potential solutions might work. (You will do some practice problem-solving in this chapter too.)

**Carefully observe how others solve problems.** You may have colleagues, friends, or family members who are skilled problem solvers. Observing how other people solve problems can help you improve your own skills. If possible, ask one of your more experienced colleagues if you can observe their techniques. Asking relevant questions can be helpful in applying them in your own career.

**Let go of the “I know everything” mentality.** If you knew exactly what to do all the time, you'd have no problems. Approach problems humbly and open. Ask questions. Be open to suggestions. Do not expect perfection of yourself. Life is not bettered by pretending we know everything all the time. It is bettered when we acknowledge our own imperfections and improve upon them.

**Be creative.** Don't be afraid to “think outside the box”. The solutions to human problems are very often rooted in great creativity.

**Focus on solution-finding rather than the problem.** Oftentimes, we get wrapped up in the problem. It affects how we perform, sleep, talk to ourselves, etc. Focusing on the problem can be frustrating, while focusing on possible solutions is positive and productive.

**Start a new hobby.** Hobbies are great activities for sharpening our problem-solving skills in a low-impact setting. Playing on a sports team, solving puzzles, learning a game like chess, even knitting, trains our brains to be better problem solvers.

*Your brain is like a muscle. If you use it and push it to do new things, it gets stronger. If you avoid challenges, it grows weak.*

### **Some Things to Avoid**

Here are some things to avoid, as they are roadblocks to sharpening good problem solving skills:

- Refusing to acknowledge or admit that a problem exists.
- Thinking that there won't be any problems.
- Looking for a quick fix.
- Fixing symptoms rather than the root cause of the problem.
- Fear of sharing your ideas, particularly "outside the box", creative solutions.
- Not having an open mind.
- Looking for someone or something to blame for the problem.
- Not asking questions or for help.
- Being scared or panicky when a problem occurs.
- Procrastinating.
- Refusing to acknowledge that a solution is not working.
- Not being flexible. Sometimes situations or conditions of a problem change.
- Fear of failure.

Let's take a look at the last bullet point a little more closely. No one likes to fail. It can be painful and frustrating. Oftentimes, we believe failure is a reflection of who we are as a whole rather than an isolated incident.

*Everyone fails.  
It's what you do with it that counts.*

People who view failure as an opportunity to learn more and improve tend to experience satisfaction and great success (however they choose to define success). This does not mean that their problems are easier than others or that they enjoy them. It simply means that they look at problems as **opportunities** rather than something thrown in their way to bring them down. As you overcome problems, you feel strengthened and capable, which sparks more desire to continue down that path.

People who view failure as a reflection of their personality, worth, or value as a human being tend to fail a lot. Here's why: When you place your value or worth on your failures, you begin to believe that you ARE a failure. When you begin to believe this, it affects your decision-making skills, who you associate with, how you take care of yourself, etc. Over time, this self-talk is so toxic that everything just feels like it's failing...because it often is.

*Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.*

—Winston Churchill

Up to now, how have you viewed your mistakes or "failures"? Do you believe that failures are a reflection of you or are they a learning opportunity?

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### **Some Common Problems Faced in the Workplace**

- Lack of communication
- Lack of resources
- Missed deadlines
- Not meeting goals
- Difficulties getting along with others/conflicts
- Gossip
- Poor leadership
- Financial problems
- Bad customer service
- Over promising or over committing
- External challenges and threats
- Difficult co-workers
- Lack of teamwork
- Poor attitude

Disconnect between supervisors and subordinates  
Unhappy clients  
Insufficient or lack of feedback  
Job stress  
Difficult customers  
Low morale  
Lack of appreciation or recognition  
Poor work environment  
Inefficient or obsolete systems  
Duplication of effort  
Inadequate training

In any job you've had before, have you ever experienced any of these? Describe the problem and what it was like in the workplace during this time. Did someone solve the problem? How? What was the outcome? (If you have never had a steady job, it's ok. You can also do this activity with family or friend problems that you've experienced.)

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Reflecting on workplace or family problems you may have experienced in the past can shed some light on how you feel about problems and how they are solved now. For example, if there was a problem in your job and no one cared to fix it, you might think that people just don't care and that's the norm. You may have been in a work situation in which one person wanted to solve all the problems, which exerts power and control, but takes away power and control of others. This can cause others to doubt their own problem-solving skills because they are never given the opportunity to practice.

Whatever your work experiences have been in the past, take a close look at the problems, how they were solved (if at all), and how it has impacted your attitude toward problem-solving.

Very rarely are problems solved alone because issues typically arise because of relational issues between people. A main ingredient in solving problems with people, whether they are personal, professional, or friendly relationships, is **effective communication**. Be sure to revisit the communication chapter often, as improving your communication skills will be the most important skill you acquire and/or improve upon.

While you are still in code camp class working toward your certifications, etc. be sure to practice all that you learn in relation to good communication skills in class and during your personal time. Do not wait until you are “on the job”. You are around people each and every day and can begin honing your communication and problem-solving skills now.

### **Problem-Solving Scenarios**

Let’s practice solving some problem scenarios. Before doing so, review the communication chapter so that you are able to incorporate some of the strategies included in that chapter.

Scenario #1: You are working at a start-up tech company. One of your coworkers makes fun of your clothes all the time. The coworker is not a very good dresser either and you could easily make fun of the way the coworker dresses too. You are thinking you can suffer silently or fight “fire with fire”. What should you do?

What is the problem? (Remember to identify the actual root problem rather than symptoms.)

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What is your goal?

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Brainstorm solutions:

Possible Solutions	Positive Outcomes	Risks/Negative Consequences

After coming up with 4 possible solutions and examining the pros and cons of each, which one would you choose and why?

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Scenario #2: Elsa and you have just finished doing a house call for your company. Elsa wants to stop for a drink before going back to work. You tell Elsa this is time theft and drinking on the job is a serious infraction of company rules. Elsa drives to the bar anyway since the car belongs to her. Elsa has walked into the bar. You are sitting in the car trying to figure out your next move. What should you do?

What is the problem? (Remember to identify the actual root problem rather than symptoms.)

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What is your goal?

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Brainstorm solutions:

Possible Solutions	Positive Outcomes	Risks/Negative Consequences

After coming up with 4 possible solutions and examining the pros and cons of each, which one would you choose and why?

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**Scenario #3:** You work at a large, stable company doing web development. You handle the same web development tasks again and again. The chances of promotion are small but you command a very high salary even if the work is becoming increasingly boring. You are a very talented programmer and a startup company headed by an old friend wants you to get in on the ground floor. You will own a fifth of the shares of the new company. You are aware that these sort of startups generally fail but the thought of being the next Steve Jobs excites you. However, you recently bought an expensive house and the monthly payment is no problem with your current salary but might be a problem if your salary is drastically reduced as it would be with the startup. What should you do?

What is the problem? (Remember to identify the actual root problem rather than symptoms.)

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What is your goal?

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Brainstorm solutions:

Possible Solutions	Positive Outcomes	Risks/Negative Consequences

After coming up with 4 possible solutions and examining the pros and cons of each, which one would you choose and why?

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**Scenario #4:** You are invited to a Japanese restaurant by coworkers and clients. You are new to the company. All of the employees are drinking heavily, and you have never been a fan of heavy drinking. Every time you drink a beer another beer is immediately offered. You are pretty drunk but coworkers seem to just be getting started. No one is turning down drinks. You want to leave or at least stop drinking but don't want to be the "rookie" who doesn't fit in. What should you do?

What is the problem? (Remember to identify the actual root problem rather than symptoms.)

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What is your goal?

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Brainstorm solutions:

Possible Solutions	Positive Outcomes	Risks/Negative Consequences

After coming up with 4 possible solutions and examining the pros and cons of each, which one would you choose and why?

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After completing the scenarios, what do you see as your greatest strength in problem-solving?

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What do you see as your greatest weakness in problem-solving?

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### **Positive Attitude and Positive People**

As you finish up this chapter, remember that problems are a part of life, whether it be at home or at work. How you choose to view them is key in being successful at handling them. If you avoid them, rush through them, look at them as nothing more than an annoyance, the problems will grow and feel unsolvable.

If you choose to embrace inevitable problems as an opportunity to grow, learn, and become better at your work and relationships, you will find that they become easier to handle. Not only that, you will feel better about yourself and your life.

If you struggle with maintaining a positive attitude toward problems, be sure to surround yourself with positive people who can provide you with their unique perspective and energy. Positive attitudes tend to be contagious.

Negative attitudes are also contagious. If you surround yourself with negative people who complain about everything rather than work toward solutions, you will get stuck in that mindset also. It is very difficult to cut ties with old friends and family members who are stuck in a negative mindset. You don't necessarily have to cut ties altogether, but be sure you limit time with negative people and stay aware of how their attitude affects yours.

Do you tend to surround yourself with positive people or negative people? Explain.

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When you reflect on your family and friends while growing up, was there an attitude of positivity or negativity? How do you believe this has affected your view of life?

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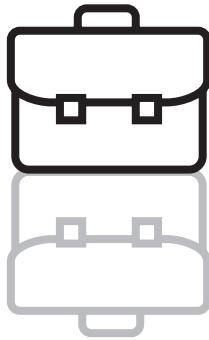
In the boxes below, begin making a list of people in your life you feel are positive and approach life with great energy and a second list of people who are negative and tend to be energy “drainers”. You don’t have to do anything with the list other than staying aware of how your attitude changes around each. You may find that eventually you would like to increase your time with positive people and decrease time spent with negative ones.

<b>Positive People in my Life</b>	<b>Negative People in my Life</b>

<b>Positive People in my Life</b>	<b>Negative People in my Life</b>

## Chapter 5 Big Ideas

1. Problem solving is how humans adapt and exert control over our ever-changing environment.
2. Problems are a part of life that cannot be avoided.
3. Problems are solved best when you face them and thoughtfully follow steps to solve them.
4. Problem solving is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and mastered.
5. Failure when solving problems is inevitable. How you view failure is very important.
6. Your attitude toward problems is as important as your skills in solving them.
7. Surround yourself with positive problem solvers, as attitude is contagious.



## ☰ Chapter 6: The Power of Professionalism

Professionalism. What does it really mean and how important is it?

It is essential to present yourself as a professional when you work in a professional environment, but oftentimes people have different ways of describing or defining it.

For some, being professional might mean dressing smartly at work or doing a good job. For others, being professional means having advanced degrees or other certifications framed and hung on the office wall. Professionalism encompasses all of these definitions. But it also covers much more.

Dictionary.com defines professionalism as “the competence or skill expected of a professional.” Again, the definition is true; however, it seems incomplete or too general. One must look more deeply into what is actually expected of a professional. We will examine very closely and specifically what you can do to increase your professionalism as you prepare for a new career.

Many of the qualities of a professional have already been covered: good communication, an ability to work with others, conflict resolution, and effective problem-solving. In this chapter, we will expand on these ideas and offer new ones to add to your skill base.

Remember, that this handbook is helping you learn new skills. A skill is something that can be learned, practiced, and mastered. So if you don’t “see” yourself as a professional yet, it’s ok. If you don’t feel you have the skills yet, that’s ok, too. The key word in both cases is “yet.” Keep a positive attitude and keep working toward your goals. Your skills will increase as you learn more and put concepts into practice in your daily life.

## Manners

Good manners make all the difference in our daily encounters in the workplace and can make a big difference to your career advancement opportunities. But not everyone seems to know what it means to have them.

Some people are raised in homes that emphasized good manners, while other homes are more relaxed with them. Some parents insist on good manners and politeness, while other parents don't; therefore, everyone comes to the workplace with different backgrounds.

Were good manners something that was emphasized in your home growing up? If so, what were your parents strict about? If not, write about what you think manners are and why they are important.

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In the workplace, using good manners is extremely important. Here, we will cover interpersonal manners when communicating with others and situational manners, like when eating out with colleagues or clients.

Here are some common "good manner" rules to follow in the workplace:

- Use "please" and "thank you." When you are requesting something from someone, always ask in the form of a question and include the word "please." Also, if someone does something for you, follow up with a "thank you". Showing gratitude and appreciation will inspire others to do more for and with you.
- Say "hello" and "goodbye." As you enter the office, a meeting, or a room, be sure to greet people in a friendly manner by saying "hello." Also, before leaving the office, be sure to say "goodbye," particularly to your team members.
- Don't ignore people in the elevator, hallways, or common spaces. It's not uncommon for people to enter an elevator or hallway and come across someone they know or are acquainted with, only to avoid eye and verbal contact. Don't ever pretend like someone is not there. Make eye contact and greet them, even if you don't know them well or even like them.
- Offer to get others coffee or treats. If you are heading off to the breakroom or a nearby Starbucks to get coffee or food, offer to get those around you something. Most people will offer to pay for their own; however, if they don't, pay for it if you can. They will likely repay the favor at another time. When people work closely with each other and do things for each other, it typically evens out over time.
- Say "Excuse me." If you want someone to get out of your way, accidentally bump into someone, walk between two people having a conversation, or need to interrupt a conversation, say "excuse me."
- Don't interrupt. Ideally, you shouldn't interrupt people when they're speaking. Let them finish. If you must interrupt, say "excuse me," or if you catch yourself after the fact, say "Sorry for interrupting you."
- Say "I'm sorry." If you intentionally or unintentionally hurt someone, are rude or short, or make a mistake that costs someone else in any way, be it time, money, or something else, say "I'm sorry." Sometimes we are rude or snippy when we are not at our best,

and then when we realize we have made a mistake, we are too embarrassed to say anything and we just continue on as though nothing has happened. Don't do that. Take a moment to own up and make amends. If the offense was a serious one, offer to do something nice to make up for the infraction.

- Hold the door. When you go through a door, always look behind you and see if anyone else is coming. If someone is, hold the door open for him or her. The same goes for when you are getting into the elevator and you see someone coming. Hold the elevator door open. There is nothing worse than seeing someone who was aware you were coming as the elevator doors slide closed. Don't be that person: it's rude.
- Turn your phone to vibrate mode or off while at the office. While cell phones are extremely convenient, they also can be very intrusive. Some people place their cell phones in higher priority than the people around them. If you are talking with someone directly, do not look at your phone at all.
- Don't complain. Have you ever been around someone who seems to be complaining all the time? It's miserable. If you choose to do this, it poisons the atmosphere, makes you sound like a jerk, and might hurt someone's feelings (like if you're complaining about the food at a meeting and it gets back to the person who was in charge of it).
- Don't give unsolicited advice. We live in a world where people are always telling others how to live. They tell you what you should and shouldn't eat and wear, how to be happy, how to exercise, and how to manage your relationships – all without being asked. This is rude. Wait for the other person to ask your advice. If they don't ask they don't want it.
- Don't make personal remarks about someone's appearance or clothing. Making personal remarks used to be considered rude. Nowadays it seems to be normal. But guess what? It's still rude. It's OK to say "I like your sweater." It is not OK to comment on someone's weight or appearance (unless you are good friends). Even "You look great today!" can be taken to mean, "You look terrible every other day!" Be careful. People like to be noticed for their talents and gifts, not necessarily their appearance.
- Clean up after yourself. When you leave your messes around the office, you are saying indirectly, "Someone else will clean up after me." People will view you as a child if you don't clean up your clutter, spills, or messes.
- Leave personal grooming at home or in the bathroom. No putting on make-up, brushing hair, clipping nails, etc. at the office. No one wants to see this at their workplace. It's too personal.
- Be courteous about food. Don't heat up stinky fish leftovers from last night without expecting people to give you a hard time. Avoid eating any food in the company refrigerator that is not yours. (You'd be shocked how much this happens.) And when there is a gathering where everyone is eating food that has been brought in, use a plate, utensils, and a napkin instead of eating right off the trays. And whatever you do, do not "double dip" vegetables, chips, or crackers in the dip (this is when you dip a chip, take a bite, and dip it again). Always chew with your mouth closed and wait until you swallow your food to speak.
- Stay at home when you are sick. No one likes being sick. Don't bring your germs around others when you are unwell.
- Be on time to meetings, gatherings, and appointments. When you are late, you are indirectly telling others that your time is more important than theirs. If being late is unavoidable, be sure to send a text. Always communicate with someone, even if you're late by only a few minutes.

- Remember people's names and use them often. Have you ever thought you knew someone, only to realize that person doesn't remember your name? Ouch. When meeting someone, repeat his/her name in your mind while looking at his/her face so that it will "sink in." Also, if you are talking with someone, use his/her name in the conversation, like, "Thank you, Mark." When you use someone's name in a conversation, it acknowledges him/her in a personal way.
- Avoid crude conversations. Crude jokes, bad language, bathroom humor, talk about sex, etc. is not conversation for the workplace. It makes you look immature.
- Don't speak too loudly. When you speak too loudly, not only is it a distraction to those around you, it can make you appear aggressive or rude.

You may come in contact with others at your workplace who do not have good manners. Do not interpret this as an opportunity to use bad manners yourself. Never sink to anyone else's level of bad behavior; then it reflects badly on you both.

While reading the tips for using good manners at work, did you see any that you feel will be very easy for you? Which ones? Why will they be easy?

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Did you see any tips in the list that you feel may be a challenge for you? Why?

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### **Dress and Hygiene**

How you present yourself in your dress and grooming habits says a lot about you. When people come to work looking like they just rolled out of bed, they are sending the message, "I don't care." This is a message you always want to avoid in the workplace because the people around you will think, "If he doesn't care about his appearance, does that mean he doesn't care about this job? What DOES he care about?" While their assumptions might not be true, our indirect way of saying things still speaks loudly about how we are perceived.

When you go to work, make sure that:

Your clothes are neat, clean, and ironed. If you look like you took your shirt out of the dirty clothes hamper, you're sending the wrong message.

- Your hair is clean and neat. Make sure you schedule regular hair cuts. Do not wear hats to work.

- Make sure you have bathed and are wearing deodorant. Sitting next to a stinky person at work is miserable and distracting.
- Make sure your clothes fit properly. Overly tight clothing reveals things that your co-workers do not want and should not have to see. Clothing that looks like it's falling off of you looks sloppy.
- Wear shoes that suit the outfit, don't have holes in them, and don't smell bad.
- Brush your teeth. Some people even like to keep gum or mouthwash at their desks to combat bad breath.
- Wash your hands every time you are finished in the restroom.

If you dismiss good hygiene rules, you are placing your co-workers and supervisors in a delicate, awkward position. No one wants to have to tell someone he/she has B.O., bad breath, or greasy hair. Avoid putting people in this awkward position. Taking care of your personal hygiene will also help you avoid the embarrassment of being spoken to about it.

### **Following a Dress Code**

Most companies have a dress code. When you accept a position, you will learn what you should and shouldn't wear according to the company's policy.

These days, many companies have become a bit more relaxed in their dress code. Do not take this as permission to wear whatever you want. Read your company's dress code carefully and follow the rules. If you have to ask yourself, "Should I wear this to work?", the answer is probably "no." Err on the side of caution rather than risking an infraction.

There are typically three main categories or style of dress in the workplace: formal business attire, business casual attire, and casual attire. Here are sample dress codes for Company X, Y, and Z that very generally describe each of the three types of dress found in the workplace: (courtesy of thebalancecareers.com)

### **Formal Dress Code Policy Example**

Company X expects employees to dress appropriately in business attire. Because our work environment sees frequent visits from customers, clients, and the public, professional business attire is essential for our reputation. The formality of our business attire makes clients and customers feel that they can trust our judgment and recommendations.

Proper business attire for men includes suits, sports jackets, and pants that are typical of formal business attire at work. For women, business attire includes pant and skirt suits and sports jackets appropriate to a formal business attire environment.

Employees are expected to demonstrate good judgment and professional taste. Courtesy to coworkers and your professional image to clients should be the factors that are used to assess whether you are dressing in business attire that is appropriate.

We will deal with employees who wear business attire that is deemed inappropriate in this workplace setting on an individual basis rather than subjecting all employees to a more stringent dress code for appropriate business attire.

### **Business Casual Dress Code Policy Example**

Company Y expects employees to dress appropriately in business casual attire. Because our work environment serves customers, professional business casual attire is essential. Customers make decisions about the quality of our products and services based on their interaction with you.

Consequently, business casual attire includes suits, pants, jackets, shirts, skirts and dresses that, while not formal, are appropriate for a business environment.

Examples of appropriate business attire include a polo shirt with pressed khaki pants, a sweater and a shirt with corduroy pants, a jacket with a skirt or slacks and a blouse or a sweater with a skirt or pants. Pantsuits and sports jackets also fit the business casual work environment if they are not too formal.

Jeans, t-shirts, shirts without collars and footwear such as flip-flops, sneakers, and sandals are not appropriate for business casual attire.

Employees are expected to demonstrate good judgment and professional taste. Use courtesy towards coworkers and your professional image to customers as the factors you use to assess whether you are dressing in business attire that is appropriate.

Employees who wear business attire that is deemed inappropriate in this workplace will be dealt with on an individual basis rather than subjecting all employees to a more stringent dress code for appropriate business attire.

### **Casual Dress Code Policy Example**

Company Z expects employees to dress appropriately in business attire of a casual nature. Our work environment for employees encourages employees to dress comfortably for work. Please do not wear anything that other employees might find offensive or that might make coworkers uncomfortable, which includes clothing with profane language statements or clothing that promotes causes that include, but are not limited to, politics, religion, sexuality, race, age, gender, and ethnicity.

Our goal is to provide a workplace environment that is comfortable and inclusive for all employees. We expect that your business attire, although casual, will exhibit common sense and professionalism.

