



# Beginning to Work It Out

## Soft Skills Work Readiness Program for Youth & Young Adults

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## PROGRAM INFORMATION

### THE PROBLEM

More and more young people are at risk for chronic unemployment, lifelong poverty, and incarceration. Steady employment in a meaningful job is a powerful resiliency factor, but many challenging youth have minimal academic and vocational skills, and are poorly prepared to join the workforce.

In addition, some also have poor impulse control, problems with rules and limits, limited insight into themselves and others, and difficulty getting along with authority figures. As a result, these youth frequently leave potentially good jobs in which they might have found success because they can't resolve day-to-day problems with co-workers and supervisors.

### THE SOLUTION

While at-risk youth and young adults may rebel against arbitrary rules, they often respond well to genuine relationships with caring, knowledgeable adults. When delivered by instructors with an understanding of cognitive change and a knack for building rapport with troubled teens, the "Beginning to Work It Out" (BWIO) curriculum has been highly successful in helping youth develop:

- (1) Insight into the personal beliefs which drive counterproductive behaviors;
- (2) Awareness of employers' unspoken expectations,
- (3) Skills for managing strong emotions;
- (4) