



STORIES

This chapter tells some of the life stories of the more than 750 participants in the Self-Directed Employment (SDE) Program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. These stories, collected during the program's 11 years of operation, represent a small part of the human drama that occurs daily in transition and supported employment programs. Unique to these stories are the methods that the individuals used as they discovered their interests, tested jobsites, and worked in the community. These individuals learned to use a system of methods and supports to achieve their own vocational goals. Although the self-directed employment methods usually worked, sometimes the approaches and procedures needed adjustment. As you read and enjoy these stories, pay particular attention to the methods. Hopefully, you will find these stories useful as you implement the Self-Directed Employment procedures.

The 20 stories in this chapter include both non-data-based narratives and case studies. To protect identities, the character names and circumstances have been changed, and many stories

are composite accounts of several individuals. The first part of the chapter includes narrative stories, and the second describes data-based case studies. Stories begin during the assessment process and follow the person through their on-the-job experiences.

NARRATIVE STORIES

Mariah: My Story

In preparation for a presentation given at a national Association of People in Supported Employment (APSE) conference in Denver, Mariah wrote the following story about her job search. It is here as she wrote it, with only identifying names and places removed. A more poignant message, typical in the lives of those involved in supported employment, comes through just below the story line—the liberating effect of choosing her own goal. Here's Mariah's story in her own words, with only punctuation edited in order to keep Mariah's voice.

When I was a senior at my high school in my staffing, I was told about the various programs available after graduation. I decided I wanted to attend the self-determination project at UCCS [University of Colorado at Colorado Springs]. I met with a counselor at vocational rehabilitation. She thought it was a good idea. She told me vocational rehabilitation would pay for this program for me.

I have been in the self-determination program since August. I had my evaluation with Eva. Then I went on six job shadowing. I went to a day care center, hotel laundry, store, restaurant, a small family grocery store, and worked in the Special Education Office at UCCS. After all those tryouts, I still felt that I wanted to do store work. All during this time, I attended the Thursday job skills classes.

I worked with a job coach. She helped me learn how to fill out job applications. She took me to fill out applications to many places. I put in over 20 applications. At first, it was really hard for me to ask for an application because I was shy. But she told me I needed to go out of my comfort zone to ask for an application. She told me to just go into a store and have a smile on my face and say, "May I have an application, please?" She was a big help to me when I got discouraged. She told me that you don't always get the first job that you put in an application for. Don't worry, she would say. That just wasn't the job for you. It will come. I know the perfect job is still out there waiting for you. Just be patient. It is better to wait for the right one than take one that you won't like and be unhappy. She told me to keep trying, Mariah. I know that job is out there, Mariah. We just haven't found it yet.

She also told me about what questions they would ask me. My job coach pretended that she was the employer and asked me some interview questions. This practice really helped me gain confidence and courage. It helped me to be calm in the interview.

On December the 4th, I was hired at Wal-Mart. I had to get a drug test, and fill out an employee attitude survey. I wanted part time instead of full time. I work Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 9:15–3:15. I had a 90-day training period. I have just finished with that and had an evaluation with my supervisor. I got a raise. I now make \$6.25 per hour. I am called an associate because I am a part-time worker. I work 20 hours a week. I get paid every 2 weeks, I have an employee card. I get 10% off of everything in the store, even at the snack bar.

I work in soft lines. That is in the women's, men and children's departments. Twice a week, I water the

plants. My uniform is a Wal-Mart vest and dark pants. Sometimes I can wear dresses and my vest. I ride the city bus to work. I went to ARC [Association for Retarded Citizens] and got a handicapped card so I can buy the pass for \$.35 a ride.

I want to thank everyone for helping me get a job. I like my job, and it is in the area I was interested in. I am glad I waited and kept trying. I just want to say hang in there and be successful in life. It will happen if you stick to your goal.

Lesson from Mariah's Story This is the story of a shy young woman who stayed the course. It describes her excitement about learning to go out of her comfort zone to ask for applications. She explains that she had to learn how to fill out an application and then complete 20 applications in her effort to find employment and become a self-sufficient, productive person. Her joy is evident as she describes her schedule, department, title, uniform, and the other particulars of her job. Through the self-discovery process during the SDE program, Mariah was able to gain employment at a job she wanted. In so doing, she learned about planning, setting goals, expanding her comfort zone, being persistent, and developing patience in pursuit of her life goals.

Joe: Now Owns a Business

Joe acquired a brain injury from a drug overdose and as a result can only use one side of his body. During our first meeting, he mentioned what he does around the house, and said that he liked to mow his lawn. He described a technique of putting a crescent wrench onto the handle of the lawn mower, which enables him to control the mower with one hand.

On his initial Jobs I Want to Do form, Joe chose, in order of importance, outdoor maintenance, animal care, janitorial work, office work, and store work. His Characteristics I Like form reflected his job choices, too. He wanted part-time work in the daytime that was outside and allowed him to have some physical activity. He designated these as his four most important characteristics. When we discussed the tasks involved and the availability of office work, Joe decided that he could not compete in this job area. This left three job areas to explore and test.

Joe went directly to the Testing Choices phase and completed a series of internships that matched his preferred job choices and characteristics. Joe tried store work first, and his overall characteristics match from the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form was in the 80% range. He liked putting stock back on shelves and organizing the merchandise. Joe did the tasks accurately but slowly. Next, Joe went to a dog kennel to see if he liked this job as much as he thought he would. The job consisted of spraying the runways and kennels with disinfectant, scrubbing the walls and floors of the runs, and feeding and watering the dogs. Speed was once again a concern. His Work, Social, Personal, and Task Improvement forms showed a 100% self-evaluation skills match, and his performance was rated as “Great” in nearly all categories but speed. The Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form showed only a 75% match, which was not quite as high as it was for store work.

After 1 day at the kennel, Joe wanted to try outdoor maintenance. Joe arrived at the outdoor maintenance site equipped with a lawnmower, rake, shovels, push broom, pen, and paper! The Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form indicated a 95% match. The four most important characteristics ranged from 75% to 100%. The one characteristic that did not match was Joe’s preference for a part-time job. Unfortunately, the available outdoor maintenance jobs were full-time work, and Joe only wanted part-time. His evaluations at this jobsite were uniformly positive.

His specific evaluations reflected his very good work skills, with the exception of speed. His decision-making skills from the Adaptability Graph, including self-evaluation and goal-setting skills, were above 90%. Joe said several times how good it was to be working again. He expressed a preference for outdoor maintenance. He said, at one point, “This is for me—getting dirty!” With support from staff and the local rehabilitation services office, he started his own outdoor maintenance business. He got \$100 worth of business the first day and has been going strong ever since.

Lesson from Joe’s Story Joe’s understanding of job characteristics drove his final placement decision. He knew what he wanted but needed support to get it. Placement staff and

his counselor from the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation worked together to help Joe start his own lawn care business. Being his own boss, his only job limitation (i.e., working slowly) was not a problem.

Richard: Learned to Do What He Liked

Richard enrolled in the supported employment program immediately after graduating from high school. School staff reported that he had limited academic and vocational skills and did not express himself easily or fully. Reports indicated that he could read functional words and that he had very basic math addition skills. One of his individualized education program (IEP) goals was to learn to count up to eight items.

On his initial Jobs I Want to Do form, Richard’s job choices included store work, food service, child care, and maid service. Richard verbally stated that he did not want to do janitorial work. He had done janitorial work as part of his school transition program. He preferred food service and told the assessment staff that he wanted a food preparation job.

In the Exploring Choices phase, Richard shadowed store work at a drug store and food preparation in a Mexican restaurant. Although Richard stated that he liked this the drug store and could do everything there, his supervisor evaluations told a different story. The supervisor said he required constant encouragement to stay on task, and he received many prompts to complete the tasks successfully.

Next, Richard tried food preparation at a Mexican restaurant. He had a difficult time applying pressure with knives to cut vegetables, did not like working with kitchen equipment, and was frightened by the noisy equipment. His Work, Personal, and Task Improvement forms noted the need for improvement in personal and work skills. He neglected his personal hygiene, had trouble stacking dishes, and tended to leave too much food on the dirty plates. But he still wanted to do this type of work. He said, “It’s for me!”

The staff arranged an extended internship at a cafeteria where they thought he had a good chance of getting hired if he demonstrated that he could do the job. While at the cafeteria, the staff carved tasks for him to do. At the end of each workday, he reviewed the areas that needed

improvement and developed strategies to improve his performance. The assessment staff used many of the procedures identified in Chapters 7, 8, and 9. The daily performance feedback, strategy identification, and assistance in implementing his change strategies enabled Richard to dramatically improve his performance. After about a month, he worked accurately and independently, came to work on time, and improved his personal hygiene. Before leaving the site each day, Richard thanked the manager of the cafeteria for letting him learn how to work in the cafeteria, and shook his hand before leaving.

Richard liked this jobsite very much; the overall Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here forms showed matches ranging from 80% to 90%. His four most important characteristics matched the jobsite's characteristics 100%. On the last day of the internship session, the assessment staff noticed a "Help Wanted" sign hanging in the window, picked up an application, and helped Richard fill it out. The manager of the cafeteria called Richard a few days later and asked him when he could start. Richard loves working at the cafeteria. His job performance now matches that of his fellow employees.