Employees are expected to demonstrate good judgment and professional taste. Courtesy towards coworkers and your professional image to coworkers are the factors you need to use to assess whether you are dressing in business attire that is appropriate.

We will deal with employees who wear business attire that is inappropriate in this workplace on an individual basis rather than subjecting all employees to a more stringent dress code for appropriate business attire.

In conclusion:

Many tech companies are implementing more casual dress codes. Be sure, if this is the case, that your clothes are always neat and clean and that you do not “push the casual boundaries” by wearing hats, torn jeans, flip-flops, or clothes that are worn out. You can still look professional even when casual. Remember, when in doubt, don’t wear it.

### **Cell Phone Professionalism Rules and Skills**

These days, everyone uses a cell phone rather than “land lines.” You will likely have your phone with you everywhere you go. Cell phones are very convenient, keep us connected to the world, entertain us, and serve many practical purposes. However, this convenience has a “down side.”

Cell phone addiction is actually real. Many games, apps, and websites are designed specifically to engage their users in a way that becomes addictive. Oftentimes, people don’t seem to be able to go very long without picking up their phone to check for texts, calls, notifications, etc. This distraction can take you away from your work tasks and engaging in real, connective conversation with others.

When you get a cell phone, it is important that you are aware of the possibility of becoming dependent upon it or addicted to using it. Here are some tips to help prevent a dependence on your cell phone:

- Make late night and early morning cell phone “off limits” time. When people use cell phones right up until they doze off, they typically do not sleep as well because the blue light on the screen activates certain parts of your brain. Additionally, if you pick up your phone the minute you wake, you aren’t giving your brain time enough to wake up before over-stimulating it. Implement “cell phone hours” to prevent the temptation to use it during all of your downtime.
- When spending quality time with family, coworkers, or friends, make it a “no phone” time. Connecting with others is very important to our well-being. When you are with others, leave your phone at home, in another room, or in the car, so that you can avoid the temptation to look at it all the time. When you use your phone during quality time with loved ones, you are indirectly telling them that they matter less than your smartphone. The same applies at work. There are times that your cell phone needs to be off, so that you can give people your undivided attention.
- Turn off app notifications. Many apps have notification chimes that alert you to something. For example, when someone comments on a picture on your Facebook account, your phone can chime to notify you of this. Some games have chimes to alert you that your lives have been restored and you can play again. Make sure you turn these notifications off. This can be done in the settings. The only notifications you should receive are phone, text, and email, and for many, even these notifications get overwhelming sometimes.
- Put your phone away at meal times. Eating with others has been a way to connect and develop relationships for centuries. Now meal time has become silent in many homes and workplaces because everyone is sitting on their phones. Connecting with people around you is much more important than what is happening on your social media or gaming accounts.

Cell phones have made everyone easy to access; therefore, when you are at work, your loved ones can contact you easily. And the opposite is true: you may receive work correspondences into the evening and even on the weekend. Set boundaries for yourself and others.

It is important to set boundaries, particularly for your friends and family. Let them know the hours that it is ok to contact you at work (unless there is an emergency). Constant calls and texts of a personal nature while at work cuts down on your productivity dramatically and affects your work relationships because people get annoyed when they are working hard and you’re busy texting your girlfriend or boyfriend all day.

Here are some cell phone rules of professionalism in the workplace:

- Put your cell phone away. Find a spot you can “stash it,” like a desk drawer. Check it every now and then for important calls or texts, but leave it alone for personal correspondences.
- Silence your ringer. If family members often have to get in touch during the workday, set your phone on vibrate and put it in your pocket. You will know when someone is calling or texting and can discreetly take the call or answer a text privately.

- Use your cell phone for important calls only. Should you chat with your friend, mom, or significant other while at work? No. Save those casual conversations for your drive home (hands-free, of course) or your break. There are very few calls that can't wait.
- If the school nurse is calling to say your child is ill, it is okay to deal with that as soon as possible. Almost any boss would be understanding about answering a call when there is a family emergency. However, if your best friend wants to talk about weekend plans, do it from home.
- Tell anyone who is likely to call about every little thing, that you won't be able to answer the phone. So if your dog has an accident on the rug, whoever is home with her can deal with it instead of letting you know immediately. When your cousin Tilly gets engaged, your mom can share the happy news after the workday is over.
- Make cell phone calls in private. If your desk is in a common area or cubicle, talking on the phone, especially loudly, is rude and distracting to others. Make sure you choose a spot where others can't hear you, especially if the call is of a personal nature.
- Don't bring your cell phone into the restroom. People do not want to be in the restroom with you when you're talking to them on the phone. Nor do people want to hear you chatting it up while they are in a public restroom with you.
- Avoid looking at your phone during meetings unless it's directly related to the meeting itself. In addition to using cell phones to talk or text, they have become an essential work tool. For example, at meetings, an important date might be mentioned. It would be ok to put that date into your phone calendar immediately. Or sometimes, a question may arise that you can quickly find the answer to on your phone. Just say, "I can find an answer for everyone. If it's ok, I'll jump online and get that for you."
- When using communication apps, like Slack, for work, remain professional. Some communication platforms "feel" informal; however, if people at work have access to communications on these platforms, you must remain professional. Avoid bad language, posting inappropriate jokes or pictures, etc. Be aware that even if you start a personal thread with someone on a work communication platform that your supervisors likely have access to even those messages. Never gossip or discuss anything on these apps that you would not say in person in front of your supervisor.
- While you are sitting at a meeting, do not text, check your social media news feeds, post your status, or play games. Don't bury your nose in your phone. Keep your eyes up and stay engaged. Doing anything else will be a clear signal to your boss that your mind isn't completely on the business at hand.

At work, you will probably have access to a number of devices, such as a phone and a computer. Sometimes your company may even issue these devices to you. Even if you are using your own personal devices, it is important that you use them properly during work hours. Avoid the following:

- Going to inappropriate websites. Also, be aware that even if you go to inappropriate websites on your own time, it is still in your browsing history. If someone were to inadvertently see your activity history, this could be very embarrassing.
- Be aware that the apps that you have typically store your personal information and activity. Avoid apps for sexting or dating sites, especially during work hours. And always remember that the icon representing that app is visible on your phone. You do not want coworkers to be aware that you are part of a sexting app or other apps that encourage what some see as immoral behavior.

- Always avoid personal internet and/or app use at work. Work is for work. Personal searching, shopping online, or checking Facebook at work is not using your company's time appropriately.

### **Phone Etiquette**

When it comes to making phone calls, answering calls, and leaving messages, proper telephone etiquette can be key to making a positive impression with customers and individuals with whom you are talking.

There is always the right way of making or answering calls and you must adhere to that, especially if you are representing a client or a company. The way you handle calls right from the start is a reflection of you AND the company you represent. It is essential to ensure that every call is properly handled with professionalism and care. Here are some proper phone etiquette tips that can help you:

- When answering an incoming call or making an outgoing call, always greet the other person with "good morning/afternoon" or "hello." Always introduce yourself politely by stating your name and the company you are representing. Here is an example: "Good morning, Ken. This is Felicia from TechPro. How are you today?"
- Be aware of the tone of your voice. Avoid sounding overly aggressive, anxious, or pushy. It is highly important to keep a tone that conveys confidence and authority. You are also advised to avoid leaning back to your chair when speaking to someone over the telephone, especially if you are in the office. This casual posture can affect your tone. Sit up straight and keep your feet on the floor.
- Be aware of your volume. Talking too quietly is frustrating for the person on the line and talking too loudly comes across as aggressive or annoying.
- Plan ahead before placing a call. Some people just get nervous on the phone. There's nothing wrong with that, but have a strategy to combat it. If you are someone who gets a little jittery on important calls, plan what you want to say before making the call so that you don't stumble over words or come across as unclear. You may even want to plan what kind of message you want to leave if his/her voicemail picks up. Some people like to jot down simple notes with key items they don't want to forget and keep those notes visible while on the call.
- Never allow interruptions to interfere with your work phone calls. Avoid allowing interruptions during conversations. Do not have side conversations with other people around you. If interruptions are inevitable, you need to excuse yourself properly for a moment, put the person on hold, and never forget to say thank you for waiting for you on the line.
- Speak slowly and clearly, especially when leaving messages. Avoid using casual phrases and slang when you are talking to someone over the phone, especially when you are leaving an important message. If you are requesting a return call, be sure to leave your number, including area code when leaving a message. Speak the number slowly and very clearly. Some even like to repeat the number so the receiver of the message can check that he/she wrote it down properly.
- Answer calls within 3 rings and return missed calls as promptly as possible.
- Avoid using speakerphone unless it's absolutely necessary. Speakerphone very often makes the person on the other end of the call feel as if what he/she is saying can be heard by many, and often this is true. Remember, the person on the line can't see your environment and doesn't know how many can hear what they are saying. Additionally, if there are others around, listening to a loud call on speaker is extremely distracting.

- Do not chew gum or smoke during business calls.
- Avoid multitasking while on a business call. People can hear distraction in your voice. If you aren't giving them your full attention it reflects poorly on you and the company you represent.
- Listen to voicemails entirely before returning a call. Avoid just calling someone back if he/she took the time to leave you a voicemail. You may find that enough information was provided in the voicemail that a return call is unnecessary.

## **Social Media**

Many people enjoy connecting with others on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Social media can actually be a lot of fun; however, you must be careful about your social media presence while you are looking for a job and even once you are employed.

When you apply for a job, especially for a larger company, a hiring manager very often will look at your social media accounts, and what you have on your account could eliminate your chances of getting a job. According to a 2018 CareerBuilder survey, 70 percent of employers use social media to screen candidates during the hiring process, and about 43 percent of employers use social media to check on current employees, and these percentages continue to rise.

Why do they do this? Social media gives people a glimpse into your personal life and what you stand for. A hiring manager is also able to see a bit of your personality through your posts and decide if you'd be a good fit in the company.

Don't let this keep you away from enjoying social media. In fact, many companies shy away from someone who has no social media presence because it appears that the person has something to hide. So have your social media accounts and enjoy all of their benefits, but follow some simple rules to maintain your professionalism. Here are some things that cause companies to shy away from a particular job candidate after seeing their social media pages, so don't post:

- Provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or information. Keep your sex life and desires to yourself. There should not be revealing pictures or videos on your social media page. Do not curse or post crude jokes.
- Information, pictures, or videos of you drinking alcohol and/or using drugs. This makes your potential employer wonder how big a problem these substances are in your life, and if it's drugs, you're showing illegal activity online.
- Discriminatory comments related to race, gender, religion, etc. Employers have to employ all different kinds of people. If they get even a hint that you are intolerant of people different from yourself, you will not get the job and may even lose your job once you have it if they see you are racist or intolerant of others.
- Discussing or bragging about criminal behavior. Your employer will likely know about your past. Don't bring it into the present on social media. Put that part of your life behind you, and definitely stay away from any future criminal activity, even minor infractions. Because you carry a felony conviction, an employer may be on high alert, looking for confirmation that you have left that lifestyle behind.

- Lying about qualifications. Do not post lies about yourself. It will backfire.
- Using poor grammar and/or communication skills. Even on social media, how you write counts. Edit before you post.
- Bad-mouthing a previous employer or colleague. This is gossip, and employers want to keep people who bad-mouth others or gossip out of their environment.
- Unprofessional or inappropriate screen name. Some people like to get creative with their screen names online, but for social media, keep your accounts in your name, not something like, “GroovySloth” or “BadAss.”
- Sharing confidential information. Avoid discussing your ex on your social media account, your very personal struggles, and/or confidential information about others or a previous company you worked for. This shows that you cannot be trusted to keep confidences.
- Calling in sick and posting a fun outing on the same day. First of all, don’t lie about being sick. Reserve your sick days for when you really do need them. But some people take days off, and if you lie about being sick, take a sick day off from work, and decide to go to a baseball game instead, don’t put anything about it on social media.

Some people feel that the way to combat all of this is just to make their social media accounts completely private and inaccessible. This is a mistake because, again, employers think you have something to hide. It’s much better to be open and just keep it clean, respectful, and light-hearted.

With so many people out searching for jobs, even the slightest thing can throw you out of the running for a position or even get you fired. Here are some social media post examples that cost the person his/her job:

**Justine Sacco**  
@JustineSacco

Follow

Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!

Reply Retweet Favorite More

2,678 RETWEETS	1,206 FAVORITES
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10:19 AM - 20 Dec 13 from Hillingdon, London

**Matt Bowman**  
@Hero\_Matt

Follow

I'd never let a woman kick my ass. If she tried something, I'd be like HEY! You get your b— ass back in the kitchen and make me some pie!

Reply Retweet Favorite More

4:51 PM - 4 Mar 13

**Josh** Told my boss i was an hour late to work because i forgot to change my clock Since the clocks went ahead an hour if i actually forgot to change my clock I would have still bin in an hour earlier for my shift not later He still Bought it:)  
4 minutes ago · Like · Comment

**Justin** Hahahaha  
3 minutes ago · Like

**Justin** When the boss son... Me, has u on fcbk prob stupid to put that up on ur wall  
2 minutes ago · Like

**Irresponsible Facebook User** Got absolutely locko last night, hanging today and my b\*\*\*h of a boss won't stop bothering me. Gonna pretend to work all day lol x  
Like · Comment · November 27 at 09:31am

Friend 1, Friend 2 and 6 others like this.

Write a comment...

Some images have been altered to protect identities.

You may be reading this section and saying to yourself, "It's my personal business. I should be able to do what I want on social media." You wouldn't be the first person to think or feel this way; however, that thinking is flawed because you are posting to the Web. The internet is NOT private. You cannot expect it to be so. All of your online activity is public activity. Always remember this so that you may protect yourself and your professional reputation.

## Chapter 6 Big Ideas:

1. Being professional has many elements, and you must pay mind to all of them.
2. Practicing good manners at all times at work is extremely important.
3. Taking pride in your hygiene and dress and following your company's dress code is vital to your success.
4. Be sure to use your cell phone appropriately and at appropriate times while you are at work.
5. Your phone manners reflect upon you and the company you represent.
6. You should have a social media presence; however, it needs to be appropriate to protect your position and reputation.



## ☰ Chapter 7: Ethics: No Need for Rules

Dictionary.com defines ethics as “moral principles that govern a person’s behavior or the conducting of an activity.”

Ethics are the rules, standards, or morals you apply to all that you do. An ethical person does not apply these standards only in certain situations or settings. An ethical person applies his/her values to all situations and settings, and even applies them when “no one is looking” or they know they “can’t get caught.”

Here is a simple example: Jules comes out of the grocery store and realizes she has not paid for a box of soft drinks that were in the bottom of her cart. She knows that she won’t get caught because no one saw the item. She could even, in her mind, attempt to blame the clerk for not noticing or justify keeping the item because it’s inexpensive and stores make a lot of money while she does not. Does she go ahead and load it into her car or does she return to the service desk to pay for it?

An ethical person looks at this scenario and makes a decision based on what is right or wrong rather than what is easy, convenient, or the lack of consequences. If Jules relies on her ethics, she returns to pay for the item because she knows if she doesn’t, she is guilty of stealing, and for her, all stealing, no matter how small, goes against her principles. She does not want this theft to be on her conscience.

In order to nurture or develop your ethics, you must evaluate what is important to you and what you value. Up to now, you may not have developed an idea of what your ethical boundaries are. You may have been raised in a family that did not stress “right from wrong” or making decisions based on a moral foundation. You may find yourself a little “stuck” in a criminal mentality of “What’s in it for me?” after being in prison. Even if you are starting fresh with determining what your moral and ethical values are, it can be done and will likely be all the more powerful because you are making a conscious decision as an adult to adopt certain values. Like all the skills in this handbook, learning where your boundaries are for “right and wrong” can be developed, practiced, and mastered.

One thing is for certain, if you choose to break ethical codes while on the job, the likelihood of eventually being caught and fired are high and at minimum, losing the respect and trust of those around you. This would not only hurt your career, it would damage all the personal and spiritual work you are doing to get there.

Before moving on, journal about your thoughts on having an ethical code you follow. Do you have one? What do you value? What rules do you always follow, even when no one is looking? Were you taught right from wrong as you were growing up? Comment on how your upbringing has affected your behavior as an adult.

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### Core Values

Ethics are based on a group of core values that someone finds important. A value is a belief about something good that guides one's judgement and decision-making in all situations.

In order for you to develop your ethics, you must determine what your core values are. Core values are values that are central to you, your life, your relationships, and your decision-making.

Let's begin by examining some important values to consider when developing your ethical code.

- **Honesty:** Ethical individuals are honest and truthful in all their dealings and they do not deliberately mislead or deceive others by lies, misrepresentations, overstatements, partial truths, selective omissions (leaving things out), or any other means.
- **Integrity:** People with integrity approach all decisions and all interactions with others with the goal to do what's right, even when no one is looking. They choose to do what's right even when there is outside pressure to do wrong. They always stand up for their beliefs, even when others don't think the same way.

- **Trustworthiness:** Those who are trustworthy follow through with what they say they will do. They keep promises, don't hide things from others, and avoid disclosing others' confidences/secrets.
- **Loyalty:** Loyal individuals are those who stick by their friends, family, co-workers, and company, even when times get hard. They never share others' secrets, especially for personal gain. They do not leave friends or employers without discussion, good reason, and/or notice, and do not gossip at any time after leaving.
- **Fairness:** Someone who places emphasis on fairness is one who looks for justice and equality in all situations. They do not discriminate based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or any other difference in individuals. They do not take advantage of the mistakes of others and are willing to admit they are wrong and, when appropriate, change their positions and beliefs.
- **Empathy and Compassion:** Those who practice empathy and compassion are kind; they live life using the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have done to you), help those in need, and seek to accomplish their business and personal objectives in a manner that causes the least harm and the greatest good. People who practice empathy and compassion put themselves in another's "shoes," recognize struggle and try to listen and/or help, are generous, and care about others' feelings.
- **Respect:** Respectful people demonstrate a regard for the human dignity, autonomy, privacy, rights, and interests of all those who have a stake in their lives; they are courteous and treat all people with equal respect and dignity regardless of sex, race or national origin. People who demonstrate true respect do not wait to receive respect before giving it, nor do they reserve respect for a select group of people. They also do not withhold respect just because someone has authority, like law enforcement.
- **Citizenship:** People who value citizenship understand that their actions have an impact in their community. They are individuals who honor rules and laws of their workplace, community, and country. They participate in community decisions, like elections, and help or volunteer time when the community needs it.
- **Commitment to Excellence:** Someone who is committed to excellence does so at all times when performing their duties; they are well informed and prepared, and constantly strive to increase their performance in all areas of responsibility, including their personal lives. People who commit themselves to excellence are humble and always strive for improvement in multiple areas of their lives, even when things are going well.
- **Leadership:** People who value leadership understand that they are constantly leading others with their words and examples; therefore, they strive to treat others well, make sound decisions, and remain positive and supportive at all times because they know that others are watching and want to set a good example.
- **Accountability:** Accountable individuals understand it's important to own up to their decisions, mistakes, and failures. They hold themselves accountable for their own behavior, attitude, and happiness. They do not play the "blame game" or play the victim when they've done wrong.
- **Perseverance:** Someone who values perseverance does not give up, even when things get really hard. They stick to their goals and push through obstacles.
- **Self-Discipline:** Individuals who practice self-discipline understand that they are responsible for their own actions, reactions, and attitudes. They understand that outside influences do not affect their decision-making and practice self control. They are able to understand that the behavior and attitudes of others are out of their control and practice restraint when reacting to others' poor behavior.

After reading and thinking about the above values, complete the following activity:

*Rank the 13 values from most important to you (1) to least important to you (13):*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_

Was ranking the values easy or hard for you? Why?

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Explain why you chose the value you did for number 1, the most important one:

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Explain why you chose the value you did for number 13, the least important one:

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Do you know someone who embodies each of the values? Think about people in your life who seem to have these values in place. If you can't think of someone, leave it blank, and if you think of more than one, feel free to put more than one person on the blank. If you struggle to think of people you know who embody the values, you may want to consider seeking out new people to associate with. When we surround ourselves with people with strong values, we begin to adopt those values also.

1. Honesty: Integrity: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Trustworthiness: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Loyalty: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Fairness: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Empathy & Compassion: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Respect: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Citizenship: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Commitment to Excellence: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Leadership: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Accountability: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Perseverance: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Self-discipline: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know someone who embodies all, or almost all the values? If so, describe him/her. If not, explain why it would be beneficial to be on the “lookout” for someone who does.

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### A Closer Look: Self-Discipline

We are going to take a closer look at one of the values on the list, as it has a great impact on all the others: **self-discipline**, also called **self-control**. The reason this is so key in determining your ethical boundaries is that your ability to stop yourself from saying and doing things in order to *apply your value system* to a situation starts with *self-control*.

All people face temptation and the desire to do or say what comes to mind first. Falling victim to temptation and first reactions is easy. It doesn't require any thought or consideration.

People with self-discipline understand that first reactions or instincts aren't always the best option. In fact, very rarely are they the most sound decision.

Here is an example: You are leaving work one day and notice a group of co-workers hanging out behind the warehouse smoking pot. Work hours are complete, and they are off company hours. You can hear them laughing and having a blast. They spot you and call your name while holding up an offering of a joint. One guy waves his hand to call you over.

If you are undisciplined in your thought process, you walk over immediately because you're thinking, “That looks like so much fun. I had a rotten day and I could use something to take the edge off.” You succumb to the urge and temptation without giving it any real thought.

