

Lesson 1

Using My New Skills on The Job

TIME: 45-60 minutes

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. identify appropriate ways to disclose disability on the job
2. distinguish legal from illegal job interview and application questions according to ADA
3. identify appropriate responses to questions about disabilities and abilities asked on job applications and interviews
4. identify appropriate responses when asked inappropriate questions on job applications and in interviews

MATERIALS

1. Making the Transition From High School to College for Students with Disabilities: Transition Checklist (page 1 of the NCLD handout from unit 4)

LESSON OPENING

- Review KWL chart from Unit 7.
 - *In our last unit you learned how to advocate for yourself in high school. Lets take a minute to look at your KWL charts to review some of the things you learned.*
- Provide time and opportunity for students to discuss and share.
 - *Today you are going to learn how to use self-awareness and self-advocacy skills in a job setting.*

PROCEDURE

1. Discussion point(s): Read students the following case study about dealing with disability at work.

Listen while I read a story about a young man named Drew who has dyslexia. While I read, I need you to pay attention to the story and see if you can think of something Drew could have done differently to change the outcome of his story.

Case study: *Drew is a twenty-eight year old man living in California and working for a large company that produces chemicals for pest control services. Drew grew up in a small town in Oklahoma and attended college after high school graduation. Having dyslexia made*

school difficult for Drew and he often had to work twice as hard as his friends to pass his classes. Drew worked hard and earned a degree in fire safety and protection. During his last semester of college, Drew began applying and interviewing for jobs. He sometimes worried about how dyslexia would affect his future career, but he never considered disclosing his disability during a job interview or after being hired for a job. Drew was excited when he received a job offer and an opportunity to move to a new place.

Drew's new job required him to supervise a large warehouse containing 16 large chemical tanks and a crew of six people. Each day the crew members would read gauges on the tanks, complete a check list, and take notes about the gauge information which was then given to Drew. He would use the information to calculate the amounts of different ingredients each tank needed to have added. Drew always read the information as soon as it was given to him. If he had questions about the written information, he would ask the crew member to clarify the information before they left his office.

For the first six months, his new job went well, then the company upgraded the gauge system on the tanks. Drew began receiving computer generated reports via email instead of handwritten reports from crew members. Drew had to read the reports and then email each crew member instructions on the ingredients to be added to each tank.

The new reports Drew received were written in numbers and symbols, which were extremely difficult for him to read because of his dyslexia. Drew had an especially difficult time distinguishing the greater than and less than signs on the report. To make things worse, he no longer had a crew member there to ask clarifying questions—everything was to be completed via email. As a result Drew frequently made mistakes reading the information and in the instructions he gave to his crew. Before long, crew members began to complain to Drew about the mistakes. He was very stressed out about his situation, but decided he would just have to do his best to deal with it if he wanted to keep his job.

During the first couple of weeks, Drew's boss was understanding about the mistakes and assumed they would stop once Drew adjusted to the new system. Eventually, the mistakes became dangerous and costly to the company. In one case, Drew's mistake resulted in an employee receiving chemical burns from mixing the wrong ingredients together as well as ruining thousands of dollars worth of chemicals in the tank. Drew felt terrible and his boss was furious.

The next morning, Drew's boss called him into his office and fired him. He told Drew that he was disappointed with his recent job performance and had expected more from him based on his performance early on with the company. Drew apologized for the problems he had caused and explained that the combination of having dyslexia and the new system had made his once easy job almost impossible. His boss was surprised to hear this, because he never suspected that Drew had any type of disability.

Discussion point(s): Ask students the following questions and have them brainstorm various answers, then discuss as a class.

- *What is something Drew could have done differently to change the outcome in this story?*

Possible answers:

Drew could have

- told his boss about his dyslexia as soon as he realized the new system was a problem.
- thought of an accommodation that could have been helpful to him at work.
- asked his boss if it was possible to get a printout written like the previous reports instead of with numbers and symbols.

- *Has anyone in here ever disclosed his/her disability during a job interview or on the job?*

Provide time and opportunity for students to share their personal experiences.

- *What are some reasons a person might have for disclosing his/her disability on the job?*

Possible answers:

- They may need accommodations to complete the job correctly.
- They want their employers to understand why some things may be difficult.
- They are comfortable with their disability and do not feel the need to hide it from others.
- They understand their disability and are confident they can complete their job as well as someone without a disability.

- *What are some reasons a person might have for not disclosing his/her disability on the job?*

Possible answers:

- They may be scared that others will judge them or pity them.
- They are embarrassed about their disability.
- They do not understand their disability well enough to explain it to others.
- They do not feel their disability affects their job.
- They are scared they will lose their job or not be hired for a job.

2. Activity: Have students split into pairs or small groups and identify one positive outcome and one negative outcome of disclosing their disability at work. Have pairs/small groups share their ideas and thoughts with the class.

Possible answers: (positive)

- You can get necessary accommodations at work.
- You do not have to worry about hiding your disability from others.

- People may be more understanding about why certain job tasks are more difficult or take you more time to complete.

Possible answers: (negative)

- Your employer and/or coworkers do not understand your disability or do not believe you.
- Your employer and/or coworkers feel that your disability prevents you from doing your job and therefore does not want you around.
- Your employer and/or coworkers seem uncomfortable about your disability.

Discussion point(s): Lead class in discussion about the importance of having a plan for disclosing or not disclosing one's disability on the job.