Lesson from Richard's Story After the Exploring Choices phase, Richard's most preferred choice remained food service work. From the internship at the Mexican restaurant, staff learned that general food preparation work was not a good job match. The staff then carved internship tasks within a food service setting that matched both his skills and preferences. As a result of the internship experience and job carving, he obtained and maintained a cafeteria job. Assessment sites often provide opportunities to develop placements, especially those where job carving identifies unique employer needs that match a worker's skills and interests.

Nina: Listen and Do

Nina was a young woman with mental retardation who had exceptionally well-developed social skills. She liked to dress in western clothes and loved country-western line dancing. At the beginning of assessment, we wanted to know how she learned new line dances, as these are complex and the speed often changes. She said that she watches the dance performed, tries it,

then sits down and watches once again to get the details. However, a year-old knee injury affected her hobby and job. After the knee injury, she needed to give up her cleaning job because of the physical endurance needed. She now wanted a job that combined sitting and standing to lessen the strain on her knee.

Her initial job choices included kennel work, office work, maid service work, and warehouse work. The characteristics she chose as the most important described work that was full time, enabled her to sit down, and offered a different job every day. She also expressed a preference for working with lots of people around, at an easy job, inside, and in the mornings. The appearance of a jobsite did not matter to her, but she wanted work that involved thinking and attention to detail, that happened in the daytime, and that was in a large business. Because Nina was an experienced worker, she went directly to the Testing Choices phase, bypassing the Exploring Choices phase.

Nina agreed that maid service exceeded her physical limitations, but she wanted to try out the others. She completed internships at two different store jobs, one that involved shelving merchandise and one where she placed new compact discs in security trays and priced them. She did not particularly like store work, even though she was good at both jobs. She tried kennel work next. She liked this job and did well, but physical demands and holiday work kept her from pursuing employment. Next, she completed an internship in an office. She needed constant supervision and lacked basic computer keyboarding skills. While at the office, she verbally expressed interest in factory work. She interned at a bicycle-helmet manufacturing facility assembling straps and buckles. She learned this complex assembly task quickly.

Of all the places where she interned, she obtained the best Social and Personal Improvement forms skill evaluations at the bike factory, but the job didn't match her task or job preferences. For instance, on the Task Improvement form, she liked only two of the four assigned duties. Also, she received low evaluations on the Work Improvement form for not maintaining a good pace for the job, not working accurately, not coming to work on time (she was extremely late on one occasion), and not working independently. She replaced most of her negative

evaluations with positive ones, and for the most part, her evaluations matched those of her job coach. She had trouble in two areas of decision making: choosing the areas for the next day's goals and setting goals based on the previous day's evaluations. Nina did not admit to making errors, a trait consistent with her reluctance to set goals.

During this internship, an individual with visual impairments began his internship at the same site. Nina taught the new worker the assembly tasks within five trials. As a result of sharing her skills, Nina became more enthusiastic, pleasant, helpful, patient, and proud of her ability to help. Nina decided then that she wanted to pursue human service work, and soon afterwards she did.

Lesson from Nina's Story This is a good example of how informed choice is obtained. Nina simply did not know what she wanted to do. Because of her physical work limitations, she needed to find an alternate available community job matching her skills and preferences. The self-directed assessment approach provided the staff with an active listening method to help Nina determine alternate choices.

Several internships are often needed to help individuals identify job preferences. Learning what someone does not want is often as important as finding out what someone does want. As individuals observe and interact in a varied setting, the opportunity to make choices expands when new options occur. In Nina's case, her opportunity to teach someone else a task revealed a potentially satisfying career. Although this particular situation was not planned, the different internships provided her with the experience of new options to choose from. Plus, the employment specialist's observations at the jobsite made other opportunities possible.

Renee: The Match Minimized Behavior Problems

Renee, a recent high school graduate, entered our program shortly after losing her job as a child care worker at a children's entertainment center, which she got while in high school. School staff warned us that her extremely inappropriate questions, aggressiveness, and other inappropriate behaviors would cause problems at assessment and placement sites. We decided to give her

the opportunity to try out various jobs. Often, a job match is determined when typical behavior problems do not arise at a particular site. Despite her recent firing, Renee decided that she wanted to continue to pursue child care. She also chose animal care, store work, and office work.

When shadowing store work, Renee paid little attention to the tasks and required many prompts to focus on watching the workers. At the office internship site, Renee's poor task and social skills caused problems. She obtained a 50% match on the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here forms. Renee did not like office work; she found it too challenging, and it did not provide enough social interaction.

Renee next completed a shadowing and internship experience at a child care center. Renee constantly obstructed others' work, and she asked many irrelevant questions. She presented the teachers with more problems than the children did. Even though she obtained a 75% match on the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here forms, she could not do the tasks, and the supervisor reported that she would not hire a person with Renee's skill level and inappropriate social skills.

Renee needed a jobsite that kept her very busy so that she would not have time for distractions. She found such a jobsite at a busy skating rink running the snack bar, taking money, and serving people. The snack bar presented tasks similar to those found in store work, one of Renee's job choices. The skating rink charged for everything in multiples of 25 cents; as a result, Renee counted change quickly and accurately.

She liked the skating rink job better than any other jobsite she experienced. Her Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here forms showed matches that ranged from 68% to 93%. Her four most important characteristics matched 100%. Because the skating rink was so busy, Renee had no time to ask questions or make statements that might be perceived as inappropriate or rude by her coworkers, supervisors, or customers.

Renee's performance improved over time. Initially she received poor work, social, personal, and task improvement evaluations, much like those from the office and child care center. After receiving task instruction, having time to practice, and getting feedback, her performance improved dramatically. Renee did a very good job

adjusting day to day. She set the next day's goals to improve negative performance evaluations. She was soon hired to assist the operation of the concession stand. Renee found permanent employment at the skating rink.

Lesson from Renee's Story Renee came to the program with a prediction for failure. Finding a characteristic, task, and job environment match minimized the likelihood of inappropriate behaviors occurring. For Renee, a creative internship placement led to a successful job.

Inappropriate behavior at jobsites occur for numerous reasons. When a person enters the job match process with a history of behavior problems, at least one of two options exists. First, as in Renee's case, a location must be identified that matches the person's skills and interests. A good match will often reduce the problem behaviors. Second, a jobsite must be developed where the person's behavior matches co-workers' and supervisors' expectations.

To further illustrate, John, another participant in the supported employment program, had been fired from numerous jobs for inappropriate social behavior before he came into our program. Rather than attempting to change his behavior in the few weeks that we had to work with him, we focused on finding a job that he liked in which his social skills matched the setting. After a detailed job match assessment process, he went to work at a recycling plant where his behavior matched that of his colleagues. He stayed at this job for almost 2 years—the most successful job he had ever had.

Martha: The Job Match Made Success Happen

Martha, a 44-year-old homemaker with paranoid schizophrenia and severe learning disabilities, came into our program with *no* past paid work experience. Martha had lived in abusive situations throughout her childhood and teenage years and recently attempted suicide when her boyfriend broke off their relationship.

Martha completed our assessment process with preferences for store and warehouse work but wanted any kind of job *immediately*. Martha and the job developer believed that assembly work in a large factory closely resembled warehouse work. This related match, plus Martha's desire for an immediate job, prompted her to

accept a job assembling bicycle helmets. After 2 weeks of satisfactory performance, her production rate fell far below standards, and she lost this job. A second assembly job lasted a couple of weeks longer, but she eventually lost this one, too.

Martha realized that not only was the job important, but her preferences, skills, limits, and support needs had to match the job environment. Martha needed a business that would provide support and give her time to learn how to do the job without a lot of pressure. We found such a place at a nonprofit consignment store sorting, tagging, and pricing clothing in the backroom warehouse environment.

Martha thrived in this environment. The Supervisor Evaluation Cards, Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here, Jobs I Want forms verified the job match. Martha experienced few problems on the job but missed work for a week or more several times due to disability-related episodic issues. The business understood and kept the job open for her, one of their most productive workers.

Lesson from Martha's Story Martha initially didn't care what she did—she just wanted a job quickly. So she got a job and then another; neither of which worked out. After two failures, Martha agreed to look at her preferences and characteristic matches to guide a job match. Until she experienced failure, she did not want to consider preferences and support factors. If we had mandated a job match assessment process prior to placement, Martha would have most likely left the program. The failures counted against the overall success of the program but ended up producing success for Martha.

Steve: Part-Time Jobs Led to Full-Time Employment

Steve was a 33-year-old man who had mental health problems and Usher's syndrome (resulting in a significant hearing impairment and a gradual loss of sight) when he entered the supported employment program. He had not been employed for 4 years. Based on his own skill assessment, Steve wanted a job at a local school for students with hearing and vision impairments.

Steve started our assessment program knowing exactly what he wanted to do. The Initial Job and Task Preferences Graphs confirmed Steve's wishes. We bypassed the remain-

der of the assessment process and proceeded to the placement phase. After a few months of persistent job development, he secured a part-time interpreter's position, working 10 hours per week at \$7.00 per hour with a promise for increased hours. In the first month of Steve's employment, he also obtained a private contract to teach sign language, increasing his workweek to 13 hours. A year later, Steve's record and references were sufficient to seek permanent employment as a teacher's aide or interpreter. Steve established monthly goals and plans to make this happen. At the beginning of the school year, a local school district employed Steve full-time to work as a one-on-one interpreter at \$12.53 per hour. He finally had his dream job.

Lessons from Steve's Story One supported employment belief is that every placement should be at a job working at least 20 hours per week from the first day of employment. Steve illustrates the myth behind this belief—especially for people with unique job interests. Steve got his dream job, but it took a series of part-time jobs, each building on the other, in order to make the connections, establish a work record, and build references to move into his dream position.

Larry: Won the Worker of the Month Award

Larry, a 20-year-old high school graduate with mental retardation, came into the supported employment program directly out of high school. After he finished the assessment phase, library and store work emerged as his two top-ranked job choices. Larry secured a courtesy clerk job at a grocery earning above minimum wage and working 20 hours per week.

We began collecting daily, then weekly Supervisor Evaluation Cards, which the supervisors used to describe his excellent performance. Because of a lack of any problems, we did not implement an improvement contract. After 2 weeks, Larry completed the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form, the Job and Tasks I Like forms, and the Can I Do This Job? form, which verified an excellent preference match to his current job. In the beginning, we met with Larry twice per week. As Larry maintained his excellent performance, we gradually

decreased our on-site visits from once per week to once per month. During these follow-up visits, we completed follow-along procedures and discussed career advancement.

After about a year on the job, Larry received the grocery store's Worker of the Month Award. Excellent work performance brought increased work hours. His next step up would be a promotion to a customer service position. He is very involved socially at work, and he is finishing up driving lessons in hopes of getting his driver's license.

Lesson from Larry's Story More often than not, the supported employment process works well. Larry represents just one of many individuals who learned what he wanted to do, did it, and became successful. Because of a lack of openings in the city's libraries, Larry first job choice was not an option. He happily entered his second choice. This is why the self-directed assessment approach identifies at least two top-ranked job choices.

Pam: My Change Plan Identified a Switch in Preferences

Pam's initial assessment indicated that she was a 23-year-old woman with mental retardation and low adaptive behavior scores who moved slowly and initiated few conversations. During assessment, her job choices were somewhat scattered, but she appeared to prefer food service or store work. After entering the job development phase of our program, she completed two internships to check out her inconsistent job choices. One was completed at a store and the other at a fast-food restaurant.

While participating in these internships, Pam completed the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form and the Job and Tasks I Like form daily. We set up a match contract for her to use daily to monitor her performance. We wanted to see how realistic she would be in evaluating her own performance. During these internships, Pam smiled a lot but spoke very little. The internships resulted in a strong preference for food service. She also performed her best work at this location.

Pam became employed for the same food service chain where she completed an internship but at a different site. Pam worked as a bun warmer for about 20 hours per week at minimum

wage. This was the same job she had trained for during her internship. We set up an improvement contract for Pam to complete daily. After 1 week of employment in the new restaurant, she completed the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form and the Job and Tasks I Like form. The preference and skills forms indicated that Pam truly did prefer and could do this job.

Pam happily maintained her job. The problem-solving system, in which she used the improvement contracts, became a part of her routine and helped her maintain satisfactory work performance and social behavior. Over the years, Pam has had a few problems along the way, but these do not get in the way of her success. She usually corrects any concerns the supervisor has the next day. About every 6 months, Pam completes a change plan to determine if she is still happy with this job or would want to move onto another. On her last change plan, she asked if she could wrap potatoes and stack the french fry rack. She developed a plan to facilitate this change and presented her request to the supervisor. She soon began doing this new job.

Lesson from Pam's Story Pam's story demonstrates a key to long-term job success. Often, jobs are inadvertently sabotaged because workers' preferences change, and they do not communicate their desire for change in a proactive manner. These individuals often do not show up for work or they come in late or decrease their productivity level until they are terminated. To decrease the likelihood of this happening, Pam completed the proactive My Change Plan form twice a year. The change plan provides a window to observe a preference switch. As her preferences shifted, Pam created a plan to make these changes. If this would involve leaving the present job for a different job, this change could happen in an orderly and respectful manner. This planned departure helps to preserve the placement for a future worker, and provides a reference for the new job.

Judy: Cooperation with Families Leads to Multiple Jobs

When Judy began the supported employment program, she was almost 21 years old and completing her last year of high school transition programming. Her parents were very knowledgeable and influential in their child's life and in the lives of many other individuals with develop-

mental disabilities and their families. The family's goal was for Judy to secure a permanent job after high school.

The parents first secured Judy a public school-funded work-study job in the dining room of a large business. She was paid sub-minimum wages from the public school transition program to work 20 hours per week as a kitchen helper. The parents asked us to work with the school's transition team to facilitate a smooth transition from her public school-subsidized job to one where the school paid her at least minimum wage.

Judy eventually obtained three part-time jobs. Judy started her day by working at the dining hall as a lounge attendant for 10 hours per week. Next, she walked to a near-by restaurant, where she worked as a custodian for 4 hours per week. After finishing lunch, she walked back to the library, where she worked as a library assistant for an hour per day. Judy's parents developed the dining hall job and also secured the job at the library. We developed the custodian position at a nearby restaurant. Together, these jobs provided her sufficient hours.

Lesson from Judy's Story Judy wanted to work as many hours a week as possible. Unfortunately, she could not work any more hours at the dining hall or library. Working collaboratively with Judy and her parents, we developed a third placement. Together, these three jobs provided her varied tasks and sufficient work hours. At times, uniquely developed jobs do not provide sufficient hours. As in Judy's case, she worked at three sites to gain sufficient hours.

Alan: The Road Often Has Detours

Alan, a 29-year-old man with Down syndrome, a history of heart and knee surgeries, and speech impediments, was one of the first participants in the supported employment program. Alan had spent the previous 8 years in a local sheltered workshop, and as he said, "It was time for change." He was adamant about getting a community job. Alan's dream was to get a job in an office. To reach this goal, we used extended internships to carve jobs and build coworker support. The road ahead would be a rocky one, but it would eventually lead to "an outside job." Alan began his job development internship at a local sports training center, doing collating and filing. Because of the numerous social and job concerns, we implemented improvement con-

tracts to change his grooming skills, argumentative on-the-job interactions, inappropriate social skills, and poor work productivity. This internship site did not turn into a placement.

In the next few months, Alan completed two more office internships. During these internships, similar behaviors surfaced, but with each internship and continued use of his improvement contracts, Alan's work and social skills improved. However, one thing became very apparent. The likelihood of employment in the clerical field for Alan was very slim. As a result of completing a series of preference and skill assessments, food service became an alternative job choice.

We procured a job for Alan at a quaint sandwich shop as a dishwasher working 9 hours per week at minimum wage. The owner and staff were great with Alan and had high expectations for the quality of his work. Alan thrived in this setting. By this time, Alan was using, understanding, enjoying, and benefiting from the feedback provided by the Improvement Contract. He willingly completed the forms every work day. Unfortunately, the business closed. Although he had a good experience in food service, he wanted to try office work again.

Next, Alan went to work in an office as a minister's assistant. Alan enjoyed this experience, but the part-time job ended because of a lack of work available for Alan to do. Next, we found a placement for Alan at a local restaurant as a host and busser, working 15 hours per week at minimum wage. Alan did very well at this job. He continued to complete daily improvement contracts, even though we suggested that he could do them once per week. One year later, new owners made drastic changes. Duties were changed, shifts were changed, hours were reduced, and several employees were laid off. Alan was kept on, but his hours were reduced steadily until he was only working 2 hours per week. He was also taken off lounge duties and told that this was the responsibility of the manager. He was instead assigned to do work he considered demeaning—picking up cigarette butts in the parking lot.

A new placement was developed at another local restaurant. Alan was hired as a bun warmer, working 16 hours per week at minimum wage. The restaurant was close to his apartment, and the hours were perfect. Alan has difficulty with endurance, so the short shifts he worked and the location made this an ideal job. Today, Alan continues to work at the restaurant.

Lesson from Alan's Story Like people without disabilities, beginning workers with disabilities often shift jobs during their first several years of working. The profile of individuals with disabilities who enter the workplace for the first time is often like Alan's. He knew what he wanted but needed to modify his initial dream because of a lack of availability. He chose another job and then had to move several times until he found a stable position. Alan was able to persevere in his job search, which led to his success.

Bob: He Kept On Trying

Bob started doing manual labor jobs when he was 9 years old. In school, he participated in football and wrestling. In his teens and early adulthood, he was a boxer, a bicycle racer, a body builder, and a professional rodeo cowboy. When he was 24 years old, Bob was working three jobs. One evening while delivering horses to a nearby ranch, he fell asleep at the wheel and had a major accident in which he was thrown through the windshield. The doctors believed Bob survived his accident because of his excellent physical condition, the result of many years of manual labor and bodybuilding. Bob was in a coma for 6 months and remained in a rehabilitation hospital for another 6 months.