If you have self-discipline, you stop for a moment and consider all of the possibilities and consequences of this decision. You may say to yourself, “I've had a rotten day, and that would be fun, but they are on company grounds. Even though it's after hours, if they get

caught, they could be fired. I don't want to be a part of that. I've got to think of another way to take the edge off because I'm trying to get my life together." And you'd likely wave and say, "No thanks, guys. I have to get home."

There are three types of self-control: **Impulse control, emotional control, and movement control.**

We are going to focus on the first two, as **movement control** is generally something that children struggle with. Movement control is the ability to regulate body movements so that you are not overly active, restless, or disruptive. You may be someone who fidgets. If you are, you may need to work on this in a team setting because someone fidgeting can be disruptive to others.

**Impulse control** is something that people of all ages have to be aware of and work on. This type of control is your ability to consider the consequences of your actions. Someone who struggles with impulse control may:

- Interrupt others when speaking
- Eat too much
- Participate in alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Not complete tasks
- Follow rules one day but not the next
- Make decisions based on what feels good rather than what IS good

Do you believe you practice good impulse control or do you struggle in this area?

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Think of a time you did not practice impulse control, a time when you did what you wanted without giving it much thought because it felt good, was exciting, or others pressured you to do it. Tell the story. Then write about the consequences of that decision.

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In order to sharpen your impulse control skills, always stop yourself when making a decision about what to do or say and consider the possible consequences for your actions and/or words. All decisions should have a goal in mind, or a “mantra”, something like: *All of my decisions will support the good in my life and in other's. I will not make decisions that do harm to my life or others.*

On the blanks below, write a mantra that you can say to yourself when making decisions that will allow you time and control over the decision you make:

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### **Emotional Control**

Emotional control is the ability to manage reactions, feelings, and emotions. It has also been referred to as “emotional intelligence.” Some people believe that they have no control over their feelings. In an argument, they might shout something like, “It’s how I FEEL! I can’t help it!” This is untrue.

We have control over our thought processes, reactions, feelings, and emotions. This is not to say that emotions aren’t real or that they aren’t powerful. They are both real and powerful. However, when you experience them, you do have the power to sort through them and control what you do with them.

Gaining control over your emotions will help you become mentally stronger. Fortunately, anyone can become better at regulating their emotions. Just like any other skill, managing your emotions requires practice and dedication.

One important thing to note in learning to control your emotions is that controlling them is not the same as suppressing or ignoring them. Trying to push emotions down so that you don’t experience them will result in many negative consequences:

- High stress levels
- You develop unhealthy coping mechanisms, like abuse of food, drugs, alcohol, spending, etc.
- Anger outbursts and sometimes even violence
- Decreased mental capacity
- Lack of sleep
- Depression

You cannot wish uncomfortable emotions and pain away. They are a part of life. The most healthy option is to allow yourself to feel, no matter how painful, but then set about managing the emotions in a conscious way. So cry. Punch a pillow. Sit silently.

Then set out to manage the emotions in a positive manner. Here are some tips:

1. **Label your emotions.** Before you can change how you feel, you need to acknowledge what you’re experiencing in the moment. Are you nervous? Do you feel disappointed? Are you sad? Keep in mind that anger sometimes masks emotions that feel vulnerable-like shame, embarrassment, or fear. So pay close attention to what’s really going on inside of you. Name your emotions and keep in mind you might feel a lot of emotions at once-like anxious, frustrated, and impatient.

Labeling how you feel can take a lot of the sting out of the emotion. It can also help you take careful note of how those feelings are likely to affect your decisions.

2. **Adjust your thoughts.** Emotions are tricksters. They make you perceive things that may or may not be true. For example, you receive an email from your boss saying, "Please see me in my office at 11:00." If you are having a rough day, you may read this and immediately begin worrying because you think you're in trouble. If you're happy that day, you may think, "Hmmmm, I wonder what this is about?" Notice how the external stimuli (boss's email) did not change. The only difference was how you were feeling that day.

Stay aware of the fact that your emotions may lie to you. Sometimes, the easiest way to gain a different perspective is to take a step back and ask yourself, "What would I say to a friend who had this problem?" Answering that question will take some of the emotion out of the equation so you can think more rationally.

If you find yourself dwelling on negative things, you may need to change the channel in your brain. A quick physical activity, such as going for a walk, cleaning off your desk, or practicing relaxation breathing can help you stop dwelling.

3. **Decide to do a “mood booster.”** When you are experiencing negative or difficult emotions, it's easy to do activities that keep you in a bad mood, like mindlessly scrolling through your phone or complaining to everyone who will listen. These do nothing to solve the problem.

Instead, think of things you like to do when you're happy, such as reading, listening to music, playing basketball, meditation, walks, playing with your dog or child, or baking. Then make the time to do it.

As you practice controlling your emotions, you will notice that your mind becomes stronger and it gets easier.

Think of a time you did not practice emotional control, a time when you reacted to something emotionally without thinking, a time you allowed your emotions to "get the best of you." Tell the story. Then write about the consequences of that decision.

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## A Common Trigger: Others' Bad Behavior

One area of emotional control that is not easy at all is controlling how we react to others' bad behavior. We want to control what others say and/or do because their actions have an impact on us. But you can't. The only person you have control over is you. If you have tried everything, including good communication, conflict resolution, and self-management, to solve a problem with someone, it may be time to evaluate the relationship altogether.

Determine what your final boundaries are for someone else's behavior. Clearly state that boundary to the other person and what will happen if he/she decides to cross it. Be sure you are ok with the consequence should he/she decided to cross your boundary, as you'll need to stick to it.

Here is an example of setting boundaries:

Josh has just returned from rehab where he began his recovery from alcohol addiction. His wife and children welcome him home with open arms. Josh is ready to start a new life but understands that it will require diligence and effort each and every day. Josh's wife, Susan, says that she will do anything she can to support him. Two days later, she comes home with a bottle of wine. She tells Josh, "I know you're not drinking, but I had a rough day, and I want some wine. You don't have to have any."

Josh gets angry and tells Susan that she is not supporting him, but she continues to pour her wine.

This pattern repeats itself numerous times and Josh is struggling with his own sobriety. He continues working his 12-Step program, but doesn't feel his wife is on his side. He reaches his breaking point and decides to sit down with Susan and discuss it. Rather than losing his temper, he recognizes that he does not have control over Susan's decisions or priorities. He says to her: "I love you and our life together, but in order to maintain the life we have created, my sobriety is key to our success as a couple. For now, I cannot be around someone drinking all the time and maintain it. I need you to stop drinking in the house. If you would like to drink, you are welcome to go out with a friend, but if you choose to drink in the house with me, at least for now, we will have to consider alternative living arrangements. My sobriety is that important to me and this family."

At this point, he has identified what he needs from Susan and has expressed it clearly and calmly. Now, Susan must decide what her priorities are in this situation.

How does this all tie in to preparing for your new career? You will experience times when you have to make sound decisions at work. You must practice impulse control. You will experience emotional reactions to things at work. You must practice emotional control. Both of these skills are key to building a successful professional and personal life.

Do you struggle to control yourself when someone else is doing or saying something you don't like? Do you try and change his/her behavior in hopes that it will diminish your negative reaction? Explain in detail, and provide an example if you have one.

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## **Ethical Dilemma Activities**

Practicing good ethics in business breaks down to a simple concept: **Knowing right from wrong and doing right.** Sometimes, though, ethical dilemmas are not cut and dry. We are going to review some ethical dilemmas in the workplace so that you may practice exercising the decision-making process you will have to use in the workplace.

Each one of the following scenarios will present a problem and ask that you sort through your thoughts on what should be done.

**Ethical dilemma #1:** You see one of your close colleagues speaking inappropriately to another member of staff. This has been going on for a while, and you're sure that what you are seeing is sexual harassment. You know your colleague's actions are wrong, but you don't want to ruin the friendship you've developed with him over the past few years. What should you do?

First, which one of the 13 values from the beginning of the chapter is your colleague violating?

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What consequences might you experience if you report your colleague to human resources? (List them)

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What consequences might occur if you choose to ignore your colleague's behavior?

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What would you do?

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**Solution:** If you have a friendship with your colleague, then you should ideally raise the issue directly with him and tell him your concerns. If you don't feel comfortable with this, find out whether your human resources department allows you to make anonymous complaints. This has the dual benefit of protecting your identity while also bringing the issue to the attention of management. You're hopefully bringing an end to the emotional suffering that's being endured by the person being harassed. Remember, ethical individuals practice compassion and care when other people are being hurt.

**Ethical Dilemma #2:** You have been procrastinating on a project and suddenly deadline day is upon you. Your manager asks you for the completed project, but you have not completed it. Will you admit that you just didn't get around to it, or will you place the blame on someone else?

First, which one (or more) of the 13 values from the beginning of the chapter will you need to consider in making this decision?

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What consequences might you experience if you blame it on someone else? (List them)

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What consequences might occur if you choose to be honest and own your lack of action?

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What would you do?

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**Solution:** It's best to be honest about why you didn't complete your project. This applies to many situations in which you have the choice between being honest and lying. More often than not, lies in the workplace have a way of revealing themselves over time. Take responsibility and face up to your mistake. If your boss is a reasonable person, then he/she may well offer the advice and support you need to complete the project. You should, however, learn from your mistake and prepare in advance next time – your boss won't be as sympathetic if you miss another important deadline.

**Ethical Dilemma #3:** While in the restroom, you overhear your boss telling a colleague that John is going to be laid off at the end of the quarter, which is about 2 weeks away. John is a friend of yours. Do you tell John or not?

First, which one (or more) of the 13 values from the beginning of the chapter will you need to consider in making this decision?

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What consequences might you experience if you tell John? (List them)

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What consequences might occur if you choose to wait and let your boss tell John?

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What would you do?

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**Solution:** While it is tempting to tell John because he is your friend, you would want to keep this to yourself. Should John find out ahead of time, it could get back to your boss that you told him. You'd then lose the trust of your boss, and you could be the next one to be laid off. Your goal is to be a good friend, right? Once John is laid off, offer to take him out to lunch to show him your support. Offer to do anything you can to help him find a new position, etc. By solving this problem in this way, you have both respected your boss and been a good friend to John.

**Ethical Dilemma #4:** There is a guy at your office named Dave who is very quiet and very quirky. He has some weird habits that you just can't figure out. One day, you and some friends go out for subs at lunch. While sitting and eating, all of your friends bring up Dave and begin making fun of him. They refer to him as "weirdo" and "psycho" and have nothing nice to say. Do you join in on the conversation?

First, which one (or more) of the 13 values from the beginning of the chapter will you need to consider in making this decision?

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What consequences might you experience if you join in on the conversation? (List them)

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What consequences might occur if you choose to defend Dave?

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What would you do?

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**Solution:** This is a tough one. You want to fit in with your friends; everyone does. It's also easy to fall into this conversation because, frankly, you think Dave is a little weird, too. But what if there is something about Dave you all don't know? What if he's autistic? What if he's suffered great trauma? In this case, it would be wise to put yourself in Dave's shoes. What if people were going to lunch talking about you being a criminal and calling you "Felon" behind your back when they don't know the whole story or the whole you? In this case, what if you asked your friends questions, like, "What if he's autistic?" Or "Have you guys talked to him yet?" These questions do not threaten those around you or make you

look like you're judging them. They spark some thought, though. If they keep talking bad about him, you can choose not to add anything to the conversation. Just listen until the subject changes. After this, it would be wise to begin trying to get to know Dave. He may be a great guy.

**Ethical Dilemma #5:** You work for your company remotely. Company policy says that you must log in 40 hours a week and be available for phone calls and online meetings during the work day, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. One Thursday morning, a friend calls and says, "Hey! I have an extra ticket to an afternoon baseball game downtown. Wanna go?" (Of course you do!) You know that you should be reachable, but also know that it's not likely to happen on this day, so you probably won't get caught. Do you "sneak away" from your work and go to the game or stay in your home office?

First, which one (or more) of the 13 values from the beginning of the chapter will you need to consider in making this decision?

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What consequences might you experience if you join your friends at the ball game?  
(List them)

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What consequences might occur if you choose to stay at home and work?

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What would you do?

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**Solution:** The best policy is to be forthright and honest. You may call your supervisor and tell him/her of the situation and ask permission to go. You can offer up the option of using PTO (paid time off) hours or offer to make the hours you're gone up over the weekend. If your supervisor says yes, be sure to make up the hours. If he/she says no, make other plans with your friends on another day. When you do not complete the hours that your company is paying you for, it is the same as stealing.

In conclusion, ethics at work can be complicated; however, if you apply your value system to your decision about them, and practice self-control, the decisions typically reveal themselves. If they don't, be sure to go to a trusted mentor who can help you work through the dilemma and make the right choice. Never act rashly or quickly in these situations.

## Chapter 7 Big Ideas:

1. Ethics are the rules, standards, and/or morals you apply to all that you do.
2. Ethics are based on determining what values are important in your life, such as honesty, loyalty, and respect.
3. Self-discipline is the foundation when using an ethical code because you must control your impulses and reactions long enough to apply your value system to your decisions.
4. The only person you have control over is you.
5. Ethical dilemmas can be difficult. When you apply your core values, it becomes easier.
6. Don't just do what feels good. Do what IS good.



## ☰ Chapter 8: Productivity: Getting the Job Done

Productivity is the act of producing. In your career, you will likely be asked to produce code, and a lot of it. Once you get more experience, you may find that your responsibilities change or increase, but you will always be asked to produce quality results.

Teachers must “produce” children who have learned a lot by the end of the school year.

Doctors must “produce” patients who are healed and recovered.

Farmers must produce food.

Sales people must produce business clients.

Mechanics must produce cars that work.

It doesn’t matter what field people decide to go into, they are asked to produce quality results.

Yet many people struggle with their productivity. It may be that they are easily distracted, or that there is a lot of conflict in the office, or directions are not clear. No matter what the obstacle, always seek a way to resolve it, as the standards for your productivity do not change based on your personal challenges.

There are many things that can interfere with good productivity in the workplace. Some things you will have control over, and others you won’t. For the ones you do have control over, make a conscious decision to remove these obstacles from your work day. For the ones you do not have control over, work to come up with adaptations to your day that will allow for good productivity despite them. When you have a review with your boss, you

may make mention of distractions that happen in the office, like the temperature being too hot in the afternoons, that interfere with your productivity. Your boss will be interested in fixing this because he/she is responsible for the level of the office's overall productivity.

Here are some common obstacles to productivity. Next to each one, write a ✓ next to the ones you have control over and an X next to the ones you do not have control over.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone, social media, and internet use
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Gossip and conflict
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Unnecessary meetings
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent interruptions from co-workers and the phone
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of training
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Not having proper tools and/or resources
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Inability to manage emotions brought to work from home
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of communication
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Office environment: too hot, too cold, too loud, too quiet, people too close together, etc.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Trying to multi-task rather than focusing on one task at a time

Even if you do not have control over an obstacle, how you choose to respond to it or deal with it is up to you. If you choose to just get angry rather than offer solutions to management, nothing will change. If you keep a positive attitude and go to management with solutions, you might be surprised how open your boss is to suggestions that are positive and handled with care and professionalism.

### **Increasing Your Productivity**

There are many things that you can do to help increase your own productivity:

- Eat healthy foods throughout the day to keep your brain fueled and to prevent energy crashes. Diets high in sugar, processed foods, and empty calories cause brain fog and energy crashes. Stick to whole foods that have not been processed to help fuel your brain and body, like nuts, fruit, cheese, protein, nut butters, and vegetables.
- Get some exercise. Play a sport with friends after work, go on walks, do yoga, join a gym, etc. But you can also take physical breaks during your work day. Get up, walk around, stretch, or do some jumping jacks.
- Do a morning “huddle” with your team. Make sure everyone knows what the priorities are for the day, support each other, and start your day off on a positive note with the people you are working closely with.
- Put your phone on silent and/or put it away.
- Declutter and organize your work environment. Clutter is distracting and discouraging.
- Get up early enough that you are not rushing and fully awake by the time you arrive to work.
- Stand more. Many people are sitting at desks all day in front of a computer. Research shows that standing while working helps increase productivity. Some offices even have desks that can be raised so that you can stand part of the day.

- Learn to say no. This one is hard, but if you're right in the middle of something and someone interrupts you, ask that they give you 15 minutes to get to a good stopping point.
- Tackle one project at a time.
- Wear headphones. Some people work well with music on. Your headphones will also indicate to those around you that it is not a good time to disturb you.
- Create personal deadlines in which you give yourself less time than you think you may need.
- Protect your most productive time. If you are most productive in the morning, make sure you have a system in place that protects that time from distractions.
- Reward yourself. When you do things that help you feel good as a reward for hard work, you will continue to work hard.
- Complete recurring tasks (tasks that happen daily or weekly) on the same day and at the same time.
- Be positive. If you find yourself getting frustrated or agitated, take a break and reframe your thinking. Complaining in your head does not solve the problem.
- Do not guilt or shame yourself if you aren't having a great day. Beating yourself up only makes matters worse.
- Take regular breaks. This sounds counterintuitive, but frequent breaks that give our brains a little rest help us dive back into a task with much more enthusiasm and brain power.

As you finish reading the list of suggestions, which three do you feel will be easy for you?

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Which three do you feel may pose more of a challenge for you? Why?

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### Time Management

**Time:** there never seems to be enough of it, especially at work when multiple tasks and projects are underway. Some people find that they get to the end of the day and wonder, "Where did all the time go? What did I actually get done?" This feeling of not being in control of time and what happens in it can create a drop in productivity.

One very important element in increasing your productivity is implementing effective time management strategies. Here are some tips for making sure you use your time wisely:

- Before you can organize your time, you must know how you spend it now. The only way to fully analyze whether or not you are using your time wisely and productively is to take a hard look at how your time is being used. For one week, log your activities (all of them, including breaks, distractions, etc.) and how much time you spend doing them. This helps you identify your most productive times and the “time draining” activities, like checking your phone, that take away from your productivity.
- Before leaving work on one day, create a written schedule of how you’ll spend the following day. This step is crucial for managing time at work. Don’t even attempt starting your day without an organized to-do list. Before you leave work for the day, create a list of the most pressing tasks for the next day. This step allows you to get going as soon as you get to the office.
- Putting everything on paper will prevent you from lying awake at night tossing and turning over the tasks running through your brain. Instead, your subconscious goes to work on your plans while you are asleep, which means you can wake up in the morning with new insights for the workday.
- Prioritize your tasks. As you organize your to-do list, prioritization is key for successful time management at work. Start by eliminating tasks that you shouldn’t be performing in the first place. Then identify the three or four of your most important tasks and do those first—that way, you make sure you finish the essentials first before moving on to less important or urgent tasks.
- Lucidchart.com has developed the following chart to illustrate the types of tasks that you will have at work:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Urgent & Important	Not Urgent & Important
Not Important	Urgent & Not Important	Not Urgent & Not Important

—**Important and urgent:** These tasks have important deadlines with high urgency—complete them right away.

—**Important but not urgent:** These items are important but don’t require immediate action and should involve long-term development strategizing. Strive to spend most of your time in this quadrant.

—**Urgent but not important:** These tasks are urgent but not important. Minimize, delegate, or eliminate them because they don’t contribute to your output. They are generally distractions that may result from the poor planning of others.

—**Urgent and unimportant:** These activities hold little if any value and should be eliminated as much as possible.

- **Group similar tasks together.** Save yourself time and mental energy by completing all of one type of to-do before moving on to the next. For example, create separate chunks of time for answering emails, making phone calls, coding, etc. Don't answer emails and messages as they come in, as it shifts your brain power in the middle of a task. Turn off your phone and email notifications to completely eliminate the temptation to check at any and all times during your day.
- **Try not to multitask.** Trying to do multiple things at once very often means that nothing gets done to completion or it is not the best quality work that you can do. Focus on the task at hand all the way to completion, then move to the next task. Utilize your checklist for the day. Don't move to the next thing on the list until the prior task is checked off.
- **Try and mentally assign time limits to tasks, particularly large, long-term projects.** When working on a large project, assign a mental time limit for working on it. Once that time limit is up, cross it off your list and move on to your next task. The large project will be there the next day. You can pick it back up with a fresh mind.
- **Build in scheduled breaks.** One of the more enjoyable time management tips for work: Make breaks a part of your schedule. When you finish a task, give yourself time to breathe. Take mini breaks to recharge, whether that be a short walk, eating a snack, some meditation, etc.
- **Start using a time management app.** Yes, there is an app for everything these days. There are many time management apps, such as ToDoist, Calendar, Be Focused Timer, Focus Booster, Loop (habit tracker), Focus@will, and Omnifocus. Some are free and some come with a fee. You can research these and figure out which one best suits your style and needs. As a computer programmer, it will be important for you to use technological tools as much as possible, as this practice will enhance your ability to spot effective design and usability on websites and apps.

### **When You Work Remotely**

Because so much can be accomplished through digital means these days, many people work remotely. Working remotely has many benefits, such as:

- The whole world is a job market now. No longer are we locked in to the city or community in which we live. In fact, Persevere employs people all over the country, from California to Texas to Georgia.
- You do not have to commute, which saves time, money, and wear and tear on your car.
- Work schedules can be a bit more flexible.
- It reduces stress and exposure to illnesses.

While working from home has great benefits and has been shown to increase productivity, one must be diligent in creating a schedule and routine at home. It can be very easy for some to get distracted by kids, dogs, the television, house chores, and so on. In order to maximize your productivity when working from home, try these things:

- Create a designated work space that is comfortable and pleasing for you. Make sure it is neat and organized.
- Do your most difficult tasks during the time that your brain functions best. Some people are “morning” people and are able to tackle the bulk of their work in the early hours of the day. Some are the opposite. Observe when you are the most productive and schedule your hard-to-do tasks for then.