- *Disclosing your disability on the job is a personal choice. There are valid reasons for disclosing and valid reasons for not disclosing to others. Either way, you need to have a plan on how to handle the situation. Part of that plan includes knowing answers to the following questions.*

1. What skills do you need for the job?
2. Does your disability prevent you from performing the job requirements?
3. If yes, could accommodations make the job doable for you?
4. If so, what accommodations would you need?
 - a. Remember, you must disclose your disability if you expect your employer to provide accommodations.
5. What are my legal rights as an employee with a disability?

Discussion point(s): Review ADA and discuss the main points of how it might impact your students during job interviews and after being hired.

- *During Unit 4, we learned a little about the Americans with Disabilities Act, known as ADA.*
- *You learned how ADA affects you in school. It is also important for you to understand how ADA affects you on the job. According to ADA, employers are not allowed to ask you questions about your disability on job applications or during job interviews.*

Discussion point(s): Discuss each of the following points and examples regarding ADA.

- It is illegal for employers to ask questions about disability on job applications and/or during job interviews.

Examples:

- (application) Do you have a disability? If so, please list and describe.
 - I noticed you are wearing glasses, do you have a visual impairment?
 - This job requires that you send out written correspondence from the company. Do you have any type of reading or writing disability that I should know about?
 - Do you have any type of disability that affects your behavior? We like to keep things calm around here.
 - You will be in direct contact with customers everyday. Do you have any type of disability that is going to make that difficult for you to do?
 - Have you ever undergone a psychiatric evaluation? What were the results?
 - Do you have asthma or high blood pressure?
 - Have you ever had heart surgery?
- Employers can ask you specific questions about your abilities and skills required to perform the job.

Examples:

- This job requires that you to drive during work hours everyday. Is there anything that will prevent you from being able to do so?
 - You will need to spend 5 to 6 hours a day working at a computer. Is there anything that prevents you from being able to do so?
 - We are looking for someone who is able to do complicated math on a regular basis. Will this be a problem for you?
 - Lifting 50 to 100 pounds several times a day is part of this job. Are you able to do so?
- *What if a job interviewer asks you questions about disability? (Pause to give students time to think about this question.)*
 - *There are no easy or correct answers to this question, but you should consider the following before you decide what and how to answer questions about your disability during a job interview or on a job application.*
 - How badly do you want/need the job?
 - How much information about yourself are you comfortable sharing with others?
 - Is the question related to your job performance?
 - *On the application you can simply choose to leave the question blank, but in the interview such questions could be uncomfortable. Again, think about how badly you want the job and how much information you are willing to share. Here are a few tips on dealing with the situation.*

- Do not lie! Telling your employer or future employer a lie is a bad idea. It gives them justification for firing you.
 - Always focus on the positive, not the negative.
 - Explain how your disability does and does not affect your ability to do the job.
 - Stick to the details that impact you on the job. Your personal life should not be discussed.
 - Ask your employer if he/she has questions about your disability (you need to be ready to answer the questions).
- *These are some suggestions on dealing with questions about your disability. However, it is illegal for employers to ask you about your disability on job applications and during interviews. If you feel the situation is serious enough, you can choose to report it the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or other advocacy organizations in your area and request that they address the issue with the employer. Disability disclosure is a personal decision that everyone must make for themselves.*

Extension Activity: Have students work in pairs or small groups to generate a list of questions they might be asked during a job interview. This list should include both legal and illegal questions about disabilities and abilities. Have each group share their list aloud with the rest of the class.

- As a class, generate a list of appropriate answers to the questions identified by each pair/small group.
- Have each pair/small group role play a job interview based on the questions and answers identified by the class.

LESSON CLOSURE

- Revisit the following questions with the class. Have students identify 1 - 3 answers for each question. Answers may vary depending on the concerns and issues brought up by students during the lesson.
 - What are some ways to handle illegal questions about your disability on a job application or during a job interview?
 - What are some reasons a person might have for disclosing their disability on the job?

- What are some reasons a person might have for not disclosing their disability on the job?
- What are some benefits of disclosing your disability at work?
- Provide students time to add to KWL charts

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Participation in class discussion
2. Participation in small group work/discussion
3. Entries on KWL chart as needed

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MATERIALS

1. Making the Transition From High School to College for Students with Disabilities: Transition Checklist (page 1 of the NCLD handout from unit 4)
2. Copy of Drew Scenario
3. Power Point Presentation

LESSON OPENING

- Review KWL chart from Unit 7.
 - *In our last unit you learned how to advocate for yourself in high school. Lets take a minute to look at your KWL charts to review some of the things you learned.*
- Provide time and opportunity for students to discuss and share.
 - *Today you are going to learn how to use self-awareness and self-advocacy skills in a job setting.*

PROCEDURE

1. Discussion point(s): Read students the following case study about dealing with disability at work. (on power point)

2. Handout Scenario (following directions on worksheet as it is read)

Listen while I read a story about a young man named Drew who has dyslexia. While I read, I need you to pay attention to the story and see if you can think of something Drew could have done differently to change the outcome of his story.

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Handout Worksheet 8-1: Questions to Think About

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- Stick to the details that impact you on the job. Your personal life should not be discussed.
- Ask your employer if he/she has questions about your disability (you need to be ready to answer the questions).

Handout Worksheet 8-1: Legal or Not (complete with students)

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- Provide students time to add to KWL charts

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Participation in class discussion
2. Participation in small group work/discussion
3. Entries on KWL chart as needed