Bob came to our program 2 years after his traffic accident. He had sustained a traumatic brain injury and had many physical limitations:

- He was in a wheelchair.
- He was only able to lift 10–25 pounds.
- He had poor but improving standing balance.
- His reflexes on the left side were slow.
- His visual/perceptual speed was impaired.
- His fine motor skills were impaired.
- His ability to work at a fast pace was limited but improving.
- His mental endurance was poor.
- He was not realistic about his capabilities.

Bob wanted his old lifestyle back. He had little patience for our procedures, our assistance, or our suggestions. His assessment took a long time and was not very successful as a result of his frequent absences. One internship began the chain of events that changed Bob's life. Bob agreed to do an internship at a local movie theater, where he would work in the box office. The

first day went fine. On the second day, Bob called and said he would have to cancel due to a headache. Later, he called and said that he decided that he no longer wanted to continue the internship at the theater. He also stated that he was not sure if he was ready for a job.

We knew that if we continued with our standard procedures we would lose him, so we went in a different direction. We contacted a new horseback riding therapy program. Because they only had volunteers, Bob would not be able to get a paid job, but it still seemed like a great low-pressure setting for him to volunteer. Bob reluctantly agreed to try helping at the stables, but he did not think he could do much. Eventually, he found many tasks that he could complete. He started feeling good about himself again. He was back in the outdoors on a ranch with animals he loved. Bob thrived in this setting, and he was able to do more and more as time went by. Eventually, he was able to ride again—an impossible feat according to the information in his records.

Three months after riding, Bob said he was ready to go to work. He was soon hired as an arcade attendant. He excelled at this job and made many friends. The location of the arcade was ideal. It was close enough for Bob to get to work on his own. Also during this period, Bob started using crutches more and more. Bob worked at the arcade for about a year until it closed. We returned to the movie theater where he first started. Bob interviewed with a new manager, who was very impressed. Bob was hired on the spot to work in the box office. Bob quickly learned this job and established an immediate and very close friendship with his boss. The manager was new to the area, and he and Bob were about the same age. Bob began showing him the town, and they frequently watched videos together at Bob's house. Bob learned all he could, as quick as he could about the movie business. He ended up on the management track at the movie theater and started talking about opening his own gym.

Lesson from Bob's Story Read again the first paragraphs of Bob's story, and you will see just how far Bob has come. Before Bob would think about working, he needed a successful experience. Volunteering at the horse therapy program provided him with an excellent opportunity to regain his self-confidence. If we had tried to use only the procedures described in

Chapters 3–9, he would have left the program. It is definitely an asset to be able to adapt and adjust the program to meet each individual's needs.

Sam: Satisfaction Remained Elusive

Sam came to our program with these diagnoses: dysthymia (i.e., low-level depression), posttraumatic stress disorder, avoidant personality disorder, very low self-esteem, and lumbar strain with a lifting restriction. At one of the initial meetings with the vocational rehabilitation office, Sam said he

- Felt hopeless
- Had lost his direction in life
- Was in school and had an assignment hanging over his head all semester, afraid to get started
- Had decided not to apply for Social Security because his family considers it a form of welfare
- Had a real fear of going to work but wanted to do so

The rehabilitation counselor, in consultation with Sam, decided that he should wait before seeking employment.

About 9 months later, Sam entered our program. He had completed his bachelor's degree in psychology and was ready to start a human services career. Sam said that he would be interested in working with the people who had mental health issues or developmental disabilities. He preferred an entry-level counseling job but was willing to start in any entry-level human service position. We skipped assessment and went directly to placement.

During the first month, Sam seemed to be dragging his feet whenever we would give him job leads that matched his expressed preferences. In the second month, Sam followed up on a job lead to work as an enclave site supervisor, where he would be working with individuals with severe developmental disabilities. Sam was interviewed and hired. He worked about 15 hours per week at slightly above minimum wage.

Conditions were so strenuous at this site that the lead supervisor quit just 3 days after Sam started. Sam accepted the position of lead supervisor, working a few more hours per week

at about \$2 per hour more. Sam never received training for this position, the contract he supervised was under bid, and the staff he was given could not do the job. Sam found himself doing the majority of the work and working into all hours of the night. His hours were now up to about 32 hours per week. At this point Sam told me that he wanted to quit but not until he had another job. So, he kept working until another job became available.

During the next few months, Sam did not follow up on several job leads, and many very good opportunities passed by. Finally, Sam got a job as a full-time case manager with a local supported employment agency. Sam accepted the position. By the end of the first week, he quit, stating that it was just too much to learn, too many people in close surroundings, and too much responsibility. He was not ready for this. He said that his old job at the enclave was becoming more appealing. He went back to the original agency and was given a job coach position. Within a few weeks, Sam became bored with this job and wanted more of a challenge. He got a job as a full-time workshop supervisor position, and he has maintained that position.

Lesson from Sam's Story He is working in the field of his choice, and he has maintained employment. Sam often was dissatisfied with any job he had, and he changed jobs to experience what he thought might be a better situation. He went through several jobs until he found one that fit him. His job match process went beyond initial assessment and into placement. His initial match got him into the field he wanted to work, but he needed to explore that field in order to determine what he really wanted. His job switching shows up in the cumulative data presented in Chapter 12. On one hand, job switching like Sam's could be viewed as a negative; on the other hand, his exploration resulted in a permanent job that he liked and was successful at.

Amy Sue: The New Supervisor Syndrome

Amy Sue was one of the first four participants in the Colorado Springs Self-Directed Employment Program. Records indicated that Amy Sue had moderate to severe mental retardation, epilepsy, an eating disorder, poor balance and

coordination, and very poor communication skills. The records also said that Amy Sue was very shy and spent most of her time twirling her lower lip. The information in her old records did not state any positive features or strengths. We immediately questioned this report after meeting Amy Sue. We saw that she was happy, smiled a lot, made friends quickly, and knew what she wanted to do. After completing the assessment process Amy Sue expressed consistent interest in office or store work.

We began job development by having Amy Sue complete an extended internship at a major insurance company's office. For over a month while she worked at different tasks, we noticed who did what and what did not get finished. After completing the internship, we sat down with Amy Sue's supervisor and discussed the possibility of a job for Amy Sue. At first, the supervisor said that the company did not have any jobs available. We then explained what we learned during a month of observations. Upper-level employees were completing many simple tasks (e.g., opening mail, stuffing envelopes, stamping envelopes, filing) when they had time, and often these tasks went undone. The employees also hated doing these tasks, as it kept them from more important work. The tasks were very crucial to the business, but they were not completed in a timely fashion. We also talked about costs. Did the company really want upper-level employees completing entry-level tasks at upper-level salaries? These points were very convincing.

Amy Sue was hired as an office assistant working 20 hours per week at above minimum wage. Amy Sue worked at this site for more than 5 years. Amy Sue needed a lot of training before she could accomplish the many tasks involved. Picture-cued improvement contracts, task schedules, behavior programs, Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here forms, Job and Tasks I Like forms, and Can I Do This Job? forms were used throughout the process. Amy Sue's supervisors and coworkers were friendly, appreciated Amy Sue, and took her with them to many office social functions.

Unfortunately, after several years, the company acquired automated mailing machines, and Amy Sue was unable to operate these complex computer-based machines. She was assigned to other duties. Then, three mergers and corporate

takeovers changed the office. Amy Sue's job responsibilities changed, then increased. The new supervisors finally decided that Amy Sue could not meet these new demands, and she was fired. She lost her health benefits, a good job, and association with her work friends.

After months of renewed job development, we found a job for Amy Sue at a local discount store. Her tasks were to straighten shelves and take care of defective items. Her job went from daytime to night, which resulted in transportation problems. The city buses did not run late enough, and the residential staff would not transport Amy Sue at these late hours. Our staff took Amy Sue to and from the jobsite for several weeks as we tried to come up with alternatives, but we could not find any. Amy Sue had to quit the job.

Amy Sue's next job was at a clothing store near her home. She placed clothes on hangers and then placed them in the rack for 18 hours per week at minimum wage. After several weeks on the job, where she received positive supervisor evaluations, a new boss changed her quota to 10 racks of clothes every day, and Amy Sue was completing about four racks. The new supervisor gave Amy Sue 30 days to get her production up to seven racks per day, then up to 10 racks per day in 2 months. The outcome is easy to guess.

Lesson from Amy Sue's Story Amy Sue lost two successful jobs because her supervisors changed. Despite two corporate mergers and automation she maintained her first job for several years. However, the third corporate change put new supervisors in Amy Sue's office. When Amy Sue got laid off, the new supervisors told her that they needed employees who could complete multiple tasks and could take over duties of another worker if that person is out of the office. This happened again a few months later at a different jobsite.

We saw this pattern repeat itself, so we often started calling it the "new supervisor syndrome." The syndrome became a problem usually when the person with a disability worked at tasks carved from other positions. Time after time, we saw successful workers who had received repeated positive evaluations terminated by new supervisors. Shortly after new supervisors started, the person with disabilities would be laid off. The supervisor would cite productivity problems, inability to complete a variety of tasks, decreased

business, and similar concerns. Follow-up staff were not at a jobsite with enough frequency to always learn about the supervisory change and so could not advocate for continued employment. Co-workers were often at a disadvantage because they also had to adjust to a new supervisor and thus could not successfully advocate for the person's continued employment.