- Cut down on distractions: turn off the tv, shut the door, turn off your phone, etc. If you have children at home, make sure they understand the ground rules for when they can interact with you. For example, you can say something like, "When Mommy's door is closed, it means that I'm doing something very important for work. You cannot knock or come in. When the door is open, you may come in."
  - Work, for the most part, when other people in your company are working, particularly the "higher-ups," or supervisors and managers.
  - Follow a schedule as if you were in an office. Start at the same time each day. Schedule your breaks and lunch rather than taking them when the mood strikes. End your day at the same time.
  - Do not work all day every day. Balance in your life is extremely important for productivity and well-being. If you work all day every day, you will miss out on social opportunities, time with family, self-care, etc. This, over time, will affect your mental and physical health. Burn-out is real; you have to maintain balance in order to prevent it.

In the blanks below, discuss how you see yourself in relation to time management. Do you feel you do it well? Have you struggled with it? Do you naturally implement many of these techniques or is it all new to you? If you've never had a job that required good time management skills, how you manage time in your day to day life is a good indication of what you'll be like on the job. You can even reflect back to when you were a child or teen to get a good indication of what your habits are in regard to time.

## **Other Tips for Excellent Productivity**

Setting boundaries for yourself and others also helps with time management and productivity. What this means is that you establish boundaries for how you spend your time and other boundaries for how others are allowed to use your time.

An example of a boundary for yourself would be not going out and partying after work and into the late hours of the night. If you choose to do this, it will affect your productivity the next day, and sometimes for days after. You will be extra tired and even hungover if you choose to overindulge with alcohol.

Others may include, but are not limited to:

- Not accepting personal phone calls at work.
- Avoiding personal use of the internet while at work.
- Avoiding taking work home or working too many hours and burning out.
- Not allowing yourself breaks to clear your mind.

An example of a boundary for others would be avoiding drama at work. It is easy to be reactionary and get involved in conflict that may affect how you use your time. In essence, it saps your time in a literal way: if you are talking with people about drama or conflict, you are not working. Additionally, it affects your time management because you may become irritated, angry, distracted, etc. So long after the conversation takes place, it still interrupts your productivity.

Others may include, but are not limited to:

- Going out to lunch with people who are constantly late and keep you away too long.
- Allowing friends and family to have unlimited access to you while you are working.
- If you are working remotely, allowing dogs, a significant other, or children interrupt you frequently while working.

Depending on how long you have been incarcerated, you have had many years of someone (or many people) telling you how you can and can't spend your time, when to do things, like eat, sleep, etc. When you gain the freedom of organizing your time yourself, it may feel a bit overwhelming. In order to combat this, be sure to have some boundaries set for yourself and others so that time does not become your enemy.

**Effective decision-making skills** also help increase productivity. Complex decisions often leave people feeling paralyzed, yet making decisions propels us forward. People don't want to make the wrong decision, so they often avoid making a decision at all. Many times this fear of making a mistake is linked to upbringing or self-image.

Note: The type of decision-making we are referring to in this section is work related decision making, solving on-the-job problems, where minor mistakes are not life-altering. This section is not referring to big life decisions like, "Do I get in the car and drive after four beers?" Job decisions may look something like: "I am halfway through the code for this website, and it is looking pretty terrible. Do I scrap it and start over? Do I consult a colleague? Do I try to re-work it myself?" This is the type of decision-making that you will want to focus on for this lesson.

When someone was raised in a high-pressure home in which mistakes were frowned upon or punishable, he/she sees mistakes as very negative as an adult and works very hard to avoid making a mistake or making a decision altogether. This type of person may even

attempt to cover up mistakes or lie about making them. It is important, if you were raised in a home like this, to acknowledge it and slowly reprogram your brain to look at mistakes differently.

Adopt your own new way of looking at mistakes by telling yourself things like:

***Mistakes are our greatest teachers.***

***Making a mistake is better than doing nothing at all.***

***If I fall down 7 times, I'll get up 8.***

***I give myself permission to be human.***

***Mistakes are a fact of life. It's what I do with them that counts.***

A second factor that hinders decision-making is carrying shame from previous mistakes as an adult. For example, because you made a large decision that resulted in a felony conviction, you may be afraid to make any mistakes because you feel that your mistakes are a reflection of WHO you are and/or your character. You may feel that you are living under a microscope with everyone watching to see if you will “screw up” in a big way again. These worries are driven by shame and regret, but aren’t necessarily the reality.

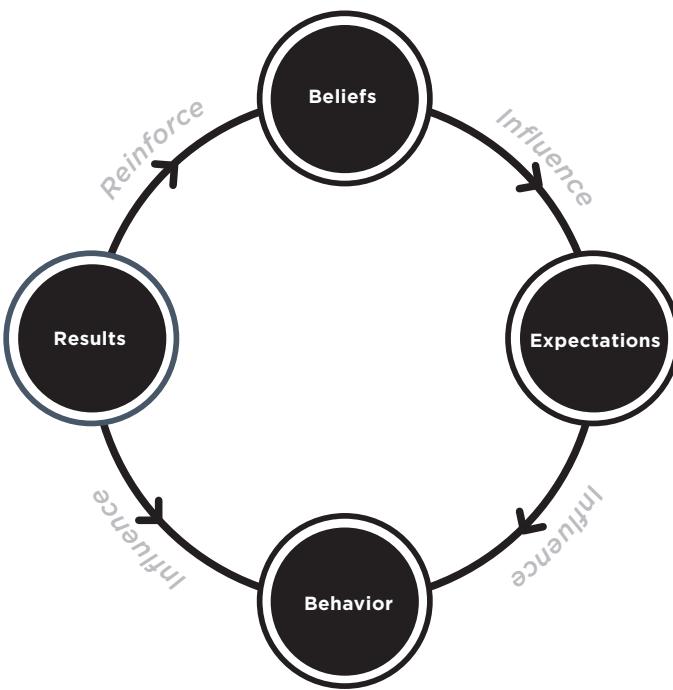
Remember earlier in the handbook when we discussed how emotions can lie to us? If your past mistakes begin to be how you define yourself, it is a result of your emotions lying to you. The truth is, most people will be cheering you on and thinking positive things about how far you’ve come. They will embrace your courage and help you through mistakes you may make on the job. Everyone makes mistakes, just differently from one another. **If you handle your mistakes positively, you will be a role model for others.**

Do not let shame hold you back from living a full life. Believe it or not, living a full life means sometimes making mistakes and **deciding to** learn from them. Mistakes help us stay humble, become more wise, and have more compassion for those around us. They should not be a reason to beat up on yourself emotionally.

Not making  
a decision  
out of fear of  
making a  
mistake is a  
mistake.

When you fail to make timely or wise decisions at work because of fear of mistakes, it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy is when someone “predicts” or expects something, and this “prediction” or expectation comes true simply because one believes it will, and his/her resulting behaviors align to fulfill those beliefs. This means that peoples’ beliefs influence their actions.

Here is a diagram that illustrates this concept:



If you start at the top and follow the diagram around, here is how this works: “I have beliefs that influence my expectations, which influence my behavior, which influence the results, which reinforce my beliefs.”

Your belief system is foundational in guiding your expectations and actions/behaviors. If you have internally labeled yourself as a “failure”, you will subconsciously expect to be a screw-up, and your behaviors will reflect those beliefs.

If your beliefs are, “I screwed up and it has taught me a lot. I am a new person who can and will have a positive impact in the world,” again, this belief system will guide your expectations and behaviors to more positive outcomes.

This concept can be applied to many aspects of your life, not just decision-making at work. Understanding that our beliefs about ourselves are powerful and can affect outcomes is crucial in creating the life you want with your family, friends, romantic partners, and colleagues.

Have you ever experienced or witnessed a self-fulfilling prophecy come true? Do you think that our beliefs play an important role in influencing our behaviors and outcomes?

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## If You Have ADHD

Some people struggle with ADHD, or attention deficit disorder. It sounds terrible, but is very common, and many people do not even view it as a “disorder” anymore. It’s simply a different way that certain people’s brains process information, time, and emotions. It can affect productivity in those who have it though, which is why it is included in this chapter.

People with ADHD often struggle to manage time because their minds are constantly racing; therefore, sorting thoughts takes priority over sorting time. They also struggle with distractibility and needing to move more often than others.

Here are some common signs of ADHD in adulthood, as outlined by healthline.com. Circle the dot next to each if you can identify or see yourself in these descriptions.

- **Lack of focus.** This is the most telltale sign of ADHD. “Lack of focus,” in the case of those with ADHD, goes beyond trouble paying attention. It means being easily distracted, finding it hard to listen to others in a conversation, overlooking details, and not completing tasks or projects. Everyone struggles with a lack of focus every now and then, but if it is often or almost all the time, one may have ADHD.
  - **Hyperfocus.** While people with ADHD are often easily distractible, they may also have something called hyperfocus, particularly when performing a task that interests them. A person with ADHD can get so engrossed in something that they can become unaware of anything else around them. This kind of focus makes it easier to lose track of time and ignore those around you.
  - **Disorganization.** Life can seem chaotic for everyone at times, but someone with ADHD typically has a more hectic life experience on a regular basis. This can make it difficult to keep everything in its right place. An adult with ADHD may struggle with these organizational skills. This can include problems keeping track of tasks and trouble prioritizing them in a logical manner.
  - **Time management struggles.** This issue goes hand-in-hand with disorganization. Adults with ADHD often have trouble using their time effectively. They may procrastinate on important tasks, show up late for important events, or ignore assignments they consider boring. They may have trouble focusing on the future or the past — the “now” is often more top-of-mind for them.
  - **Forgetfulness.** It’s human to forget things occasionally, but for someone with

ADHD, forgetfulness is a part of everyday life. This can include routinely forgetting where you've put something or what important dates you need to keep. Sometimes forgetfulness can be annoying but unimportant; other times, it can be serious. The bottom line is that forgetfulness can be damaging to careers and relationships because it can be confused with carelessness or lack of intelligence.

- **Impulsivity.** Impulsiveness in someone with ADHD can manifest in several ways:
  - interrupting others during conversation
  - being socially inappropriate
  - rushing through tasks
  - acting without much consideration to the consequences
- **Trouble managing emotions.** Life with ADHD can seem chaotic, as though your emotions are constantly in flux. You can easily become bored and go looking for excitement on a whim. Small frustrations can seem intolerable or bring on depression and mood swings. Any kind of negative feedback from others feels like a personal attack.
- **Poor self image.** Adults with ADHD are often hypercritical of themselves, which can lead to a poor self-image. This is due in part to their inability to concentrate, as well as other symptoms that may cause problems in school, work, or relationships.

Adults with ADHD may view these difficulties as personal failures or underachievement, which can cause them to see themselves in a negative light.
- **Lack of motivation.** While a person with ADHD might be open to doing everything at once, he/she may also feel unmotivated. This is a problem commonly seen in children with ADHD, who often can't focus on schoolwork. It can also happen with adults.

Coupled with procrastination and poor organizational skills, this problem can make it difficult for an adult with ADHD to finish a project because they can't focus for long periods of time.
- **Restlessness and anxiety.** As an adult with ADHD, you may feel like your motor won't shut off. Your yearning to keep moving and doing things can lead to frustration when you can't do something immediately. This leads to restlessness, which can lead to frustration and anxiety.

Anxiety is a very common symptom of adult ADHD, as the mind tends to replay worrisome events repeatedly.

As with children, physical signs of restlessness and anxiety in adults can include fidgeting. They may move around frequently — tapping their hands or feet, shifting in their seat, or being unable to sit still.
- **Fatigue.** Although this may sound surprising given that restlessness is also a symptom, fatigue is a problem for many adults with ADHD. There could be several reasons for this. It may be due to hyperactivity or sleep problems that can come with ADHD. Or it could be due to the constant effort to focus required by adults with ADHD. Or it could be a side effect of ADHD medications. Whatever the cause, fatigue can make attention difficulties even worse.
- **Health issues.** Impulsivity, lack of motivation, emotional problems, and disorganization

can lead a person with ADHD to neglect their health. This can be seen through compulsive poor eating, neglecting exercise, or forgoing important medication. Anxiety and stress also have negative impacts on health. Without good health habits, the negative effects of ADHD can make other symptoms worse.

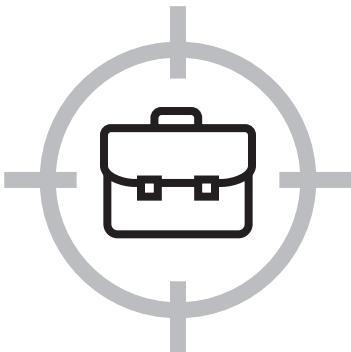
- **Relationship issues.** An adult with ADHD often has trouble in relationships, whether they are professional, romantic, or platonic. The traits of talking over people in conversation, inattentiveness, and being easily bored can be draining on relationships, as a person can come across as insensitive, irresponsible, or uncaring.
- **Substance misuse.** This issue may not affect every adult with ADHD, but adults with this condition are more likely than others to have problems with substance misuse. This may involve the use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

The research isn't clear on what the link is between substance misuse and ADHD. However, one theory is that people with ADHD use substances to self-medicate. They may misuse these substances in the hopes of improving focus or sleep, or to relieve anxiety.

If you do not identify with these symptoms, you likely do not have ADHD. However, if you do, it may be wise to 1. See a health professional to discuss options, and 2. Do some further research to learn coping skills related to having ADHD. It is very common and very manageable, so there is a lot of information available to help you.

## Chapter 8 Big Ideas:

1. Productivity is that act of producing. All employees in all fields are expected to produce.
2. There will always be things that interfere with productivity, and you can solve them if you're willing to face them and apply effective problem-solving skills.
3. There are many practices you can put in place to improve your productivity.
4. Organizing your time and practicing effective time management strategies will increase your overall satisfaction and productivity at work.
5. Working remotely has many benefits, but if you find yourself working from home, it will be important to organize your day, tasks, space, and time to ensure productivity.
6. Making decisions in a thoughtful, timely manner will increase your productivity. Do not be afraid to make decisions out of fear of failure.
7. If you already have an ADHD diagnosis or feel you may have it and have not been formally diagnosed, it would be wise to research more about how your brain works and how to develop strategies to manage it.



## ☰ Chapter 9: Search for and Apply to the Right Job

When the time arrives to start looking for and applying for jobs, you will likely find yourself feeling a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Searching for the right position when you begin working in a new field is always a bit tense, but in today's technological world, opportunities are abundant because of the Web.

Your TES will be an important and helpful resource when the time arrives for you to begin the search for a position that will be right for you. When you feel nervous or unsure, be sure to consult with him/her for support, as he/she is committed to your success.

Because you are searching for a job in the technological field, you will use technology to search for jobs. These days, most employers use online tools to post job openings because they want to reach as many candidates as possible. Gone are the days when most jobs are acquired locally; therefore, the world is open to you and the talents you offer.

In this chapter, we will give you many tips and tools to use when searching and applying for a position. We will also address how you should approach disclosing your felony conviction. This aspect of your job search may, for now, be a source of anxiety, but have no fear. Many employers welcome and even want to employ those who have been justice-involved.

Let's begin by discussing one of the most important elements in job searching: HOPE. You have worked very hard to earn your certifications and to learn and practice the soft skills you will need in the workplace. There are close to 1 million job openings for programmers.

If you couple all of your hard work with a positive attitude, you will find the job for you because they are out there waiting to be filled.

- Do not allow your past to dictate your future.
  - Do not allow any doubt to cloud your opportunities.
  - Do not allow anyone or anything to get in your way.
  - PERSEVERE through let-downs, disappointments, and the process.

If you have committed to change in your life, you will be pleasantly surprised by how many employers will be interested in employing you. Yes, you will be competing with others who don't have felony convictions in their past, but don't let this hold you back. Allow this challenge to reveal just what you are made of.

You're probably wondering, "Why would employers be interested in hiring a convicted felon?" The primary reason is that you have overcome so much by the time you arrive at the job-searching phase. Remember, employers are looking for problem solvers. They are looking for people who can adapt. And they are looking for people who can overcome obstacles. You embody all of these qualities. Those who have overcome what you have are valuable. You bring true grit and perseverance into the workplace.

When you have a quiet moment, what does your future look like to you? Do you envision a peaceful, successful life? Do you see yourself in a new light, one free of shame? Take a moment to envision what you want your life to look like, both professionally and personally. Allow your mind to go into detail. Write what you envision in the space below:

## Online Job Boards

Before beginning your job search, familiarize yourself with online tools that will help you in the process. Not only is the Web helpful in finding job postings, it is a great place to research job-searching tips, read blogs by people in your industry, and keep up to date on changes in your field.

You will find that there are many online job boards; so many, in fact, that you may feel as if you are searching for a needle in a haystack. This sometimes makes it feel overwhelming because you may wonder which job boards are worth your time and which ones aren't. Your TES will help you navigate the Web and determine which websites are beneficial for you; however, knowing some of the top job boards prior to working with your employment specialist will help you approach this process with confidence.

- **Dice:** Dice is one of the larger job boards and lists mostly technological positions. There is a focus here on all types of technological openings - regular, full time, part time, and contract work, are all listed here. This is the first place you should look for a highly specific tech job posting because it's likely to be here before any of the sources below.
- **GitHub:** You may already be familiar with GitHub as a source for code sharing. It also has a job board that is very thorough. Searching for jobs on GitHub returns many results.
- **icrunchdata:** If you're looking for a job in Data Analytics (analyzing data/information), this is the website for you. There is a well-maintained blog on icrunchdata that will help you stay up to date on the latest developments in analytics and/or employment. Even if you're not that into data analytics, there are other tech positions posted there too.
- **RubyNow:** RubyNow is a job board called a "niche" board, meaning that it is very specific. It is a board for Ruby (on Rails) developers. Ruby is a very in-demand coding language (one of the five highest-paying programming languages you can learn), and one that has many lessons readily available. If you are a Ruby master, this is a great website for you.
- **Craigslist:** Craigslist is a very common website used for job listings and is very frequently used by tech recruiters.
- **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a professional social networking site. Even if you do not use it to find a job, it is recommended that you create a profile for professional networking purposes. Because so many people use this site, it is a popular site for job searching as well. The trick to using LinkedIn is to make sure your profile is complete, detailed, and descriptive, as you will receive more "hits" from prospective employers.
- **WITI:** This website is specifically for women. WITI stands for Women in Technology International. WITI focuses on enabling women to be successful in technological careers. They have an extensive list of online job openings and also serve as a great place to network.
- **Indeed:** Indeed.com is a massive search engine for job postings. It is basically the "Google" of job hunting. The site visits job boards and corporate websites and returns listing based on keywords you select, which can make the process of searching much more efficient for you.

- **Guru:** Guru.com is a project-based site, popular with consultants. It is a great place to find side jobs, build your profile, or sub out portions of more complex jobs.
- **Experience:** Experience.com is one of the largest new graduate and internship databases available. They have a comprehensive jobs database for those with anywhere from 0-3 years of experience. Also they offer links to tips on resume writing and networking, which is always a plus.
- **Stack Overflow:** Stack Overflow is the largest online community for software developers to share knowledge and learn new skills. They now have a job board as well. This site is worth checking out as a software engineer or programmer.
- **TechCareers:** This isn't the best looking technology job board out there, but there are some good listings on here, and clicking a listing often takes you directly to the employer's website so you can apply directly. That way, you're not wasting time applying without knowing if the job is still open.

There are many more websites that feature job boards, but the above list is a great place to start. Too many options can feel overwhelming, so all of the available ones will not be listed here. However, if you are interested in learning about more, Persevere will be glad to help you explore more options.

### **Avoiding Scams on Online Job Boards**

The Web, while it connects the world in amazing ways, also has a “dark side.” When you are applying for jobs online, be sure that you are on a site with a good reputation. Even then, you'll have to keep an eye out for suspicious postings. One way to protect yourself is to google, or search, “common online job scams” to make sure you are up-to-date on what might be the latest scamming methods. Scammers are adaptable and sophisticated, and they seek new ways all the time to take advantage of job seekers.

Online job scams seek to take advantage of you in a variety of ways: to collect confidential information used for identity theft, to get you to cash fraudulent checks or wire/send money, and to get you to pay for services and/or supplies.

Job scams can be posted on sites like Craigslist and other job boards and discussion forums, as well as social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. In other cases, scammers can get ahold of your email address and send unsolicited emails to you in an attempt to bait you. It is important to be vigilant and check out every job you're interested in thoroughly to make sure it's legitimate.

Online job scam warning signs include:

- You're offered a job without an application, interview, or discussion with the employer.
- The “company” asks that you wire money or asks for your credit card/debit card information.
- The “company” asks for personal information like your social security number or driver's license number.
- You are promised high pay for minimal work.
- The “company” asks you to pay for a credit report as part of the application process.
- You are told you have to pay for training.
- You're asked to cash a check and forward some of the money to a third party.

- The salary details aren't clear. If the company doesn't pay an hourly rate or a salary, carefully investigate the details further.

Keep a lookout for the following:

- **Bait and switch scams:** This type of scam looks like this: You apply for a job and are selected for an interview. During the interview, you discover that the job you applied for doesn't actually exist and the company tries to interest you in a completely different position. Companies do this when they are trying to hire someone for a job that no one seems to want. They feel they can convince someone of taking the position in person, since the person is already gone to the trouble to get there and is interviewing.
- **Career consulting scams:** When you post your resume online, it is public information. You may be contacted by someone who refers to him/herself as a "career consultant" who would like to represent you. First of all, you already have a career consultant, your Technology Employment Specialist provided to you by Persevere. These "career consultants" are simply trying to sell something to you: resume writing, resume reviews, and other career-related services.
- **Credit report scams:** This scam occurs when an "employer" asks to see your credit report as a part of the hiring process and you end up paying a fee for this or other services. This also exposes your personal information to the scammer, which they can use to steal your identity.
- **Direct deposit scams:** These days, companies very often pay their employees through "direct deposit," where they deposit your paycheck into your checking or savings account directly rather than issuing you a paper check. This is always optional, and is only done after you have formally been hired and completed your new hire paperwork. Never give your bank account information out prior to formally being hired by a legitimate company.
- **Money laundering scams:** Money laundering scams are the most common type of online job scams. Money launderers post jobs online or send out emails saying they are hiring employees to help process payments or transfer funds. Very often, the scammer will tell you he/she is from a foreign country and cannot transfer the funds him/herself. He/she also will not meet you in person. They will, instead, ask you to use your personal bank account to move what are actually stolen or "bad" checks and have you keep a small percentage of the money for yourself. If you participate in this, even unknowingly, you can be arrested for fraud/theft.
- **Recruiting scams:** Recruiters may contact you saying they have clients with positions you may qualify for, but they don't have current openings. In the meantime, they recommend you take some training sessions to enhance your qualifications. They are ONLY trying to sell you something, not help you find a job.
- **Phishing scams:** Phishing is defined by dictionary.com as "the fraudulent practice of sending emails purporting to be from reputable companies in order to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers." In this type of scam, you would receive an email saying a company has clients with positions that you could be qualified for, sometimes even sending you the description of what could be a real job opening. After a description is provided, you are asked to click on a link. When you click on the link, you are then directed to a website on which you fill out a form with your contact information and other personal

information. This is an attempt to collect your personal information either to sell you services or to sell to a third party.

- **Shipping scams:** Shipping scams offer you a work-at-home job promising that you can earn a lot of money by reshipping items and goods. All you have to do is repackage them. There aren't really any legitimate reasons a company would need someone to do this. They can pack and ship packages very easily on their own. They will begin by asking you to pay for shipping charges with the promise they will reimburse you. What you are actually shipping is stolen goods, often electronics. Some may even have you label the packages as "gifts." By shipping these goods, you can be held liable for theft or postal fraud. Additionally, your "reimbursement" check would not be a real check.

None of this information is meant to discourage you, but rather to inform and protect you. The main things to remember in order to protect yourself online can be summarized in the following three statements, and can actually apply to almost all online activities:

- Do not give any personal information out that is connected to your identity, like your social security number, driver's license number, or bank account information.
- If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.
- Do not pay companies for training or any other service.

### **Applying for a Job**

Most job applications in the modern technological age are completed online; however, hand-written ones still do exist. In both cases, it is important to follow some simple rules to make sure your application doesn't get dumped into the trash.

Because job applicants aren't necessarily local to the job anymore, the number of applicants for available positions has increased dramatically. Back when people were looking for jobs near where they lived, a job posting may have had 25, 50, or even 100 applicants. Now, because job postings are nationwide, and sometimes worldwide, 1,000 or more people might be applying for the same position. (Imagine having to sort through all of those!)

Do not be discouraged by the thought of so many people applying for jobs that you may want or be qualified for. You are entering a field in which there are many job openings. However, during the application process, you must be thorough and detail-oriented. One slip-up on your application can cause it to be thrown out of the running.

Here are some tips to consider when applying for a position:

- **Follow all directions.** Hiring managers do not have time to comb through a thousand applications, so many include instructions at the beginning. If you follow these simple instructions thoroughly, he/she will take a further look. If you do not follow them, your application is never examined. These instructions may be something like, "Please include a salary history," or "Please include your resume in .pdf, .txt, or .doc format." In addition to being a quick screening method, all employers want people who are able to follow directions as employees. If you do not follow them on the application, they do not want to hire you.

- **Make sure your resume indicates that you meet the requirements for a job posting.** For example, if the job posting indicated that you need to have “sales experience,” you should have sales experience listed on your resume. If you don’t, your application will be rejected. Most hiring managers start by skimming resumes, looking for specific qualifications. If they do not see you have them there, they will not look further or deeper into your application. Be sure to thoroughly read all of the qualifications for a job opening.
- **Make sure your answers are error-free.** If you have spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammatical errors on your application, the potential employer will not look further. If this is not your strong-suit, be sure to have people who are good at it edit your application, cover letter, and resume. Even small mistakes can take you out of the running. Again employers are looking for people who are detail-oriented and take pride in their work. Grammatical errors and simple mistakes send the opposite message.
- **If you are filling out a written application,** use blue or black ink, and make sure your handwriting is neat. Always have a spare pen in case one malfunctions.
- **Do not leave anything blank or “skip” any question.** Make sure all fields are completed on the application. Many states have done away with boxes that ask about criminal convictions, but if there is one, do not skip over it. When you leave it blank, it is the same as lying. Be confident in your choice to turn your life around and check the “yes” box. If it asks you to “explain,” write/type “will discuss in interview” in the explanation box. We will discuss how to address this in an interview in the next chapter.
- **Additionally, never leave any other questions or areas blank.** If you do not know or it is not applicable to you, write N/A (not applicable) or “unknown” in the blank. This helps the potential employer know that you didn’t just overlook the question.

Breakout box: Not many people know that employers actually receive a tax credit when hiring ex-felons. The government has put this tax credit in place to help remove the barriers ex-felons face when securing employment. If you are also a veteran of the armed forces, the employer receives an additional tax credit.

### **Background Checks**

One of the reasons you must be honest on your job application if you are asked about a prior criminal conviction, is that many employers run background checks. If you do not answer the question on your application honestly, and your employer spends the time and energy on scheduling an interview and running a background check, only to discover you have a felony conviction, it will not only ruin your chance of getting the job, it can ruin your reputation. Leaving out information is the same as lying and it appears that you are “covering up” something.

Some people believe that companies can obtain a background check without your permission. This is a myth. You may be asked to permit the prospective company to do a background check on you. Make sure that you do. Again, if you refuse, they will think you are hiding something and you will no longer be in the running for the position.

When you consent to a background check, you know that your employer will see your felony conviction, but do not be discouraged. Again, employers are more interested in who you are NOW and what you have to offer to their company. Also, if they refuse to hire you based only on your criminal conviction, they have certain legal obligations, as doing so can be seen as discrimination.

According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), employers must get one's permission, usually in writing, before asking a background screening company for a criminal history report. If one does not give permission or authorization, the application for employment may not get reviewed. If a person does give permission but does not get hired because of information in the report, the potential employer must follow several legal obligations.

The FCRA has published the following to help explain this further. Here, it is written in its original form and can seem confusing. If you are unsure about the following excerpt, discuss it with your TES. It is important that you understand your rights.

**A Product of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council:**

**Key Employer Obligations in the FCRA**

*An employer that might use an individual's criminal history report to take an "adverse action" (e.g., to deny an application for employment) must provide a copy of the report and a document called A Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act before taking the adverse action.*

*An employer that takes an adverse action against an individual based on information in a criminal history report must tell the individual orally, in writing, or electronically: the name, address, and telephone number of the company that supplied the criminal history report; that the company that supplied the criminal history information did not make the decision to take the adverse action and cannot give specific reasons for it; and about one's right to dispute the accuracy or completeness of*

*any information in the report, and one's right to an additional free report from the company that supplied the criminal history report, if requested within 60 days of the adverse action. A reporting company that gathers negative information from public criminal records, and provides it to an employer in a criminal history report, must inform the individual that it gave the information to the employer or that it is taking precautions to make sure the information is complete and current. If an employer violation of the FCRA is suspected, it should be reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).*

*The law allows the FTC, other federal agencies, and states to take legal action against employers who fail to comply with the law's provisions. The FCRA also allows individuals to take legal action against employers in state or federal court for certain violations.*

One of the most important things to remember is that honesty is the best policy. If you are up front about your felony conviction, you can still get a job. If you lie or leave information out, you automatically will not get a position.

**Focus on the Future**

You must see yourself from this day forward as a worthwhile and valuable asset who has the skills and abilities an employer needs, not as an ex-convict unworthy of employment. Maintain a positive self-image and confidence in your skills and abilities. If you focus on your past and the shame you may feel in regard to it, you will be holding yourself back. People make mistakes all the time, and more people than you may think have criminal records. Those who choose to leave their mistakes behind, while using the wisdom they gain from those mistakes, lead happy, successful lives.

Try saying this to yourself and others when you are asked about your criminal past: "I regret having made that decision, but I am proud of who I am today."

In the space below, make a list of all of your positive traits, talents, and gifts. You may also list the things you have done to turn your life around. On days you feel discouraged or

down, return to this list to shift your focus to the positive. You also may think of things that you can add to it.

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### **Writing a Professional Cover Letter for the Technological Industry**

A cover letter is a letter of introduction that accompanies your resume when applying for a job.

Job seekers frequently send a cover letter along with their applications for employment as a way of introducing themselves to potential employers and explaining their suitability for the desired positions. Employers look for individualized and thoughtfully written cover letters as one method of screening out applicants who are not sufficiently interested in their position or who lack necessary basic skills. They also are able to observe “stand-out” letters that are well-written, unique, and suited for their company culture. Cover letters are typically categorized according to two purposes:

Applying for a specific advertised opening (“letter of application”)

Expressing interest in an organization when the job seeker is uncertain whether there are current openings (“letter of inquiry”)

If you see either one of these phrases, do not be confused. Both are still cover letters with slightly different purposes that can be customized in your letter very easily.

If you feel that your writing skills are lacking, there are many resources you can use to help you develop a show-stopping cover letter. Be sure to consult with your employment

specialist; she/he can help you. There are also online cover letter templates and builders that can help.

**Here are 9 tips to help you write your best cover letter:**

- **Only provide a cover letter if it is required.** When you fill out your application, the company will indicate whether or not you need a cover letter. If they do not require one, you do not need to send one. In fact, it might be harmful to the application process if you do. So read all directions carefully and send only what each company requests.
- **Make a strong first impression.** Recruiters and hiring managers are very busy people who receive many letters. It is wise to think of a way to grab their attention and interest in you with your first sentence. Here are some examples: “Company X is growing at such a fast rate, it must be a whirlwind to keep up with it all!” or “At only six years old, I pulled up the command line on our old Dell computer and started playing around with code.” Or even, “Three years ago I learned coding from a prison cell and now I have a new life as a computer geek.”
- **Research the company to figure out what you can do to customize it for that company.** Avoid writing a “one size fits all” cover letter. If you want to stand out, find out what kind of tone you should take in your letter by researching the company culture. For example, if the company is a fun company that rewards creativity, they might respond well to a more light-hearted cover letter. If they reward “thinking outside the box,” your cover letter could be a bit “outside the box” also. The key to all successful writing is understanding your audience and writing to that specific audience. When you customize your cover letter based on the company you have researched, it helps make a strong first impression.
- **Don’t make your whole letter about “me.”** A common cover letter mistake is that people try to focus all of their writing on themselves. That’s what your resume is for. Your cover letter should have a lot of focus on the company. You can of course discuss your skills, but put them in the context of how those skills will specifically benefit their organization.
- **Your cover letter should not be a repetition of what’s on your resume.** It’s tempting to take your resume and put all the same things in sentence form in your cover letter. The potential employer does not need to read things twice. Instead, think, “What information would be important for them to know that is not on my resume?” You can include information about previous jobs or education, but add insights or anecdotes (little “stories”) about something you did there and/or what you learned.
- **Write simply and clearly.** Sometimes people want to sound “smart,” so they use a thesaurus and try to complicate their words and style in order to accomplish that goal. Do not do this. Recruiters can recognize when you do this and they are not impressed. They will be much more impressed if you stick to being clear and simple. Cut out unnecessary words. Stay away from clichés (overused phrases). You want your cover letter to be crisp, clean, and clear.
- **Try not to sound desperate.** People are impressed by confidence, not desperation. It’s a natural human response. Confidence does not mean that you want to be full of yourself, either. So be sure to approach it without arrogance, but instead create a letter that presents yourself as a strong candidate who is aware of your skills and what value you can bring to the organization. You should sound polite and competent.

- **Have your projects ready to share.** A group of projects that you have worked on is called a portfolio. In tech jobs, your portfolio reveals much more about your talent than the words on a cover letter. Make sure you choose your very best work and be ready to show it off. Some companies have you upload some work in the application process; some wait until the interview process. Either way, prepare your best work to be presented at some point.
- **Share your future potential.** Most companies want to know they are hiring someone who can grow in their position rather than stay stagnant. They want to know that you have the drive to grow professionally, are willing to take on more responsibility once you get further into the position, and can benefit the company in new ways in the future.

A cover letter is compiled of the following parts in this order: your contact information, a salutation, the body of the cover letter, an appropriate closing, and a signature.

#### **When choosing a font for your cover letter, keep it simple.**

- **Contact information.** Here, include your name, address, phone or cell phone number, and your email address. It has also become common to include your LinkedIn address so that employers can immediately access your professional profile, resume, and networking contacts.
- **Make sure your email address is professional.** It needs to reflect your professional identity, not your sense of humor. You may want to create an email account dedicated solely to your career search.
- **Salutation.** Getting a name to address your letter to is important. Do your research to avoid having to use the generic "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam," which can make things look like you didn't make an effort to learn more about the job or the employer.
- **The best ways to learn contact names are to call an organization's front office or to review their website.** To get in gear, review samples of cover letters and note the salutations. Some have been provided to you below.
- **Body.** The body of your cover letter lets the employer know what position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow up. This section of your cover letter includes:
- **Paragraph #1- Here tell the company why you are writing.** This is "the hook," which grabs your reader's attention. Offer some specific, focused information regarding the job you're seeking and a few core strengths that demonstrate your suitability for the position.
- **Paragraph #2- Here, you discuss what you have to offer the employer.** This is where you highlight examples of the work performed and achieved results. Draw on your key competencies from your resume, although don't copy it word for word. (Employers don't need to read things twice.) Bullet points in this paragraph are extremely effective in drawing your reader's eye to your successes. You can also boldface achievements like major projects you've developed in order to make these "pop" on the page.
- **Paragraph #3- Explain your knowledge of the company.** Show that you did your research and know something about the business and how you can contribute to its mission.

- **Paragraph #4- This is your closing, or final paragraph.** Summarize what you would bring to the position and suggest next steps by requesting a meeting or suggesting a call.
- **Closing.** Finish your letter with a formal closing like "Sincerely" or "Yours truly," followed by a comma. A cover letter is professional correspondence, so don't use informal closings like "Cheers" in the letters you write to apply for jobs.
- **Signature.** How you sign your cover letter will depend if you're sending a paper or email letter. If you're sending a paper letter, type your name after the salutation, leaving a space for your handwritten signature. If you're sending an electronic cover letter, just type your name and contact information after your salutation.

A few sample cover letters that are specifically written for the technological industry are provided for you to study on the following pages:

Maria Frankel  
Sometown, DE 55555 | (555) 555-5555 | mf@somedomain.com  
July 27, 2017

Mr. Thomas Jones  
HR Manager  
ABC Corp  
15 Elm Street  
Sometown, DE 55555

**Re: IT Helpdesk Technician, Advertised on Monster**

Dear Mr. Jones:

Your tier 1 helpdesk team needs a new member, and I am interested in being the new addition. A longtime fan of ABC Corp's commitment to customer service, I bring to the table a strong customer service mindset combined with technical skills honed throughout my 15 years of help desk experience.

Key strengths include:

- High volume ticket management: In my current position as helpdesk support specialist for XYZ Co, I handle 1,725+ tickets per month, fully resolving and documenting issues for future reference.
- A track record of consistently meeting or exceeding performance targets correlated with call handling and customer satisfaction goals.
- Recognition for exceptional service delivery through "ACE Team Member" awards.
- Technical knowledge:
- Windows (all versions); Windows server 2003, 2008 R2, and 2012; macOS; Unix
- Microsoft Active Directory Services
- LAN, WAN, and wifi network technology (DNS, DHCP, NTP, SNMP and Nagios)
- MS Office 365/Exchange

Mr. Jones, if you are seeking an experienced, tech-savvy and customer service-oriented helpdesk technician with the proven ability to establish excellent relationships with customers, employees, vendors and manufacturers, we should speak.

I look forward to learning more about this position and can be reached at (555) 555-5555 or mf@somedomain.com. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Maria Frankel  
Enclosure: Résumé

**Anthony Applicant**  
567 North Street, Boston, MA 02108 · 555-555.555 · anthony.applicant@email.com

September 1, 2018

Eric Lee  
Chief Technology Officer  
Global Data  
123 Business Rd.  
Business City, NY 54321

Dear Mr. Lee:

This letter is to express my interest in your posting on Dice.com for an experienced Software Developer. With a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Master's degree in Information Technology, and hands-on experience using .Net languages to create and implement software applications, I am confident I will be an asset to your organization.

I enjoy being challenged and engaging with projects that require me to work outside my comfort and knowledge set, as continuing to learn new languages and development techniques are important to me and the success of your organization.

Your listed requirements closely match my background and skills. A few I would like to highlight that would enable me to contribute to your bottom line are:

- Highly skilled in designing, testing, and developing software
- Thorough understanding of data structures and algorithms
- Knowledgeable of back-end development best practices
- Hands-on software troubleshooting experience
- Proven track record of proper documentation for future maintenance and upgrades

I've attached a copy of my resume that details my projects and experience in software development. I can be reached anytime via my cell phone, 555-555-5555 or via email at [anthony.applicant@email.com](mailto:anthony.applicant@email.com).

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Anthony Applicant (signature hard copy letter)

Anthony Applicant

# SOFTWARE ENGINEER



youremail@gmail.com



(XXX) XXX-XXXX



142 Your Address Blvd, City Name, CA XXXXX

from Resume Genius

[Today's Date]

[Hiring Manager's Name]

[341 Company Address]

[Palo Alto, California 94301]

[(xxx) xxx-xxxx]

[hiring.manager@gmail.com]

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],

With six years of experience in full-stack web development and systems architecture, I am confident I will be an excellent fit for Haystack Search's next Senior Software Engineer. My experience has provided me with the innovative and technical skills necessary to successfully provide your company with multifaceted technical solutions across a wide range of software platforms.

At New Enterprise, I am responsible for leading the development for three high-traffic ecommerce websites that offer 12 million monthly users customizable documents. I oversee the building of innovative systems architecture via Kohana and Laravel frameworks, HTML5, CSS3/SASS, JavaScript/React, MySQL, and ElasticSearch. I was instrumental in structuring several internal systems comprising order entry/management tools, conversion/revenue reporting, and production workflow tracking, as well as designed custom REST APIs built in Python, Laravel PHP, and NodeJS. I also successfully collaborate on solutions with our product, QA, and marketing teams to offer the best user experience to build higher customer lifetime value.

I have refined my strengths through six years of experience in DevOps, where I provided solutions in database technology, programming, operating systems. The following is a snapshot of my broader technical skills:

- ✓ Agile Project Management
- ✓ Custom Web and Mobile Applications
- ✓ Database Programming
- ✓ Data Science
- ✓ Networking Devices and Tools

It would be a pleasure to learn more about Haystack's needs, and I would welcome the chance to provide further insight into my knowledge of project management, technical abilities, personal attributes, and track record of success in building revenue generating web technologies compatible across multiple platforms, browsers, and devices.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for this position. I hope to hear from you soon to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

## Writing an Effective Resume for a Technological Position

A resume is a document created and used by a person to present his/her background, skills, and accomplishments when applying for a job.

Most resumes contain a summary of relevant job experience and education/certifications. Typically, a resume is submitted at the time of application, very often along with a cover letter. Potential employers use the resume to screen out people who wouldn't be a good fit and to further explore ones who do have the qualifications to fill the position.

If you want your resume to be one that ends up in the “check this person out further pile,” you need to make sure your resume is:

- Honest and accurate
- Visually appealing
- Grammatically correct
- Includes keywords that are found in the job description the company posted.

Like the cover letter, your resume is a tool to “make a first impression”; therefore, you should put in a lot of effort to create a resume that shows who you are. Your resume tells the potential employer where you've been and where you'd like to go.

In the appendix, you will find a worksheet titled, “Resume Running Record.” As you move through your coding program, create show-stopping projects, and gain new skills, record them as you go. Then, when it is time to create your resume, you will have a comprehensive list of skills, accomplishments, and projects to sort through with your employment specialist when crafting your resume.

Here are the parts of an effective resume in order:

1. **Contact Information.** Your name, city and state, phone number, and email address should be prominently displayed on your resume. You should also include social media profile links (as long as you've cleaned them up beforehand), and your personal website or blog, if you have them.
2. **Summary.** A summary is like the “movie trailer” of a resume. It's where you highlight upfront the most important things about you. This section should be a brief paragraph (three to five sentences) that shows the value you bring by highlighting your skills and a couple big career wins (if you have them). Instead of labeling it a “summary,” use a headline that shows off your best attributes, like, “Front-End Development Expert.”
3. **Skills.** Every resume should have a skills section, which appears beneath your summary in short, bulleted columns. (See examples) The bullet points and columns add interest to your resume and make it easy for the hiring manager to skim over them to make sure you have the skills they are looking for. Because of this, you'll want to incorporate the right keywords so that your resume is reflecting the skills they are specifically looking for. Be sure to double check the job posting and see what keywords they use so that you can use them, too.