John: Success over Time

John was 26 years old and had a long record of starting and stopping various jobs. He would get a job, and within a few months, he would either quit or get fired. He had been expelled from all the other employment programs in the city, and we were his last chance. John had a dual diagnosis of mental retardation and mental illness.

The assessment process indicated John wanted factory or store work. Because of his poor work history, we thought that completing a successful factory internship at a site that was hiring would be the best method to find a placement. John did well during the internship and was hired for a 6-week position, with the promise that this may lead to a permanent job. During the first week, John called in sick twice. The next week, his supervisor listed several concerns: he poked others, called others names, came in late from breaks and lunches, and needed to increase production. In the third week, John kept falling asleep on the job. After checking, the residential staff said that he was staying up most of the night. The next week John's stepfather died, so he took off 3 days for the funeral, and then he took some time off to drive his wife on different errands. At the end of the sixth week, John decided to ask about a permanent job. His supervisor told him that the company was not hiring, so John quit on the spot, saying, "You can't fire me. I quit."

Over the next 6 years, John had found and then lost more than 20 different jobs. His success in these jobs could be measured by his degree of involvement in our program and whether he was completing his improvement contracts. When John was active and meeting with us, he would generally do well. The times that he met with us coincided with his more lengthy job experiences. But as soon as he would drop out of sight or not complete contracts, he

would usually get fired or quit his job. The same concerns followed him from job to job: impulsivity, poor attendance, tardiness, poor temper, and frequent illness or injury. He would take off work to see doctors or to take his wife to the doctor, as she was also often sick. When supervisors would talk with him about improvements he needed to make, he would quit. We measured success by the increasing length of time he stayed with a job. The last job he had with our program lasted almost 22 months, the longest he had ever kept the same job.

Lesson from John's Story During the time we knew John, we supported him at four jobs. In addition, he had 16 other jobs that we knew about. When he interacted with our program, he saw increasingly longer periods of success. John, like many individuals in our program, found success when he used the improvement contracts to solicit feedback and then make changes in his on-the-job performance. Once he quit using the improvement contracts, he lost his jobs. We would always welcome John back into our program because with each try he worked a longer and longer stretch. For John, getting the job was easy and as John learned more about what he wanted and used his improvement forms, the jobs lasted longer. His last job lasted almost 2 years—a major success!

Paula: When Do You Quit?

Paula was 21 years old when she came to our program with her records indicating that she had a learning disability, cerebral palsy, a dependent personality disorder with avoidant traits, attention deficit disorder, and hemiparesis (i.e., slight paralysis affecting one side of the body). Like so many others, her records indicated no strengths. As always, we ignored these negative records and started asking her what she wanted. Paula's finished assessment stated that her top-ranked job choices were working at a car wash and doing car detailing.

We started job development by securing an internship for Paula at a neighborhood car wash. Her biggest problem during the first 2 weeks was not listening to or following her supervisor's requests. For example, Paula was asked to concentrate on vacuuming instead of pulling the cars forward. She needed to be reminded of this several times. She used Improvement Contracts to

change these behaviors. A few weeks later, she was hired, but speed became an issue on busy days when her erratic pace often held up the assembly line. After being constantly urged to work faster, she decided to quit the car wash and look for a different job.

Paula was then hired to be an on-call employee at a store that sold music and books. This store would only hire from their pool of on-call employees. Paula began the job stocking shelves, but her speed was a concern. The business said they would like Paula to try maintenance tasks. Paula was doing satisfactory work, and she was being called in to work on a regular basis. Then, Paula approached one of her supervisors with very explicit sexual suggestions. She was told not to return to work.

Following this situation, we re-evaluated Paula's job choices with her. She stated that she was interested in store or food service. We were able to find a job for Paula at a fast-food restaurant at an Army base doing food preparation. She started out working about 8 hours per week at minimum wage with the option to add more hours after gaining experience and showing satisfactory performance. Immediately, Paula had difficulties, and she was impatient with her co-workers. We initiated an adapted improvement contract to meet the needs of her jobsite and the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here form, the Job and Tasks I Like form, and the Can I Do This Job? form. Paula was confronted three times during the month regarding her inappropriate language. Her personal appearance was an additional concern. Although Paula's behavior improved during the next few months, other concerns began to surface: working too slowly, not completing work before leaving for the day, calling the restaurant at peak hours, and talking too much on the job. Speed continued to be the major issue, so her supervisor asked if she would like to learn how to work in the lounge. Eventually, social interaction issues with customers emerged that led to her immediate termination. Paula's supervisor said that she was terminated for the following reasons:

- Swearing
- Working too slowly. The supervisor said that he could tolerate this in isolation; however, he could not tolerate it in combination with

Paula disappearing from the workstation or taking the long way around in getting back to her workstation

- Showing little respect for co-workers and customers

We spoke often about all of these issues, and Paula had goals and made plans to address these behaviors in a Job Termination and Follow Up form, but she had limited success.

We were able to find another job for Paula at a grocery store as a courtesy clerk. Paula had immediate problems and again was uncooperative at work and with program staff. She would not listen to anyone. Her third day review included the following problems:

- Packing bags too heavy
- Being unfriendly with customers
- Needing to be more productive bagging
- Needing to work on controlling her anger

When a job coach or peer trainer tried to make suggestions to Paula, she asked them to leave. As the month wore on, more concerns surfaced:

- She continued to show a disinterest in working.
- When the manager tried to help, she would walk away or become very argumentative.
- As she became more comfortable with her environment, her productivity decreased.
- Paula was deliberately doing the opposite of what she was asked to do.

Paula was terminated before the end of the month. We met with Paula, her mother, and her rehabilitation counselor. We all decided it was time to close her case.

Lesson from Paula's Story We worked with more than 700 individuals in the supported employment program. Paula is a notable example of the individual who did not maintain employment. In spite of our best attempts, Paula represents a case in which the self-directed employment approach did not achieve its goal of successful continued employment. Supported employment programs funded through vocational rehabilitation offices offer, by definition,

short-term intervention. Some situations require more intensive intervention, and some individuals have characteristics that make continued employment very difficult. The Self-Directed Employment procedures did not achieve positive long-term results for Paula.

DATA-BASED CASE STUDIES

This section shows the method used to achieve success by four participants in the Self-Directed Employment program in a more quantitative way. We used single-subject AB (baseline, then intervention) designs to show behavior change. In each case, we used the procedures discussed in the previous chapters and supplemented them with various self-management strategies.

The first case study presents Jane, who, at age 32, had a partially debilitating heart attack that led to brain injury. Jane learned a four-step self-instruction method to improve and maintain an acceptable level of production and record keeping. The second case study describes Tate, a 21-year-old man with Down syndrome. Tate used a self-monitoring package supplemented with color-coded Supervisor Evaluation Cards to improve his work production. The third case study presents the story of Freddy, a 35-year-old woman who had a brain injury caused by an automobile accident. Freddy used a social improvement contract to stop inappropriately touching male co-workers. Ty, described in the fourth case study, was a 28-year-old man with traumatic brain injury. Five years after his severe motorcycle accident, he wanted to get a job. Ty used a self-monitoring package plus Supervisor Evaluation Cards to help him set his own goal, measure his own success, and make adjustments to achieve on-the-job success.

Case Study 1: Jane

Method Jane, a 32-year-old woman, had brain injury as the result of a heart attack and subsequent lack of oxygen to the brain. Jane was highly motivated, friendly, and interacted well with almost everyone. She had been working for about a month and had received training from her co-workers, when Jane's supervisor requested additional support. Jane at first didn't want job

coaches on site but agreed when her supervisor explained that the typical training program did not work for her, and she needed additional training from her job coach to keep her job.

Setting Jane entered the SDE program and completed the job match assessment process. Jane chose factory and janitorial jobs as her first and second choices. She initially had a janitorial position but left for a factory job that paid more. She took a new job at a plastic molding factory where she worked on the operations floor. Jane had to stack the output of two plastic presses uniformly on a rack. As she took a large piece from the press, Jane turned the piece several times trying to find the correct fit. As a result, she fell behind, and the assembly line waited for her. Jane found it difficult to distinguish subtle differences in the various pieces that came out of the press. She felt that she could do the job, but it would take time and intense concentration for her to learn how to stack the pieces quickly. To save the expense of additional training, the supervisor moved Jane to the plastic bagging area, which was cooler, less noisy, and less stressful.

Dependent Measures Jane's job in the bagging area consisted of filling a 15 cubic foot bag with plastic filling, securing the bag at the top, counting and marking it on the inventory sheet, weighing every tenth bag, and stacking the bags in the appropriate area. The percentage of correct bags was chosen as the dependent measure. Tying was evaluated per unit. The job coach inspected each bag for holes or gaps at the top of the bag. The counting and marking step was vitally important because the supervisor used the sheet for inventory. Because Jane was required to weigh every tenth bag, it was decided that her accuracy should be measured in counting blocks of 10. If she missed one of 10, she missed the whole block. Multiple errors within blocks were noted but did not figure in her overall score. The supervisor indicated that the average worker performed the task at 98% accuracy, so this became the criterion. An ABA design across tasks was used to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

Baseline and Intervention During baseline, Jane received praise, error feedback, and limited error correction. We collected baseline measures three times (3 hours a day for 3 consecutive days). During posttreatment, Jane

received the same praise, error feedback, and limited error correction. Posttreatment measures were collected four times.