Matching your skills section to what appears in the job posting is especially important for people applying to technical jobs, like IT positions, since these job seekers have to show employers they possess all of the hard skills that are required to perform the job.

Don't overlook the soft skills that are your strengths, such as problem solving, communication, and leadership. So when you are creating your bullet point list, include both your hard skills and your soft skills. A combination of the two is what employers are looking for.

4. **Professional Experience.** This is where you will list your previous jobs, including the ones you had while imprisoned. If you feel that your job experience is not that great, it's ok. By this time, the hiring manager will know that you are a beginner who doesn't have much experience yet. Include your most recent employment (last 10-15 years) if you have some. You will list previous employment like this:

- Company names
- Company locations (optional)
- Job titles you had while there
- Dates you worked there (month/year to month/year)
- Accomplishments/responsibilities (try to focus more on what you actually accomplished) You can use bold text to highlight key accomplishments on your resume. You can also use bullets, checkmarks and other simple graphics to make sure your best work is noticed.
- Promotions and awards you received

In your case, you will likely feel that your previous work experience has absolutely no relation to what you will be doing now; however, there's usually an angle you can find. For example, if you managed a supermarket, it shows that you have some leadership skills. Highlight those. Don't assume a job you had in the past isn't relevant. If you showed advancement/growth, leadership, or other impressive traits, employers will love it. It's your job to make the bullet points impressive and show them how even unrelated jobs are relevant to the one you are applying.

Finally, you may have gaps in your employment because of the time you served. Be open to explain these. Also, If you had a job in prison, list this. Under salary, write "minimum wage." After all, a dollar a day was the minimum wage. Again, be positive and stress that although you were incarcerated, you have been acquiring valuable experience and skills.

5. **Education.** Here, you will list the names of the schools and dates of graduation from high school on. If you have not attended college, it's ok. Make sure you list Persevere Code Camp in this section. It is where you have received your certifications and is very relevant.
6. **Bonus section (optional).** You may have things you want to add to your resume that don't seem to fit in any of the other sections. For example, you may have testimonials from others (short quotes), awards, and accomplishments that you feel would be worthy of being included on your resume. Before you add this section; however, ask if the information makes you more attractive to the person hiring for this particular position. You can also consult your TES, who will be helping you with your resume.

One of the best ways to learn about resume building is by studying some good examples for your field. Resumes for the technological industry should be creative and show your computer/design skills. Development team: Please put each resume on its own page.

The following is a resume for an internship application, but it's been included here because of its stand-out design.

Some additional resume pointers to consider:

- You can include personal details that are relevant. For example, if you code in your free time, have taught yourself advanced software, or have accomplished something great that is relevant to the job, include it. It will make you stand out more.



# BRIAN DUDEY

N. Damen Avenue, Chicago 99999 | 999-999-9999 | hello@kickresume.com | www.kickresume.com

## Profile

Innovative optimized solution seeker. Excited to be at the deployment phase of my new career as a web developer. I am ambitious, adventurous, assiduous, animated, and an alliteration advocate.

## Skills

### Technical Skills



### Additional Skills



## Work experience

### Event Manager 03/2014 – 02/2017

C3 Presents, Washington DC

- Lead and execute all phases of event planning and production spanning committee recruitment, training, vendor relationships and on-site facilitation.
- Brought new business to the organization through relentless networking and stewardship which helped the company win the bid for the State Department Summit on the Middle East and, the companies largest civic event to date, the United State of Women
- Exercise fiscal control over budget creation, tracking and reporting. Collaborate with employees at all organizational levels to advance cohesive operations.

## Work experience

### Community Relations Manager 06/2011 – 01/2014

Gay & Lesbian Elder Housing, Los Angeles

- Arranging presentations and pitch deck.
- Designing a PR plan and establishing important focus points.
- Designing, creating and managing content across multiple communication platforms.
- Building relationships with key media players.

## Education

### Engineering Immersion Program 11/2018 – 06/2018

Thinkful, Chicago, IL

Project-focused intensive program with emphasis on Mongo, Express, React, and JavaScript (MERN) technical stack.

- Developed a full-stack web application, "RenewU", using React that allows users to explore various aspects of meditation. User's progress is stored on a backend created using Node and MongoDB.
- Developed a language learning app, "Foodie Phonetics" using spaced repetition and a linked list data structure. React was used to create the front end components while Node and Mongo were used to create a backend that stores user data.
- Developed a concierge app, "Pley", for individuals looking for curated suggestions when visiting a new place. React was used to develop the front end which includes real-time chat, drag and drop and variety of advanced features. The backend, built using Node, Express, and Mongo, takes advantage of well-developed RESTful API, Geospatial searching, and user authentication with JWT.

### BA, English 09/2001 – 09/2005

University of California, Los Angles



# Bastein Vidé

First name:  
Last name:  
Date of birth:  
Nationality:

Bastein  
Vidé  
11/11/1995  
French

Address:  
Phone number:  
Email address:  
Web:

Toulouse 31000, France  
+33 6 12 34 56 78  
hello@kickresume.com  
kickresume.com/cv/basteinvide/



## Work experience

09/2015 – present

**Apprentice Developer**  
Air France, Toulouse, France  
Node.js, Java and SpringBoot developer

04/2015 – 06/2015

**Full-stack Developer**  
Vigisys, Labège (Toulouse), France  
Back-end (Laravel/PHP) and Front-end (AngularJS) developer on Ubixr social network



## Education

09/2015 – present

**Computer Science & Network Engineering**  
ENSEEIHT, Toulouse, France

09/2013 – 06/2015

**Computer Science DUT**  
IUT Informatique Toulouse Rangueil, Toulouse, France

09/2010 – 06/2013

**Scientific Baccalaureate**  
LEGTA Toulouse Auzet, Toulouse, France



## Skills

### Web Development

HTML5/CSS3  
JavaScript  
Node.js  
PHP  
WebDesign/UX  
JEE

★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★

Java  
UML  
Node.js  
Android  
Python  
Ada  
C/C++

### Software Development

★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★

### System & Networking

GitLab  
Continuous Integration  
Unix/Linux Systems  
VoIP  
Networks Administration  
Virtualization

★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★

SQL  
MySQL  
Oracle  
No-SQL  
MongoDB

### Databases

★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★

### IT Methodologies

Agile  
Test Driven Development  
Lean Software Development  
Behavior Driven Development

★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★

French  
English  
German

### Languages

Native  
Professional  
Elementary

# John J. Jobseeker

123 Success Ave, New York, NY 10017  
Phone: (212) 555-1212  
E-mail: [john@yahoo.com](mailto:john@yahoo.com)

---

## SUMMARY

- Recent honors graduate of New York University's BS in IT program whose academic credentials are reinforced by hands-on programming experience gained during internship with ABC Company.
  - Consistently commended by professors and internship supervisor for programming abilities; strong grasp of technologies (e.g., Java, VB, C, C++, SharePoint, HTML and .Net); and attention to detail.
  - Known as a self-starter, team player and multitasker; strive to consistently exceed expectations.
- 

## EDUCATION

New York University, New York, NY

### Bachelor of Science, Major in Information Technology, 2011

- Honors:** Graduated cum laude (GPA: 3.53); inductee, Golden Key Honor Society; recipient, John Doe Academic Scholarship; Dean's List, 2009, 2010, 2011.
  - Senior Project:** Earned "A" grade on capstone project as co-developer of Web-based, customized enterprise software solution that integrated business processes for a nonprofit organization. Delivered turnkey application that reduced manual data entry, saving hundreds of personnel hours monthly.
  - Course Highlights:** Enterprise Application Development, Security, Java/C/VB Programming, IT Project Management, Database Programming, Web Design, Computer Architecture
- 

## TECHNOLOGY

- Programming/Languages:** Java (J2SDK v1.3, J2EE, EJB, Servlets, JSP, Struts, J2ME, JavaBeans, RMI, JDBC, Java Applets); C; C++; Visual Basic; SharePoint; .Net; PHP; MySQL; HTML
  - Source Code Control:** Visual SourceSafe, Ant
  - Databases:** Oracle 8.x/9.x, SQL Server, MS Access
  - Design & IDE Tools:** Rational Rose, UML, WSAD, Visual Café, VJ++, WebLogic
  - Office Tools:** MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Visio
  - Operating Systems:** Windows 7/Vista/Server 2008, Mac OS X
- 

## INTERNSHIP

ABC COMPANY — New York, NY \* Computer Programmer Intern, 2010 to 2011

- Selected for nine-month internship out of more than 150 applicants.
- Handled database and Web site programming tasks (primarily using Java, C, C++, HTML and SharePoint), working an average of 15 hours per week while maintaining a 3.5 GPA.
- Redesigned Internet and intranet pages. Used SEO best practices to optimize Web site for search engine rankings and improved functionality of company database.
- Resolved memory corruption and other technical issues by leveraging strengths in coding, debugging and integration testing.



- Include links to relevant sites. If you have built an impressive website or have a professional social media account that is relevant, include the links. The technological age has broadened what can be placed in a resume. You must still have all the relevant information on your resume because not all hiring managers will go to the site, but it can be there in case they have the time and desire to see more.
- Make sure the sections of your resume are clear and organized. Stay consistent with the format and font. This shows an attention to detail. When formatting, keep these things in mind:
  - Capitalize your headings. If you bold or underline them, make sure all of them are bolded and underlined.
  - Make sure your spacing is consistent for the whole document. If you choose 1.15 spacing, make sure you use the same spacing throughout. Do not double space your resume. It will make it appear too long or take up too many pages.
  - Make sure your punctuation is correct. Your bullet lists can have periods at the end, but you can easily leave them out, especially if your lists are not complete sentences. Just stay consistent.
  - Double check your spelling and grammar! Have someone else take a look at it, too.
- Use strong verbs. Vague, weak verbs do not grab the attention of your audience. Here is a chart to illustrate this:

<b>Weak Verbs to Replace</b>	<b>Strong Verbs</b>
Completed	Achieved
Figured out	Deciphered
Led	Spearheaded
Worked toward	Endeavored
Completed a website	Executed a web design
Found the problem	Diagnosed the problem
Shortened	Simplified
Sold	Negotiated a sale
Work well with others	Collaborate well with others

### Online Resume Builders

An excellent tool to use when creating your resume is online resume builders and/or templates. On these sites, you are able to select a template that matches both your personality and your purpose and fill in all of the information you'd like to include on your resume.

Some sites are free while others charge a fee. Should you choose one that charges a fee, be sure to make note of whether or not the payment is scheduled to repeat each month in a subscription-type fashion. You will want to know how to cancel the automatic payment once you have secured a position.

Here are some suggested resume-building websites:

- **Zety:** Zety offers complete resume-making services for a fee. On this site, you can also create cover letters. Once you choose a template, this site takes you through building your resume step-by-step. After creating and editing your resume, you are then able to download it or create a unique web address for it so that it is available online.
- **Canva:** Canva is a free option that many people use. This site is known for having user friendly graphic design tools that almost anyone can use. Here, you can start with a blank slate or choose a template design on which you simply replace the generic information with your own. You are also able to use canva's design tools to customize your resume further.
- **Kickresume:** Kickresume is a good site to use as a beginner. It's also known for helping people create resumes specific to their industry. They provide sample resumes of people who actually did get hired, so this is a great feature to help you see what may have been appealing to hiring managers in your industry. They do have a free plan, but the templates offered for free are extremely limited. If you decide you like the site, they offer monthly plans and annual plans that provide much more variety and choices in styles.
- **Visual CV:** Visual CV offers great templates and tools to help you customize your resume for each position to which you are applying. It is user-friendly and helps you create a resume that will look different from anyone else's. This site does charge fees, which do increase as you add more templates and options. They bill you a reasonable fee quarterly (every three months).

### **Having More Than One “Iron in the Fire”**

When you begin applying for jobs, it is best to apply to multiple jobs rather than just one. This method prevents you from putting all of your “eggs in one basket,” so to speak.

If you apply to jobs one at a time, it could have negative effects, including:

1. You come across as desperate.
2. It extends the time you spend job-searching because you do not apply to a new job until you know one has fallen through. This is time you are not making a paycheck.
3. It can be discouraging. Because you have all of your hopes invested in one opportunity, if it falls through, you can feel extremely disappointed.

If you apply to multiple jobs at a time, you will experience positive effects:

1. You're less dependent on the outcome of one opportunity, so you feel more confident and relaxed. This is particularly helpful when walking into an interview. You know that you have multiple opportunities in the works, so you will not come across as desperate, which increases the likelihood of getting the job.
2. You will feel more secure because if any one opportunity falls through, you know there are more waiting.
3. When it's time to start discussing your salary, you can negotiate from a position of strength because you very easily could have a couple of offers come your way. This makes you appear very desirable and gives you more room to negotiate a higher salary.

- When you do start a position, you can start with confidence rather than a feeling of being “lucky” to have gotten there. You will know that you got there because you explored all of your options and were able to choose the best one for you.

After reading, studying, and discussing the lessons in this chapter with your employment specialist, what made a lasting impression? What important things did you learn? How do you feel about searching and applying for jobs now? Are you fearful? Optimistic? Explain.

## Chapter 9 Big Ideas:

1. Searching for and applying to jobs can spark a combination of excitement and anxiety, but the most important emotion to embrace is HOPE.
2. Your past does not dictate your future. Keep looking forward and don't let anything get in the way of your success.
3. There are many ways to find a job these days; online job boards are abundant and extremely effective.
4. Be sure to be aware of signs of scams when searching for a job.
5. Be thorough in following directions and editing your applications.
6. Be honest if you are asked about your criminal past.
7. You cannot be discriminated against solely because of your criminal past.
8. There are many resources and tools to help you write show-stopping cover letters and resumes.
9. Cover letters and resumes are your methods to make a strong first impression.
10. Make sure you apply to more than one position at a time.



## ☰ Chapter 10: Preparing for the Interview

Like the job searching phase, facing the interview process can be both exciting and stressful. Something important to remember as you enter this phase in preparing for your new career is that ALL people, even the most experienced job hunters, find interviewing nerve-wracking and intimidating. It is what you do with that nervous energy that makes the difference in being successful in your interviews or floundering.

In this chapter and in your Persevere coding class, we will work to help you prepare well so that you are entering into this phase with confidence. By the time you reach your first interview, you will have far less worry about “being put on the spot” because you will have already participated in the two greatest and most effective interview strategies: **preparation and practice.**

One aspect of the interview process you may be worried about is addressing your criminal past. We will help you know exactly what your rights are in regard to this along with the best ways to handle it.

As with all of the phases of the changes you are making in your life, one of the most important keys to success is maintaining a positive attitude. When you make it to your first interview, be sure to focus on how far you’ve come: all the positive changes you’ve made and how much you have learned. You have a lot to be proud of. Do not allow fear or shame over your past mistakes cloud this fact.

Remember your mantra in regard to your criminal history: “I regret having made that decision, but I am proud of who I am today.”

## **Self-Talk Matters**

Before getting into what an interview may be like, let's take a closer look into attitude and how to tackle the stress that almost all people feel about interviewing. It is important to remember that just about EVERYONE feels stress prior to and during an interview. When you feel stress or anxiety about an upcoming interview, the worst thing you can do is give yourself a hard time about it. Try to avoid thought patterns such as these:

- “I don’t know how to talk to people well.”
- “I am going to blow this and not get the job.”
- “There’s no way I’m as smart as the other candidates.”
- “How could I ever get hired for this position? It’s too perfect.”
- “I don’t have much experience. Why would they ever hire me?”
- “I have always had terrible luck. This will be no different.”

When you fall into a pattern of such thinking, it can often create the outcome you dread the most. When a negative outcome happens after thinking this way, it tends to validate the negative thoughts. (Remember the lesson on self-fulfilling prophecy?)

For example, let's say you get a call back from a company with which you interviewed. The supervisor says, "Hi Cam, I am calling to let you know that we have decided to go with another candidate. You have a lot to offer; we just feel we found the perfect fit with someone else. We wish you the best of luck."

The call you received is actually quite positive; however, if you have fallen into the habit of negative self talk, you'd likely hang up the phone and say to yourself, "I KNEW it! I'm not good enough!" This feeds your negative self image, thus making the next interview even harder. This has the potential to repeat until finally, you just can't handle what you perceive as repeated rejection, and you give up.

There IS a better way! The way that you speak to yourself about stressful situations is extremely important; therefore, in this case, you would want to catch yourself being negative and change the thoughts to something like this:

Negative	Positive
"I don't know how to talk to people well."	"I have never been much of a people person, but if I practice answering sample questions, I can handle it."
"I am going to blow this and not get the job."	"Like anything, interviewing takes practice; because I am new to this, it might not go perfectly, but I will remember that I am practicing for the perfect job for me."

"There's no way I am as smart as other candidates."

"I have no idea who else is interviewing and what they have to offer. I have been through a lot and made it through: I have a lot to offer."

"There's no way I'm getting this job. It's too perfect."

"If I do not get this job, then it is not the perfect job for ME."

"I don't have much experience. Why would they ever hire me?"

"I may not have a ton of on-the-job experience, but I do have the skills. I will continue to build projects on my own time. Some people actually like to hire rookies because they come with a fresh perspective."

"I have always had terrible luck. This will be no different."

"This is not about luck. It's about preparation and hard work, and I have done a lot of both."

When you look at the columns above, honestly evaluate how you speak to yourself on a regular basis. Start paying very close attention to the chatter in your mind. If your thought patterns are similar to the ones on the left, you have the power to stop them. You are in charge of your thoughts. When you hear self-criticism, visualize putting up a mental stop sign and turn the thought into something more positive. This will help you in all areas of your life, not just in the search for a job.

## Self-Reflection: How I Talk to Myself

Below is a chart similar to the one above. Changing the way we talk to ourselves takes practice. Think about some of the ways you talk to yourself. When you catch yourself talking to yourself in a negative way, record it in the left-hand column. Then think of a new way of thinking about the same thing and record it in the right-hand column. All people struggle with negative self-talk sometimes, so try not to avoid this activity. If you are unsure, consult with your TES.

**Negative**

**Positive**

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## **Preparation Pays Off BIG!**

In addition to monitoring your attitude and self-talk there are many other things you can do to help prepare for and diminish the stress prior to interviewing:

- **Identify and memorize your strengths and skills.** There are many things you can do to prepare yourself for upcoming interviews. Identify what the company is looking for; then identify your relevant skills that suit the company's needs. Be ready to show examples, tell anecdotes (small stories/reflections), and how you have applied all of your newly acquired hard skills AND soft skills.
- **Research each target company thoroughly.** When you know about the company, it shows. You are able to tailor answers according to what you know the company's goals and needs are. You can research companies by visiting the company website (they will often have a tab labeled "about us"), check the company's social media accounts, like Facebook, Google+, Instagram, and Twitter. This provides you with knowledge of how the company wants to be perceived by the public.
- **LinkedIn is a particularly good place to research a company.** Many companies have profiles there and you are able to see company statistics, connections they have in the industry, new hires, other jobs they have posted, and more. Here, you can also look up your interviewer and learn more about him/her. Look for common links between him/her and yourself so that you are able to make the interview more personable.
- **Another source of information is Google and Google News.** If you search the company name, you can find information that you might otherwise not have found in other places. You may find out that they are expanding to another state or country, or that they have a product that was recently released that has been found to underperform. This knowledge can help you formulate responses to interview questions.

## **Best Method to Prepare: Practice, Practice, Practice!**

When you were in school, do you remember having to deliver a speech? It is one of the most dreaded assignments in school. Some people seem to do well when the time comes, and it is clear when someone is really struggling. Some of it has to do with personality: some people are naturally shy and some are more outgoing. But believe it or not, it has much more to do with how much the individual practiced.

Here is how to practice for upcoming interviews:

1. Study sample interview questions. (Many have been provided for you in the coming pages.)
2. Put the sample questions on index cards (one question per card). Shuffle them and practice answering them in your head silently.
3. After you have practiced silently, begin practicing them with others in role-playing situations. This is THE most important part in your preparation. Answering questions out loud is key to being comfortable when answering them in a formal setting. Practice means shuffling your card deck and answering questions repeatedly with a classmate, friend, instructor, or your employment specialist.
4. When you reach the role-playing phase, set up an interview space that may be similar to the ones in which you will be interviewing. For example, have chairs on either side of a desk, etc. If this is not possible, you can simply set up chairs on opposite sides of a table.

5. If you are able, dress the part. You obviously won't be able to do this if you are still serving your time; however, if you are out, this is a great way to build confidence. When we dress the part, we act the part.
6. Once you have been released, another effective practice method is to video record yourself on your smartphone so that you can see and hear the quality of your responses and monitor your body language, posture, and eye contact. Do you sound and look confident? Are your answers too long-winded? Are you fidgeting? This honest self reflection may be uncomfortable, but is very effective in improving your skills.
7. In your quiet time, visualize a successful interview. Many people believe that visualization of positive outcomes helps increase the odds of those outcomes. Try frequently imagining positive interactions with an interviewer, especially in the days and hours prior to a scheduled interview.

### **Sample Tech Interview Questions**

Here is a list of 50 sample interview questions for computer the computer/tech industry. Take these questions and place them on index cards. Keep the cards with you and practice formulating responses frequently:

1. What do you know about our company? (When practicing, use a “sample” company.)
2. What is the most challenging/exciting project you’ve worked on recently?
3. What kind of tech projects do you work on in your spare time?
4. Tell me about the most difficult technical challenge you’ve encountered and how you resolved it.
5. What technologies could you not live without? (This may be hard to practice while still serving time. Ask your employment specialist what his/her favorite technology is to help you begin understanding what is out there.)
6. What are your tech pet peeves?
7. What are your favorite gadgets/apps?
8. Tell me about a time you were asked to do something you’d never done before. How did you react and what did you learn?
9. What online resources do you use to help you do your job?
10. How do you keep your technology skills current?
11. Pretend I’m not a tech person. Can you explain [a relevant technology] in simple terms?
12. What qualities do you think are most important in a developer [or another relevant position]?
13. What are three words your friends would use to describe you?
14. Can you tell me about a time when things didn’t go the way you wanted at work, such as a project that failed or being passed over for a promotion?
15. What are your favorite and least favorite technologies and why?

16. What are the benefits and drawbacks of working in an Agile environment? (Most IT teams have adopted some form of Agile — currently the favored SDLC (software development life cycle) methodology — which means lots of quick meetings and a steady stream of feedback from fellow team members. Your answer to this question can reveal your level of understanding of this popular environment, but also your attitude toward collaboration and communication.)
17. What was the last presentation you gave?
18. What are the qualities of a successful team or project leader?
19. Are you comfortable working remotely or on a flexible schedule?
20. How do you manage your work/life balance?
21. Why do you want to work for us? (This is why researching the company prior to the interview is so important because you can't just say, "I need the work.")
22. What are your weaknesses?
23. How familiar are you with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert specific coding languages)?
24. Have you interviewed anywhere else? (Play it safe. Refrain from being specific, and keep your response laid-back and general. "Yes, I'm actively looking for other great roles like this." Or, "I'm moving quickly with other companies with competitive offers.")
25. Do you work best alone or as part of a team? (This question is baiting you to take a side, but don't. Why? The ideal tech candidate is a master of solo, unsupervised work and collaboration. A great response: "I love the speed and energy of teamwork, and I also like concentrated time to work alone and execute on projects.")
26. What salary are you looking for? (You want to diplomatically avoid answering, and here's why: you don't know what their budget range is for the position, so giving a number in the dark could disqualify you if you're too low or too high. So what do you say? Politely deflect by trying, "I'm sure what you're paying is in step with industry norms." Or: "It's hard to specify a salary range because this is a new type of role for me." Or: "Based on what my responsibilities would be, I'm sure we can figure out compensation that makes sense.")
27. The programming test: (This is more of a 2nd/3rd interview occurrence, but you should be prepared for it in your first interview, just in case. Remember, the way you solve the problem is being evaluated just as much as your final answer. Practicing increases your skills, and being prepared makes you calm. So devote time to taking practice tests before the interview. We like Codewars, Topcoder, and HackerRank. If you want to try a mock live-interview coding test, try Pramp or Gainlo.)
28. What do you do for fun?
29. What are your strengths?
30. What is the best part of your current/last job?
31. What is the most frustrating part of your current/last job?
32. What in particular are you most interested in working on?

33. Do you have examples of your work?
34. Where do you see yourself professionally in 3-5 years?
35. Brain teaser questions (to test your problem-solving abilities): (These can be intimidating if you're new to programming and coding. Brain teasers and riddles can definitely throw you for a loop, especially if you're not prepared. But what you need to do in that case is show that you aren't going to get flustered under pressure, and that you can think through problems logically. Spending some time familiarizing yourself with the most common types of brainteasers you might be asked is a good way to prepare. But what's more important than a correct answer is the ability to think through the problem logically. To that end, talk your way through the problem. Ask any questions that you need to in order to clarify what is being asked. And then tell the interviewer how you're going about figuring it out. The entire point of these brainteasers is to test your creativity, your analytical skills, and your logic, not to show that you actually know how many gas stations there are in the US.)
36. When you don't know the answer to something, what's the first thing you do?
37. If you could design your dream job, what would it look like?
38. Tell me about your process of getting work done. When you get a new job or take on a new project, how do you go about doing it successfully?
39. How did you first learn to code and what was the first thing you built?
40. Describe a co-worker's working style. (This is sometimes asked of candidates in project interviews to show what they respect most about coworkers, and what they learned from them. Does this person think about others? Can they distinguish between the strengths different coworkers add to the team? Can they identify anything beyond straight knowledge or skills that makes someone great/difficult to work with? For example, "They knew python really well" (meh) - "They had a talent to explain complex coding concepts in a way that was easily understood by everyone" (better). Good candidates just say generically "good things" about co-workers but can't articulate details.)
41. Tell me how the internet works.
42. Which of your managers gets the best results and most value out of you and why?
43. Have you made an account on our website and what do you think can be improved about the process?
44. Why do you get up in the morning?
45. What is the one thing we've asked you that you want to make sure we know?
46. If you were a tech brand, what would you be and why? (Right answer: 'I would be Amazon, because I put customer service at the centre of everything I do. I always deliver on time and I'm an early adopter – oh, and I'm prepared to swallow the odd unfavorable review'. Wrong answer: 'You?')
47. How would you explain a database to an 8-year-old in three sentences? (Sample answer: 'A database is like a toy box, except that the toys are data instead. When you've finished playing with your toys, you put them away neatly so you can find them easily the next time you want to play with them. In this way, your toy box is your database, grouping all the different types of toys in a sensible order – so you can quickly find them again'.)

48. What will technology do for us in the future?
49. You've just been assigned to a project involving a new technology. How would you get started?
50. Describe a time when you were able to improve upon the design that was originally suggested.

You may be asked what are called “red herring” or “curveball” questions. These questions are strangely unrelated to the job to which you are applying and rarely are they meant to test your knowledge. They are instead meant to show your reasoning skills, creativity, social skills, logic, and/or communication skills. If you are asked one of these seemingly “strange” questions, keep the following in mind:

- It's ok to ask questions; in fact, it's good to ask clarifying questions.
- There is no right or wrong answer. Remember, these questions are meant to show your ability to stay calm and think through a problem or scenario on your feet.
- These questions are often meant to “humanize” both you and the interviewer, so it's ok to have a sense of humor and to be personable.
- Answer conversationally rather than formally.
- If the question requires problem solving, think it through out loud so that the interviewer is able to see how you problem solve.

**Sample “curveball” questions:** (Keep in mind, you may get one or more in an interview that are quite different from these. Don't be thrown off. Stay calm and keep in mind what they are looking for: your personality and your problem-solving/thought process. So take a deep breath, think it through, and be yourself.)

1. If you were a cake, what kind would you be?
2. If you were selected to be the first person to go to Mars, but you couldn't come back, would you go?
3. What would you bring to our monthly bake-off?
4. On a scale from 1 to 10, how weird are you?
5. Can you teach me something I don't know?
6. What would our company be crazy NOT to do in the next quarter?
7. How many gas stations are in America?
8. If you could have dinner with someone famous, dead or alive, who would it be?
9. You're a new addition to the crayon box, what color would you be and why?
10. How would you test an elevator?
11. If you were a pizza deliverer, how would you benefit from scissors?
12. Why are manhole covers round?

## **The Importance of Asking Questions of Your Interviewer**

While you will be answering many questions for your interviewer, don't forget to ask some questions of him/her. This shows that you are curious, thorough, and engaged in the process.

Here are some sample questions you can ask in an interview:

1. Can you tell me about the members of the team that I will be joining? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the team?
2. How will my performance be measured?
3. Why do you enjoy working here?
4. What are the biggest challenges faced by the team right now?
5. What technology is the company currently using?
6. How do your customers benefit from using your product or service?
7. Is there room for growth in my position?
8. Ask a question specific to the company to show you've done your research.
9. Do you have any feedback for me?

## **Explaining a Felony Conviction to an Interviewer or Potential Employer**

For an ex-offender, explaining his/her felony conviction may be the most dreaded part of the interview. Some people may want to just avoid the conversation altogether, but this is not the wisest strategy. The more upfront you are about your felony conviction, the better off you will be; however, you are not obligated to explain things in detail. There are positive ways to answer questions in regard to your conviction. Let's start by looking at some role-playing scenarios.

—These scenarios are adapted from the U.S. Department of Labor publication, "Tips for Finding the Right Job."

### **Scenario #1:**

**Employer:** "I see from your application that you have been convicted of a felony. Will you explain this to me?"

**Poor Answer:** "Well, I was using drugs at the time, so I wasn't thinking right. My boyfriend was selling drugs. He asked me to hold some drugs for him. The police said I was part of a conspiracy to sell drugs. But I didn't do anything except trust the wrong person. They free-cased me and gave me two years."

Why this answer won't work well: This response indicates that the applicant takes no true responsibility for his or her own actions.

**Better Answer:** "I'm glad you asked me, because I want you to feel comfortable hiring me. I want to assure you that it had nothing to do with my previous employers. In my past, I was involved with drugs. I made some poor decisions. As a result, I was convicted of distribution of a controlled substance. While I was incarcerated, I took the opportunity to enroll in a drug treatment program. I took several classes and maintained employment in food service. I now have a total of two years experience in food service. I want to stay in the industry, and learn as much as possible. As a result of my past, when you hire me, your company may be eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program, which can save you up to \$2,400. Are you familiar with this program?"

Why this answer works well: This response shows the applicant takes responsibility and does not blame others. The second half of the response focuses on the positives. As you consider your own response, be sure to use your own situation to shape your explanation, skills, and positives.

### **Scenario #2:**

**Employer:** "How can I be assured your legal and drug addiction troubles are behind you?"

**Poor Answer:** "Oh, I don't use drugs anymore. I don't hang around those people at all. I refuse to return to that lifestyle."

Why this answer won't work well: This response lacks assurance and a plan for the future.

**Better Answer:** "I completed a drug treatment program while I was incarcerated; I am sober now and I intend to maintain this lifestyle. I continue to attend support groups. As noted on my application, I am on a two year term of supervision with a Probation Officer. She is also there to assist me in maintaining this productive lifestyle. If you have any concerns about dishonesty, I can obtain Federal bonding insurance, which would protect you as my employer. Are you familiar with this program?"

Why this answer works well: This response tells the employer the positive things the applicant has done to overcome a problem, that the applicant has a plan in place, and that there is third-party support.

(If you do not have drug use history, talk about the positive things you did to overcome the illegal issue and what you plan to do to remain productive. Tell the employer about any third-party support you may have, such as your Probation Officer or employment specialist.)

### **Scenario #3 with multiple example answers:**

**Interviewer:** "I see from your application that you have been convicted of a crime. Will you explain this to me?"

**Response #1:** "I'm glad you asked because I want you to feel comfortable hiring me. I want to assure you it had nothing to do with my previous employers. I took some things that didn't belong to me, and as a result, I spent some time in jail. I used that time to improve myself, and to decide what field I wanted to get into. I enrolled in Persevere Code Camp and am now a full stack developer. I am skilled in several coding languages and libraries, and have excellent communication skills. I am very interested in learning all I can about this industry and I know I would be an asset to this organization."

Why this answer works so well: The applicant has spent very little time explaining the conviction in comparison to the time talking about her skills and abilities. The other two responses are similar:

**Response #2:** "When I was young, I got mixed up with the wrong crowd and I got into trouble for breaking into cars. We all do things when we are young that we regret. I used the time to my advantage by completing a coding training program and have received my certifications to be a full stack developer. I've researched several tech companies in the area and yours is well-respected. I would really like to be a part of your team."

**Response #3:** "In my past, I was involved in drugs, but that is all behind me and I've taken control of my life. I have two years of experience in computer programming now and want to stay in this industry and learn as much as possible. As a result of my past, when you hire me, your company may be eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which can save you up to \$2400. Are you familiar with this program?"

As you can see, there are positive ways to address your prior conviction. The key is to answer honestly, but don't spend too much time on the actual crime or reasons for it. More time should be given to what you have done since to turn your life around.

### **Let's practice.**

An interviewer asks you this: "I see that from your application you have a felony conviction and have served time. Do you mind telling me about that?"

How would you choose to answer this question?

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### **The Transition Statement**

You may be faced with situations and questions regarding your felony conviction both in an interview and out. In most cases, you will want to be open and honest because you do not want to be perceived as someone who has something to hide. But you also don't want to spend a lot of time on the negative parts of your past. In these cases, it is helpful to employ the "transition statement" method in answering questions or discussing your past. Here's how it works:

#### **Example #1:**

A team member says, "Hey, Camille, I heard that you are a convicted felon and went to prison. Is that true?"

Your response is, "Yes, 5 years ago I was convicted of a felony theft. While I was there, though, I turned my life around. Since then, I have become a full-stack developer, shed my addictions, and moved on from my past mistakes."

Notice that you answered your team member's question in one simple sentence that lacks any real detail. Just after that is the transition statement: **While I was there, though, I turned my life around.** This statement detracts from the original question and redirects your co-worker's attention to who you are now, where you go into more detail. Very little attention is given to the crime or prison time.

#### **Example #2:** (Transition statement is in bold.)

**Paulie:** What was it like in prison?

**You:** "Well, I don't recommend it. **While I was there, I had an opportunity to learn a new way I want to live though.** Now, I am free from addiction, have an awesome set of skills, and a brand new job I love. Life is good."

**Example #3:** (Transition statement is in bold.)

**Miguel:** “My cousin is in prison and says it’s terrible. What’s the worst thing you saw?”

**You:** “I saw a lot of things I choose not to think about, but the worst one is the overall loss of hope. **I chose to hang on to hope.** Now I live a much better life.”

**Let's practice one:**

**Co-worker:** “I heard you did some time. What did you do to end up in prison?”

Your response using the transition statement method:

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**Another Communication Style to Consider**

Some people, when faced with having to process something difficult in their lives, choose to make light of it in a joking manner. This is illustrated in the following story:

Samir went to prison for 18 months before receiving probation. When he was released, his family, friends, and co-workers, in an attempt to connect with him and make sure he was doing well, would ask him about his time inside. Samir’s approach was to joke around about it and make light of the situation.

He told lots of stories about funny situations that happened during his incarceration. He’d make jokes about the guys in his unit. He made fun of the officers, food, and anything else he could think of to make his stories funny.

On the surface, it was, in fact, funny. However, there are two more serious things going on below the surface. One, Samir, through humor, is covering up the pain and shame he feels for having to serve time. He is not processing it in a healthy, productive manner. Two, other people begin to see him as flippant, which means “not showing a serious or respectful attitude”. They believe he is not taking responsibility for his crime because he’s spending so much time talking and making jokes about prison. They begin to feel that his stories are not funny at all because they are thinking to themselves, “Going to prison isn’t funny.”

There are times to joke around and make light of difficult things in your life. And there are times when you should stay honest but relatively quiet about the details. If you choose to be open about your conviction and/or prison time, be sure not to come across as flippant. Sharing too much information or joking around about it all the time sends the wrong message to those around you.

The fact of the matter is that people will be curious about your past, but that does not mean that you have to react poorly or give it too much attention. You can very simply answer their questions in an open and honest manner without giving much detail then lead their attention to who you are NOW, which is much more important, relevant information.

Do you feel you are the type of person to stay relatively quiet about your conviction

and prison time or are you the type who will want to make light of it and share about it openly? Explain.

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What is your reaction to Samir's story? How does it make you feel?

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How do you feel about the **transition statement** method of addressing your criminal past? Do you think it will work for you? Do you feel there may be obstacles you may face when using this method? What are they and how can you overcome them?

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### What to Wear to an Interview

In the professionalism chapter, you learned about what to wear on the job, but do the same rules apply to going to an interview? Yes and no.

As with dressing on the job, your clothes should be neat, ironed, clean, and relatively new for an interview. You can certainly dress according to your style, but being a bit more formal in your interview attire is necessary.



For an interview, you should dress up more than you would for day-to-day work. You can choose to dress in business formal, but will likely choose a nice business casual look.

For men, this means wearing khaki pants, a button-down collared shirt, leather shoes, a belt, and sometimes a sports coat. You will want to stick to patterns on your shirt and/or sport coat that are small and professional rather than big, bold, and loud.

For women, this means wearing slacks or a skirt that falls below your finger-tips when standing with your arms by your side. Your blouse should be one that does not flaunt your cleavage or show parts of your underclothing. Make sure all of the clothes fit properly and that your shoes are fairly conservative and go well with the outfit.

### **Managing Your Stress Prior to Your Interviews**

You will, without a doubt, feel the jitters before you walk in to your interview. Some ways to manage this are:

1. Make sure you are on time. In fact, plan ahead for traffic, etc. Running behind even by a little bit will raise your anxiety level. If you are taking public transportation, allow time for crowds or hiccups in the schedule. Know the schedule ahead of time and select a bus or train departure time that will leave you with plenty of time to arrive and decompress.
2. Practice your breathing exercises that help with managing stress. Be conscious of the effects the nervousness is having on your body and work to manage it.
3. This is going to sound a little crazy, but it truly works. Before you walk into the building in which your interview will take place, practice the Superman pose. This pose makes you feel powerful and that you can handle anything. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Put your fists on your hips and puff out your chest. Breathe deeply. Feel how powerful and confident you truly are. You have overcome a lot. Give yourself credit for it.



4. Remember to monitor your self-talk. You will have a lot of chatter going on in your head. Make sure you are remaining in a positive mindset. If negative thoughts creep in, turn them into positive thoughts. You can choose to be kind to yourself.
5. Reduce the importance of the event in your mind. Yes, your interview is important; however, sometimes we build things up in our minds so much that we think if one little thing goes wrong, it is the end of the world. Try to compare it to something else in the past that you have done that was as big and important feeling. Remind yourself that this will not be the first or the last opportunity of this kind that you encounter.
6. You can also reframe the event in your mind. Instead of viewing it as an all-important interview, think of it as an exciting chance to meet new people and expand your network. You never know what will happen.

### **Body Language in Your Interview**

When you enter your interview, your body language will be important. Upon your entry to the room, be sure to keep your head up and your posture straight. This conveys confidence.

Shake your interviewer(s)' hand. It should be a firm handshake but not bone-crushing. If your handshake is "squishy" it conveys a lack of confidence.

When the interview begins, practice the following body language tips:

- Sit all the way back in the chair rather than on the edge. This helps prevent slouching.
- Use good eye contact, but not the whole time. Look at the person's face in general so that it doesn't come across like you're staring him/her down with direct eye to eye contact the whole time.
- Feel free to use hand gestures. Sometimes when we are nervous, we get stiff and our hands stay still. If you move them around naturally, it will loosen you up a bit.
- Every now and then, turn your hands palms-up. When your palms are up, it signals honesty and engagement.
- Keep both feet on the ground. If you are a man and cross your legs in the open position, you will appear too casual. If you are a woman and cross your legs in the closed position, it can get uncomfortable, causing you to shift too much. There is actually science behind keeping both feet on the ground: it makes you feel more grounded and secure. It also allows both sides of your brain, the creative and the rational, to both engage.
- Nod your head while listening. This shows that you are engaged in what the other person is saying.
- Every now and then, lean into what the other person is saying. Leaning forward, like nodding, shows that you are engaged in the conversation.

### **At the End of the Interview**

- If the employer does not offer you a job on the spot, or say when you can expect to hear about it, ask when you may call to find out about the decision.
- If the employer asks you to call or return for another interview, make a written note of the time, date and place. This is not something on which you want to make a mistake or miss.

- Thank the employer for the interview and reaffirm your interest and qualifications for the job.
- Even if you make a mistake or two, walk out with your head held high and walk with confidence.

### **After the Interview**

Each interview is a learning experience. After it is over, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
2. Did I present my qualifications well? Did I overlook qualifications that were important for the job?
3. Did I learn all that I needed to know about the job?
4. Did I ask questions that I had about the job?
5. Did I talk too much? Too little?
6. Was I too tense? Too relaxed
7. Was I too aggressive? Not aggressive enough?
8. Was I dressed appropriately?
9. Did I effectively close the interview?

If your interview went very well, give yourself a “pat on the back”. If you made some mistakes or could have done some things better, do NOT beat yourself up or fall victim to negative self talk. Also, avoid casting any blame on outside forces or circumstances. You are responsible for your own life and casting blame never sparks change or innovation.

After you have monitored and adjusted your self talk, make a list of specific ways you can improve for your next interview. Remember, practice makes perfect. The more you interview, the better you will get at it. If you plan carefully and stay motivated, you can market your job talents. You **will** get a job that uses your skills and pays you well.

### **Following Up**

After an interview, it is important that you follow up with a “thank you” email. This shows the level of your commitment, keeps your name in the forefront of the interviewer’s mind, and exhibits good manners. Many times, interviewers hear nothing from candidates after an interview takes place. When they do, it stands out.

To be a stand-out thank you letter, though, you will need to make sure it is well-written, clear, and customized to the person to whom you are sending it. A generic letter won’t have the same impact.

Here are some steps to follow when writing a thank you email:

1. Create a clear subject line for your email. It should be something like these:
2. --Thank you, [interviewer’s name]
3. --Thank you for your time and advice
4. --Thanks for the interview yesterday
5. --I enjoyed learning more about [company name]

6. Open with a personal greeting rather than a generic one. Your greeting should address the hiring manager directly. If you interviewed with more than one person, create a separate email for each. Examples:
  7. --Dear Ms. Parsons:
  8. --Hello Steve,
9. Express your appreciation. Open your paragraph with “Thank you.....”. Be sincere in your appreciation for their time and consideration for the position.
10. Restate your interest in the position. Your interviewer wants to, of course, make sure you are qualified for their position. But he/she also wants to know that you are eager to come aboard. Make sure you mention your enthusiasm for the job in your thank you letter.
11. Even if you feel the position may not be right for you, send a thank you email anyway. In the body of your email, let the hiring manager know that you feel it is not a perfect fit. He/she will appreciate your honesty because you will be saving him/her time.
12. Refer to something specific you discussed during your interview. This makes your email feel personal and shows that you were actively engaged during the interview.
13. Review what is particularly interesting about the position and what you can bring to the company in regard to its needs.
14. Offer to provide any additional information he/she may need and remind the hiring manager of the response deadline. For example, if he/she said, “I’ll get back to you about this by Friday,” you write something like, “I look forward to hearing from you on Friday.”
15. Close with one last “thank you” and sign “Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_.” Below your signature, include your contact details, like phone number, email, and any links to relevant social media, like LinkedIn.