Procedure First, Jane received explicit feedback on her baseline performance. Jane's biggest problem was the counting/marking step. She would consistently mark the wrong column or forget to mark the sheet. She helped devise a new inventory sheet that included clear column borders and color-coded columns. Next, she received detailed training in the use of self-instruction procedures that would be used to support her efforts to get to the desired level of performance.

The self-instructional package contained four steps that were repeated for seven consecutive workdays. Jane's self-instructional chant was, "Mark in yellow, weigh in blue." For the first 10 bags of the session, Jane would fill, tie, and stack as usual, but the job coach said the phrase aloud and marked the inventory sheet. For the next 10, Jane would say the phrase aloud while marking the appropriate column, with the job coach whispering next to her. The next time, Jane would whisper while marking, with the job coach mouthing the words and prompting if necessary. Finally, Jane would mouth the words while marking, while the job coach observed. After the session, data were collected across all tasks.

Interobserver Agreement Interobserver agreement was measured by the total number of checks in agreement divided by the total number of inspections, multiplied by 100. Bags received a plus or a minus after inspection. A second job coach independently inspected the bag, graded accordingly, and independently recorded her evaluations. Agreement measures were 98% and were obtained on approximately 25% of the observations.

Results Figure 10.1 shows data from 13 probes over a 2-month period. Her supervisor indicated that the counting and marking portion of the work was most critical. The baseline reflects an average score of 20%, which is well below the 98% criterion. On the first probe after introducing the four-step self-instruction model, efficiency increased to 70%. Continual increases were recorded during the month of intervention; the final three probes scored 100% accuracy. Maintenance scores of 80%, 100%, and 90% were all much better than baseline. Jane's tying ability was a few percentage points below crite-

rior at baseline. Her scores continued below criterion during intervention and increased to slightly above the criterion of 98%. Improvement continued during maintenance, progressing from criterion of 98% to 100%. Jane's stacking ability received baseline scores below tying and above counting and marking on inventory sheet. The stacking data increased slightly from baseline and stayed at this level.

Discussion The results of this study indicated that a brief self-instructional intervention in conjunction with a color-cue for completing the inventory significantly increased Jane's work performance. About 2 weeks after the intervention ended, Jane's supervisor reported that Jane had made a column-related counting error. When asked about this, Jane said that she had run out of the color-coded inventory sheets and had to keep a tally on one of the regular sheets. Jane said that the ones with the grid and the color-coding were much easier to see and she could remember which column to mark in ("mark in yellow, weigh in blue"). Jane's supervisor was impressed with the increases that the data had indicated and was pleased that the job coaches faded out of the picture.

Case Study 2: Tate

Method Tate, a young man with moderate mental retardation, began the supported employ-

ment program when he was almost 21 years old and was completing his last year of high school transition programming. We worked with the school transition team to facilitate a smooth transition from a public school-subsidized job to one in which he got paid at least minimum wage. Before he left his school program, Tate was hired as a dishwasher at a site where he completed a school sponsored internship.

Setting Tate's job was as a dishroom attendant for a cafeteria. His duties consisted of loading and unloading a high-output dishwasher, sorting silverware, and wiping down tables in the cafeteria. Tate could perform his basic duties but was extremely distractible and had a tendency to wander off. These behaviors resulted in negative evaluations from his co-workers, and his supervisor warned about possible termination. Tate's duties were reduced to loading only, as the supervisor felt this might reduce his wandering.

Dependent Measures We implemented a modified version of the supervisor evaluation card. Tate was evaluated with a green index card if he had a "great" day (i.e., less than three prompts to stay on task or reprimands for wandering), a yellow index card if he had an "okay" day (i.e., three to six prompts or reprimands), or a blue card if he had a "bad" day (more than six prompts or reprimands). The percentage of "okay" or "great" days was the dependent mea-

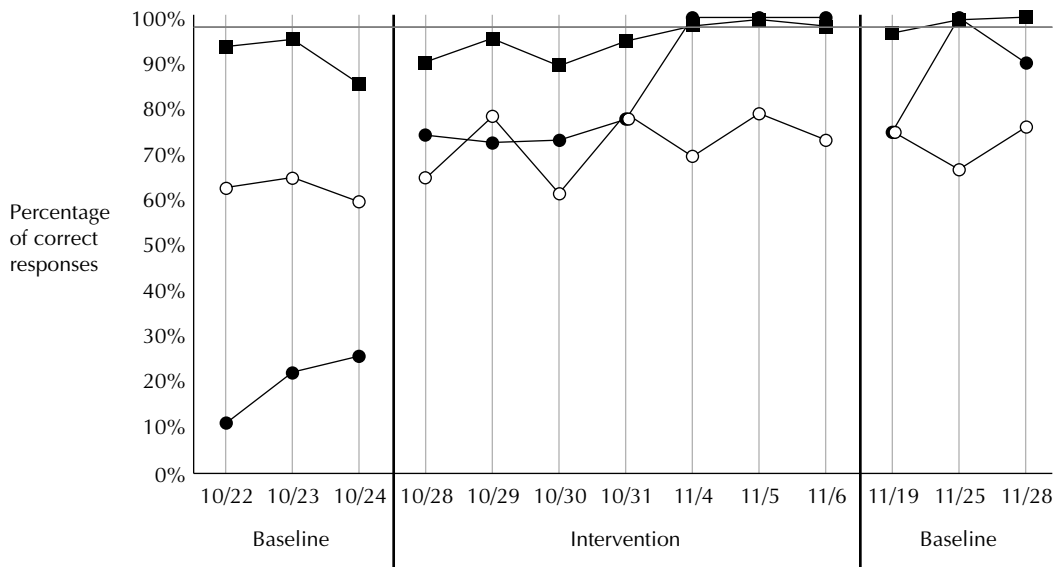


Figure 10.1. Jane's responses over a 1-month period. (Key: ● Counting and marking on the inventory sheet; ■ Tying bags; ○ Stacking)

sure. The supervisor wanted Tommy to have 80% of his work days evaluated as “okay” or “great.” An ABA design was used to determine the overall effectiveness of a self-monitoring package paired with feedback from the modified supervisor evaluation card.

Baseline and Intervention During baseline assessment, Tate received praise and error feedback. Pretreatment measures were collected once per day for 3 days. During post-treatment, Tate received praise and error feedback. Posttreatment measures were collected every 10 days.

Procedure Prior to intervention, the supervisor reviewed Tate’s performance, and he told Tate that improvement was needed for him to remain employed. Tate was given a month to improve his performance. The procedure to be used was discussed, and the desired levels of performance were set. Tate began his shift by verbally setting a goal (e.g., “blue card today”). His co-workers evaluated his performance with the color-coded cards. Tate acknowledged his evaluation and set a goal for the next day.

Results During the 3 days of baseline, Tate’s performance was deemed unacceptable by

his co-workers. As depicted in the graph in Figure 10.2, after introduction of the card system, Tate received “okay” or “great” evaluations on 91% of his probationary work days. After removal of the instructional components, Tate received “okay” or “great” evaluations on nine of 10 additional work days. His supervisor was so impressed with the performance improvement that Tate not only kept his job but also received a raise after another 30 days.

Discussion We modified the supervisor feedback form into a format understandable to Tate. The combination of goal setting, getting a supervisor feedback card with specific feedback as to what to change, and being praised for successfully accomplished steps improved Tate’s performance. The supported employment staff tried not to become involved in task training issues, leaving this up to the employer and the typical process. When a person received a warning, supported employment staff would intervene to attempt to improve performance. If the person knew how to do the task, a goal setting feedback loop was established as the first method to change performance. This approach often worked, as it did with Tate.

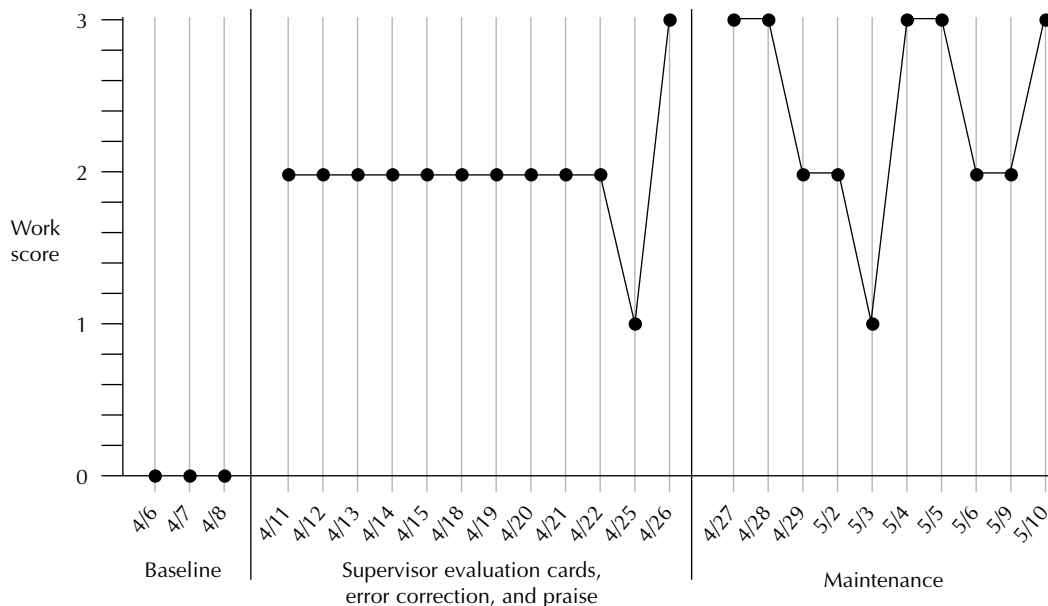


Figure 10.2. Tate's responses over a 1-month period.

Case Study 3: Freddy

Method Freddy was a 35-year-old woman when she entered the supported employment program. A few years earlier, she acquired a severe traumatic brain injury when she was thrown from a truck during an accident.

Setting Prior to her accident, Freddy worked as a janitor, and she expressed a desire to return to that line of work. Freddy was placed in a janitorial position at a local business. Her duties included sweeping, mopping, emptying trash, and cleaning bathrooms. She had been working for 2 months when her supervisor requested additional support.

Dependent Measures Freddy's work performance was consistently adequate, and she often received praise for a job well done. But as she became more acquainted with the staff, Freddy began initiating physical contact with the male co-workers. As the complaints increased, Freddy was given a warning to stop or she would lose her job. The percentage of positive social evaluations became the dependent measure. The supervisor set 100% positive evaluation as the criterion. An AB teaching design was used across evaluation domains to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

Baseline and Intervention During baseline assessment, Freddy received daily supervisor evaluation cards and verbal warnings for problem behavior. The supervisor evaluated Freddy's work, social, and personal behavior by checking "Yes" for acceptable behaviors and "No" for unwanted work, social and personal behaviors. A percentage was also included in her daily evaluations for tasks done correctly.

Intervention A daily social improvement contract was added to the daily feedback card routine. Using the improvement contract, Freddy set a daily social goal before starting work and described what she would do to attain her goal. She would write down both her goal and how she would accomplish it after reviewing the goal and strategy with a job coach or a co-worker. At the end of the day, she received her supervisor evaluation card and made adjustments for the next day's goal. At the start of each day, she received instruction to set her social goal based on the previous day's feedback.

Results Figures 10.3 and 10.4 indicate the results. Baseline assessment consisted of 43 days

of work, social, and personal evaluations in addition to assessment of the percentage of tasks done correctly. The "No" scores on the social graph depict the days when she received negative supervisor feedback for inappropriately touching male co-workers. During baseline, Freddy received a "Yes" on 79% of the days and "No" on 21%.

Following the introduction of the improvement contract, Freddy received a "Yes" on all 23 days that she received supervisor feedback over a 3-month period. Her work and personal graph also showed 100% for both baseline and intervention on all but one of the 66 total probes. The only "No" in the work and personal behavior coincided with a "No" on social behavior, and a 52% drop in task quality.

The task quality data fluctuated but stayed within the range of what was acceptable to her supervisor. During baseline assessment, her percentage of tasks done well was 100% on 76% of the days over the 2½-month period. During the 3-month improvement contract period, Freddy improved from 76% to 82% of the 23 probes measured.

Discussion Freddy's case shows the advantage of collecting daily supervisor evaluation cards during the first few weeks that a person begins working. As her negative social evaluations began to accumulate, Freddy and her job coach used the data to show her positive performance in other work areas. This positive data more than likely kept her employed long enough to change her social behavior.

For many people, getting daily supervisor feedback improves behavior. In Freddy's case, simple feedback was insufficient. The data showed that Freddy worked several days at a time with correct social behavior, so she knew what to do. We implemented a simple improvement contract to motivate her positive behavior. Each day, she set a social goal based in part on feedback from the previous day. She wrote down the goal on her improvement contract and identified what she would do to attain the goal. At the end of the day, she would get feedback and make an adjustment statement by writing what she would do differently, if anything, the next day. Supervisor feedback and warnings did not change the behavior, but following the introduction of the improvement contract, her social behavior improved.

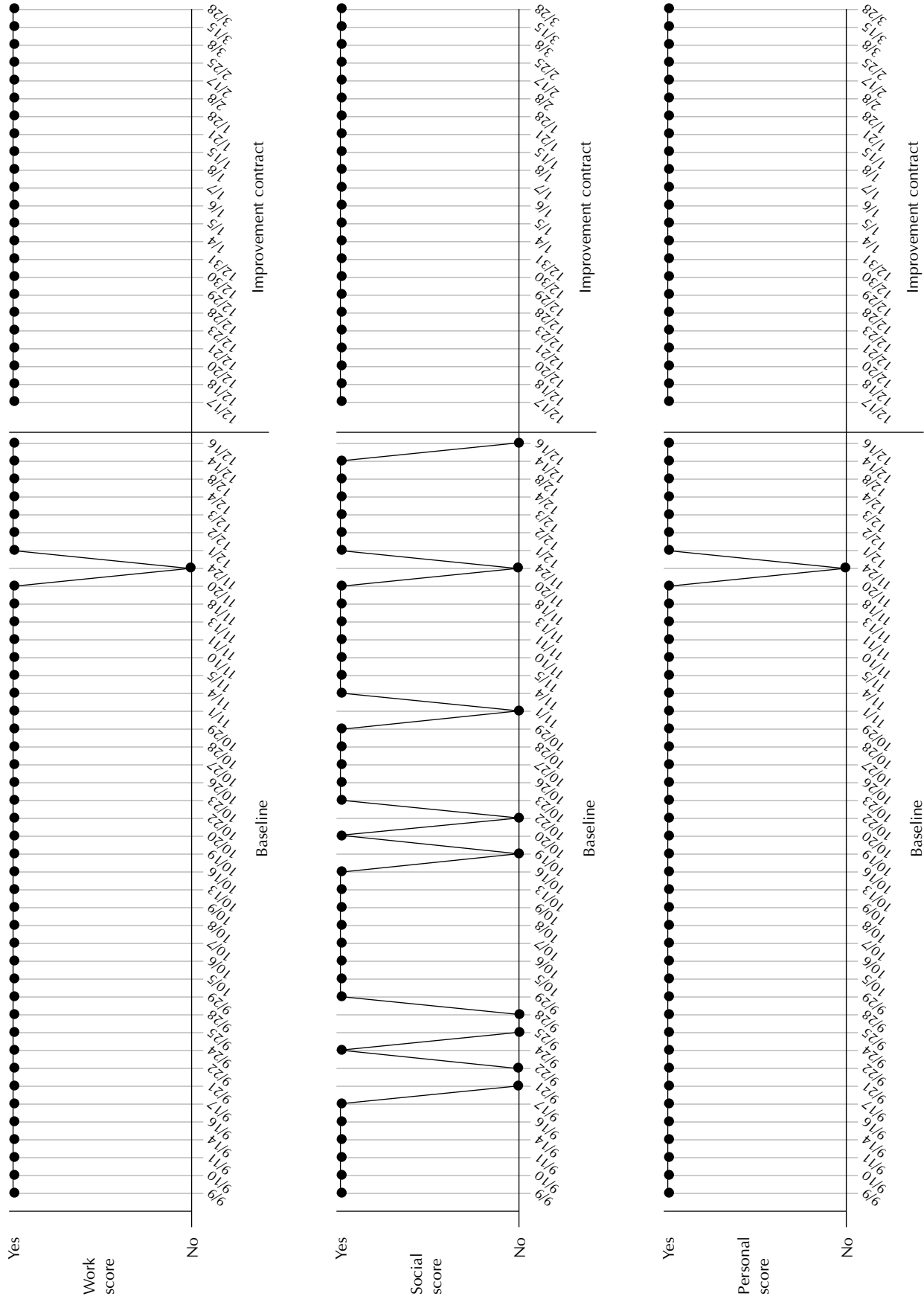


Figure 10.3. Freddy's responses to improvement contracts for work, social, and personal issues.