Here is an example of a well-written thank you email that has all the necessary qualities and parts to impress the hiring manager:

**Subject line: Thank you, Amanda!**

Hello Amanda,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me and talk about the position of the Senior Digital Marketing Specialist with ABC Inc. yesterday. It was a pleasure to learn more about your approach to growing organic traffic.

Our conversation made me even more excited to join ABC. What interested me in particular was how sharply your efforts are focused on the actual reader experience, not just technical SEO issues.

I was thinking about what you said regarding your plans to expand the email subscribers base by offering free bonus content downloads in the upcoming quarter. In my current role as Content Marketing Specialist with XYZ, I found that using contextual click-triggers for bonus downloads within blog posts increased the subscription rate by 35% compared to regular pop-ups. I hope that helps!

I'm sure my experience can translate into similar success as your new Senior Digital Marketing Specialist.

If you need any additional information from me at this point, please do not hesitate to contact me. I'm looking forward to hearing back from you next Friday, as discussed.

Thank you again for your time!

Sincerely,

Jack Redlock

555-255-0712

j.m.redlock@gmail.com

Here is an example of an ineffective, “generic” thank you email:

**Subject line: Great interview, thank you!**

Dear Hiring Manager,

I enjoyed meeting you in person after all these emails we've exchanged. It was a pleasure to be interviewed yesterday.

I already said how excited I was to join your team. I've achieved so much in my current position (as you have seen on my resume) and I know I will be a great asset to your company.

Please, let me know as soon as you know anything about the further steps of the recruitment process. I hope to meet you again and become one of your team members soon! So excited!

Best,

Camryn Lockhart

Closely examine the letter that is effective. What did Jack do right?

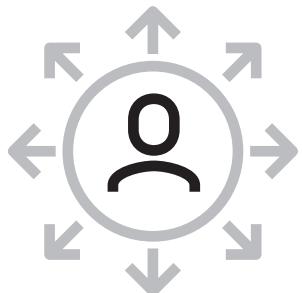
Closely examine the letter that is ineffective. What did Camryn do wrong?

## Chapter 10 Big Ideas:

All people are nervous about interviewing. You combat this with preparation and practice.

Having a positive attitude and talking to yourself kindly will help relieve stress and contribute to the success of your interviews.

1. The best method to prepare for upcoming interviews is practice, practice, practice.
2. Explaining your felony conviction to potential employers should be honest and straight-forward but lacking in a lot of details.
3. Focus on how far you've come and where you and your life is NOW.
4. Before an interview, be sure to implement stress management strategies to diminish the jitters before entering the room.
5. During your interviews, present well in your attire and your body language.
6. After your interviews, do an honest self-evaluation and follow up with a thank you email.



## ☰ Chapter 11: I Have a Job, Now What?

In this final chapter, we will cover some things you will need to have in place in order to continue your employment and enjoy a fruitful, successful career. Typically, this spills over into your personal life as well, so you have a lot to look forward to.

We will begin with some “nuts and bolts” lessons and tips and end with a deep and powerful lesson as the handbook comes to a close.

### **Transportation**

Once you are employed, you may need to commute to an office during your work week. You may be in an office all 5 days of the week or come in 2-3 days per week. Many companies are working on a more flexible schedule. No matter how many days you are required to go to your office, you will obviously need transportation to get there.

If you do not have your own car, you will need to take advantage of public transportation. Once you have secured your position, it will be crucial to begin planning how to get to and from work.

The first step is obtaining a bus or train schedule in your area. Study the schedule carefully and choose a departure time that allows plenty of time to arrive to work on time. If you cut it too close, you will risk being late, and that is never acceptable. If you arrive a little early, no harm is done. In fact, you will be viewed as “going the extra mile”. You may be able to accomplish some small tasks or even decompress and ready yourself for your day during the early moments in the office. Some people even find that it is a good way to develop relationships because you have some space to socialize before the day begins.

Once you begin making a steady paycheck, you may even consider using transportation options such as Uber or Lyft. These are relatively new, safe, and convenient methods of transportation and are especially useful in urban and/or suburban areas.

Both companies have downloadable apps for your smartphone. Once you've downloaded the app, you link a payment method such as a debit card to your account. When it comes time to find a ride, your smartphone knows your location and you very simply set up a ride by entering the address to which you are going.

The app tells you how long it will take for your ride to arrive to you and what type of car he/she is in. It's like a cab ride; however, you do not need cash. The charge for the ride is taken care of through your online payment method in the app.

### **Understanding Your Paycheck**

There are two payment options that you can choose from when setting up your pay with your new employer. The first is simply receiving a physical paper check. Just like any other check, it can be cashed or deposited to your bank account if you have one.

The other option that's also used by many employers is direct deposit. This allows your employer to electronically transfer your paycheck directly to your bank account. In order to do this, you'll need to provide your employer with a voided check from your bank account or your routing and account numbers. If you do not have an account when you start, you can sign up for paper checks; then, once you have a bank or credit union account, you can switch your payment method over to direct deposit.

Every paycheck you receive should come with an accompanying pay stub, even if you have it directly deposited into your account. This is a record of how much you earned from a certain pay period, as well as the amount of money that was removed for deductions. It has quite a bit of information on it, but once you learn what each part means, it's not hard at all.

Here is a sample pay stub. Yours might look much different, but it will have all of the same information on it.

**Vesta Insurance Group**  
1000 Leafton Boulevard  
Maywood, MA 01015

**Earnings Statement**  
Carl Bathory  
23 Profton Road  
Maywood, MA 01015

Employee ID number: 48576

Social Security Number: XXX-XX-1234

Pay Period: 08/06/17 - 08/19/17

Taxable Marital Status Single  
Exemptions/Allowances  
Federal 2  
Local 2

#### Earnings

rate	hours	this period	year to date
15.00	80.00	1200.00	18600.00
<b>Gross Pay</b>		<b>1200.00</b>	<b>18600.00</b>

#### Deductions

##### Statutory

Income Tax	162.12	2538.90
State Income Tax	51.00	790.50
Social Security	75.40	1153.20
Medicare	17.40	269.70

##### Other

Health Insurance	77.12	1195.37
Dental Insurance	27.47	425.82
Retirement (401k)	150.00	1200.00

**Net Pay:** 639.49

#### Notes

EFFECTIVE THIS PAY PERIOD:  
YOUR REGULAR HOURLY PAY HAS BEEN  
INCREASED FROM \$14.00 TO \$15.00 PER  
HOUR.

### Earnings vs. Net Pay

When you view your pay stub, you'll find two types of pay: your earnings (or gross pay) and your net pay. Your earnings is the amount of money you make based on your pay rate. After a number of taxes and deductions are applied, you're left with your net pay, or the money that's available to you on your paycheck.

Upon your initial payment, you might be surprised at the difference between your earnings and your net pay due to unforeseen deductions. It's important to plan for this difference, especially when budgeting or doing any financial planning. (For much more on financial budgeting, etc. Persevere has a "Financial Wellness" handbook that you will receive if you haven't already.)

### Taxes

As mentioned above, there are several deductions that are taken out of your earnings. Some of these vary depending on location and your employer, but there's one deduction everyone must deal with: income tax.

No matter where you live in the country, Federal income tax will be deducted from your earnings. The amount of money that's withheld will depend on several factors, including how much you earn and the number of allowances you claim on your W-4. Depending on where you live, you may also have state income taxes deducted from your paycheck.

In addition to income tax, there are Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes that are withheld to help fund Social Security and Medicare.

## **Benefit Deductions**

If your workplace offers certain benefits, it may require deductions from your earnings as well. These include things like health insurance, disability, life insurance, and retirement. Below are explanations of these various benefits:

- Health/dental/vision insurance: Health insurance helps to cover some of the high costs of healthcare. Most employers will pay for a portion of this and require you to pay a portion as well.
- Retirement/pension plan: Retirement plans, such as a 401(k) or 403(b), allow you to save for your retirement. You often choose how much you'd like to contribute, which will then be deducted from your check before taxes are taken out.
- Life insurance: In the event of death, life insurance will provide your beneficiary, usually a family member, with money. Your employer may pay a minimum amount of coverage for this, but you have the option of contributing more from your paycheck.
- Disability insurance: If you experience illness or become disabled, this insurance will provide you with income you would have otherwise lost. Some employers provide minimum coverage, like worker's compensation, but disability insurance varies from state to state.

## **Your Civic Responsibilities**

The word **civic** means "of, relating to, or belonging to a city, a citizen, or citizenship, municipal or civil society" (*ibid.*).

In order to maintain your employment and a positive life trajectory, you must remember that you are part of a larger community that is counting on you to be an active, law-abiding member.

By engaging in civic responsibility, you live by and uphold certain democratic values written in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Those values or duties include fighting for justice; expressing your own and respecting others' freedom; treating others equally; respect for diversity, authority, privacy, and others' property; participation in elections and other community decisions; showing patriotism; protecting human rights; following the rule of law; showing tolerance for others; providing help and assistance; and showing self restraint and self respect.

This is a long list; however, it can be summarized in the following statement: As a member of a community, state, and country, you are obligated to follow the law, participate in community decisions such as elections, and take care of the community as if all of the property were your own.

If you have never voted before, now is the time to start. Be sure to register to vote when you are able. You can do this online at many sites, including [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov).

## **The Importance of Connections**

As you settle into a new career and life, it is important that you establish meaningful connections with positive people in your workplace and community.

Set out to make new friends. Connecting with positive, supportive people will help you accomplish many things, including keeping your life on track in a positive direction.

If you have struggled with addiction, joining a group of sober people in a 12-step program or other program that appeals to you will help you feel part of something bigger than yourself, which will help you maintain your sobriety. Helping someone else maintain his/her sobriety will bring you satisfaction and also help you stay sober too.

If you have struggled with faith, finding a group of people at a church or religious-based institution can help you develop a faith system that works for you. This might take some time, but if developing your spirituality in some form is even a small priority for you, it can help you develop your values and connect you with people that will provide a terrific support system.

If you have struggled with depression and/or anxiety, finding a group of people who enjoy physical activity like basketball or hiking can help you combat this. If you do an online search of recreational activities in your area, you will likely be surprised how much is out there to do to keep your body healthy and make connections with like-minded people. There are often recreational sports teams for adults, 5K races, and other group activities available. Once you begin making a steady paycheck, you may even consider joining a gym.

Giving back to your community is also incredibly helpful in maintaining a positive lifestyle; there are many opportunities for volunteer work. You can work at a soup kitchen, help gather school supplies for underprivileged children, or mentor at-risk youth. Helping other people is one of the greatest sources for boosting your own self-esteem and happiness. It is very gratifying when you help others, and it often helps you heal your own emotional wounds.

Human connection feeds positivity in our lives.

It is important that you reflect on the friends and family that you had (and may continue to have now) prior to your incarceration. If your friend group was/is one that is negative, unproductive, addicted to substances, or caught up in a criminal mindset, you will need to evaluate what role they will have in your life.

It hurts to cut ties; however, you have done a lot of hard work to rehabilitate your life. Old habits and ties could derail all of that hard work. Peer pressure is real and old habits die hard. When old friends see you in a new life, they might be jealous or feel like you have changed too much. They may attempt to try and change you back to the “old you” because that makes them feel more comfortable. It is not your job to make others comfortable in their lives. It is your job to manage your own life and your own comfort. If you need to cut ties, do so. There are many people out there who would enjoy being your friend and accept you as you are now. Do not sell yourself short.

Before moving on, record below some friends and/or family members who MAY pose a problem with this. No one needs to see this. It is for your own awareness, so that prior to your release, you can spend some time evaluating the relationships and how you may handle these relationships when the time comes.

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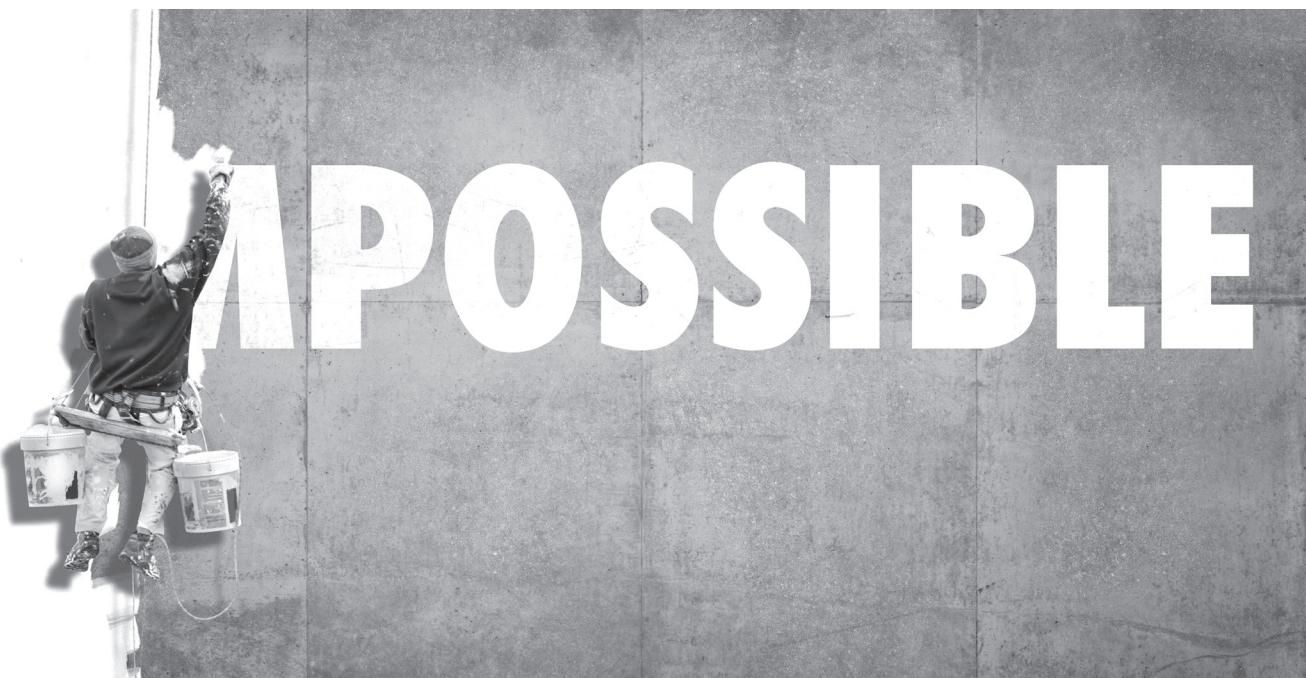
Never lose sight of how important your social support system is. We become who we hang around. We adopt similar values, mannerisms, and habits. Making sure you surround yourself with like-minded people will help boost your success.

Additionally, having a support system helps prevent a feeling of isolation and loneliness, both of which spark and feed negative feelings and behaviors. When you feel isolated, you tend to seek comfort through negative means like substance abuse, addiction to electronics, and falling into old patterns of thinking and behavior.

### **Self-Efficacy**

For the final lesson in this handbook, we will explore the importance of self-efficacy.

Quite simply, self-efficacy is **a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation.**



Our belief in our own ability to succeed plays a role in how we think, how we act, and how we feel about our place in the world. Self-efficacy also determines what goals we choose to pursue, how we go about accomplishing those goals, and how we reflect upon our own performance.

We have, on a number of occasions, discussed in this handbook how important attitude, self-talk, and your belief systems are in shaping your life. It is time now to really get into a core belief you have about yourself, which can be encapsulated in one question:

#### **Do you believe you will be successful?**

It's easy to have a knee-jerk reaction to this, and say, "YES!" but it really needs further thought and reflection. A lot of times, when our enthusiasm is high, as yours probably is right now, it is easy to believe the best will happen. But for some, all it takes is one set back or one person saying something negative, and their minds change. They fall into a pattern of old beliefs as soon as an obstacle gets in their way. And obstacles do and will occur.

So consider some of your core beliefs:  
Do you believe that people can truly change their lives? Explain.

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Do you believe that people coming out of prison can be completely rehabilitated? Explain.

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Do you believe that you are capable of and have the skills to succeed, even when things get hard?

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In the past, have you given up easily when you are faced with challenges? If so, what's different now?

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Do you believe people have complete power over their success? Explain.

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Do you believe success is designated to “other” people or anyone who wants it bad enough? Explain.

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How will you keep your enthusiasm alive when things get difficult?

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Are you truly ready to embrace change and do the actions and practices necessary for change?

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Do you deserve success and happiness?

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After reviewing your answers above, do you truly believe in the possibility of your own success? If you look at your answers and feel there may be a seed of doubt, it would be wise to talk with a mentor such as your TES or a trusted friend so that you may unmask the reasons behind any self-doubt that remains in your thoughts.

In your mind, imagine a house being built. It starts first with clearing the land, followed by laying a foundation. After the foundation is in place, all other components of the house can be added in stages: framing, drywall, plumbing, electrical systems, heating and air, windows, and roof.

In order for all of the components of the house to be added and work well, the foundation must be strong and stable. If it is not, the house itself will not be stable.

Self-efficacy is the foundation of your success. You can add skills. You can learn new things and practice new habits. You can get a job. But if you do not fully believe that you are capable of success, your foundation may be weak and long-term success may be in jeopardy.

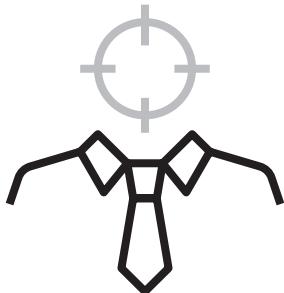
You must work on the core beliefs that you carry about yourself, your capabilities, and all that is possible for you. If you have struggled with trauma, addiction, toxic relationships, poverty, etc., you may want to address these things with a counselor so that you can fully heal. With healing, your self-perception, self-esteem, your foundation will become strong. This can be a life-long endeavor, but one that will truly make you strong.

At Persevere, WE believe in you. We believe that you are capable of designing and building a beautiful life and career. YOU must believe it, too.

As we close the Career Readiness guide, we want to leave some space for you to record thoughts, feelings, things you learned and will stick with you, etc. This is an open “journaling” space for you to write whatever comes to mind and whatever is on your heart. This does not have to be done all at once. Oftentimes, our thoughts take a while to “simmer” before we can truly sort through them. Take your time and continue to....







## ≡ Appendix

### Job Interest Inventory

As you progress through the year, you will likely hear and learn about career paths that interest you. Record these interests on this page.

Let's start with thinking about some things that already interest you:

I like numbers. I've always had an aptitude for math.	Y	N	Maybe
I like art. I'm interested in designing things.	Y	N	Maybe
I am good at fixing things.	Y	N	Maybe
I like to work on solving problems.	Y	N	Maybe
I like to teach other people how to do things.	Y	N	Maybe
I pay very close attention to detail.	Y	N	Maybe
I have imagined creating my own video game.	Y	N	Maybe
I have imagined owning my own business.	Y	N	Maybe
I like to work alone.	Y	N	Maybe
I am a people person and prefer to work with others.	Y	N	Maybe

Other observations I have made about myself that may be relevant when deciding the career path for me: (This does not have to be completed all at once. It's meant to be completed throughout your journey.)

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As you progress through the program and the career readiness training, record what interests you here. Be sure to include what types of projects or things you think will assist you in your professional development:

# Problem-Solving Skills Self-Evaluation

## Instructions

For each statement, check the box in the column that best describes you. Please answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be), and don't worry if some questions seem to score "in the wrong direction". Remember, honest self-evaluation is the key to improvement.

Self-Observation Statements	Not at All	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
I easily recognize when I have a problem.					
I know when I have completely solved a problem.					
I can usually see more than one solution to a problem.					
I always check to make sure I understand the problem.					
People seek my advice about their problems often.					
I suggest ways of solving problems to others.					
I seek out resources that will help me solve problems.					
I ask for other people's advice when facing a problem.					

I try and come up with multiple solutions to choose from before jumping on the first one.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My solutions take into account the possible consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I listen to other people's suggestions and take note of them.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think about how I will know when the problem is solved.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I can solve problems on my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I can solve problems with other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I stay calm when my solution doesn't work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I stay calm when others don't agree with my solution.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
If my solution doesn't work, I find out why.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Scores for each column:**

\_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

After completing the chart above, calculate a score for yourself. For each checkmark, assign it a point value based on the following guidelines:

**Not at all = 1   Rarely = 2   Sometimes = 3   Often = 4   Very often = 5**

**What is your total score?** \_\_\_\_\_

# Problem-Solving Step-by-Step Worksheet

Identify the problem:

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What are my goals in relation to the problem?

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## Brainstorm Solutions:

Possible Solutions	Positive Outcomes	Risks/Negative Consequences


After outlining choices and outcomes, highlight, check, or circle the solution choice you make.

## Resume Running Record

The following worksheet is provided so that as you progress through the coding course, you can record the skills you have, projects you complete, and other information that will be important to include in your resume. Like the job interest inventory, this is a document you will not complete all at once.

Record things here that you may want to include in your personal summary:

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As you complete projects, list them here:

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If and when you have some work experience that is relevant, list it here:

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