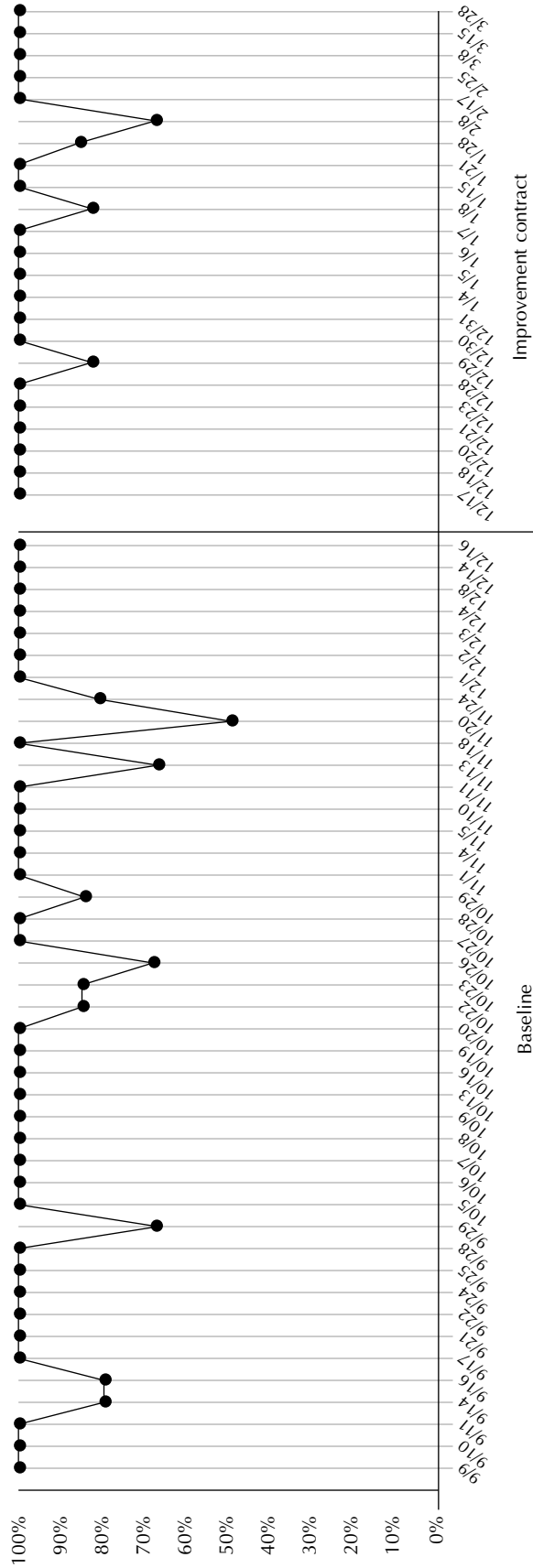


Figure 10.4. Freddy's responses to improvement contracts for task issues.

Case Study 4: Ty

Method Ty was a 28-year-old male who had acquired a brain injury in a motorcycle accident 5 years before he entered the supported employment program. When he began the program, he also continued to receive counseling from the hospital regarding his mood swings, significant anger outbursts, independent living options, and money management skills. Ty's records indicated that he had difficulty with attention to detail, visual perceptual function, speed of response, endurance, distractibility, work and social judgment, and problem solving. The reports also noted that Ty required a job with repetitive tasks that had little variation in routine, and that he needed to work in an environment that did not distract him from his primary tasks. As a result of his injury, he had expressive language dysfunction; could not read more than a single paragraph at a time; and had poor attention, concentration, rate of response, and short-term memory. An evaluation indicated that assembly-line tasks were not recommended. The report suggested that, with proper supervision and instruction, Ty could be allowed to try light machining, construction, and drilling activities where he could self-pace with minimal distractions and interruptions.

Finally, the reports emphasized that Ty had difficulty with recognizing his deficits and that his long-range vocational and educational goals were not appropriate given his cognitive status. When he entered our program, he expressed a strong desire to go back to college and become an engineer after saving money from working at the job we would help him get.

Prior to his brain injury, Ty worked as a machinist while he was going to college, and he wanted to return to this type of work more than any other. Three years following his injury, he worked at several food service jobs. He found these jobs himself but did not stay at any job for very long.

Setting After exposure to many types of jobs during the assessment process, his first and second job choices were to work at a machine shop or a factory. Ty quickly secured a part-time job at a local machine shop as a machinist helper. His tasks included unloading deliveries of stock material, measuring and cutting stock, grinding, de-burring, counting and packaging finished products for shipment, daily clean-up duties, and

other duties assigned by the owner. The owner agreed to assess Ty's machining skills after a 90-day probationary period. Ty was expected to achieve a performance and productivity rating of at least 80% of the shop standard. Ty had been working for 2 weeks when the owner became concerned about his productivity levels. His co-workers gave him additional support, and the owner restated the expectations. They all liked Ty and wanted him to succeed, but he had to do his own work. Ty also received negative evaluations on his daily supervisor evaluation cards. His performance did not improve.

Dependent Measures Ty struggled the most with de-burring, counting, and packing a variety of finished machined items into boxes for shipping. The number produced per hour for each part was set as the dependent measure. An AB design was used to assess the effectiveness of a self-monitoring package, paired with feedback from the daily supervisor evaluation card.

Baseline and Intervention Ty received daily supervisor feedback forms at the end of his shift, and unplanned suggestions and prompts from co-workers while he was on the job. Ty also received praise, specific error feedback, and owner prompting and correction. The owner once again reviewed Ty's performance and indicated what areas needed to be improved in order for him to remain employed. The intervention procedure was then described to Ty.

Ty was given a package of modified production sheets that he would complete daily. He was to tell his supervisor the name of the part that he would be working on for each hour, get the shop standard from his supervisor, set his own goal for how many pieces he would produce each hour, count the number he actually produced at the end of the hour, determine if he met his goal for each hour, and discuss the results with the supervisor while getting instructions on what part to do next. He repeated this procedure for each new batch. At the end of the day, Ty verbally summarized to his supervisor whether he met his goals and then stated what he would do the next day to improve his performance, if any improvement was needed. Ty self-monitored his own progress using the production sheet. The owner randomly verified his count. When Ty met the shop production rate for the parts he produced, the supervisor would mark the supervisor evaluation card with a "Yes;" if not, a "No" was circled.

Results During baseline assessment, Ty received five “No” evaluations, which prompted a change in strategy. The addition of praise, specific error feedback, and peer instruction improved the situation, but his performance was still not at an acceptable level. During this intervention, he earned six positive evaluations and seven negative supervisor evaluations. Next, Ty began using the social improvement contract, which used goal setting, self-monitoring, self-strategy production, plus the previous intervention components. For the next 3 days, Ty tried unsuccessfully to increase his production level. On the fourth day, he succeeded with a production level that met the shop production level, which earned him a “Yes” evaluation. He continued to receive a “Yes” on the supervisor’s evaluation card for the remaining 18 days. After this, he continued to use the modified inventory form, the improvement contract was discontinued, and his production rate remained satisfactory (see Figure 10.5).

Discussion The results indicated that the goal attainment improvement contract Ty used significantly increased his performance. The improvement contract combined several self-management strategies into one package to help facilitate behavior change. Ty also worked in a very supportive environment, and this environment must have increased Ty’s willingness to continue trying. The owner of the shop, his supervisor, and co-workers all wanted him to succeed. However, the typical training and sup-

port methods the shop crew used to support and train Ty didn’t work. The crew and Ty were ready for a different approach.

SUMMARY

Every person associated with transition and supported employment programs can tell stories about their experience. We included this chapter for two reasons. First, it allowed us to share a few of the ups and downs of the individuals who participated in the Self-Directed Employment Program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Second, it provided a means of showing how the procedures presented in Chapters 4–9 actually work. Sometimes the methods did not work by themselves, and we had to implement other strategies to achieve success. One story tells of abandoning the self-directed methods while the person spent time at a stable. Another describes using self-instructions to teach someone to learn a task. Detailing all these additional strategies goes beyond the purpose of this book, and other materials are readily available. At times, you may need to supplement the methods discussed in this book, but for many other people, these methods worked well. The next chapter covers the summary statistics of how the program functioned at different points in time. As you read Chapter 11, remember the people in Chapter 10—their lives are included in the data summaries.

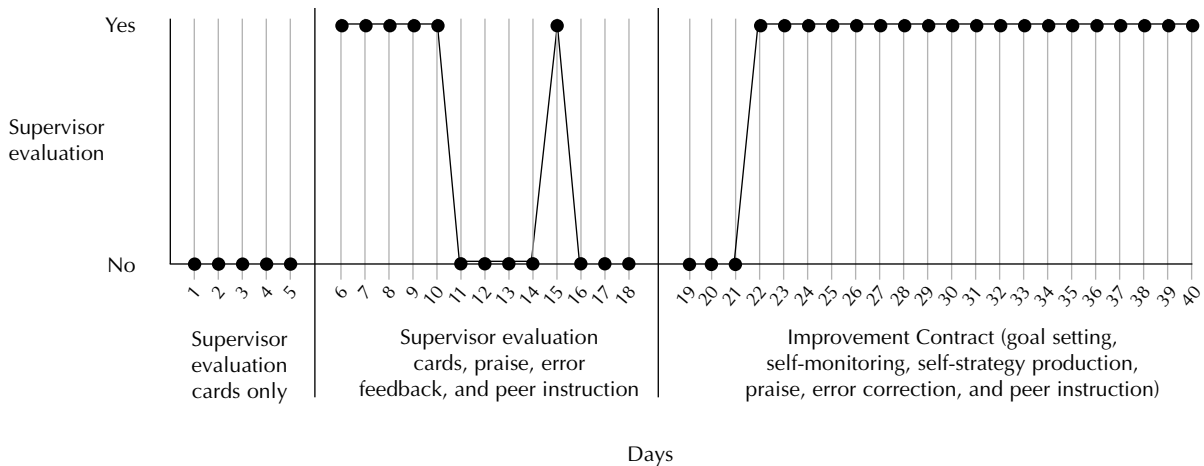


Figure 10.5. Ty's responses to strategies for improving his supervisor's evaluation scores.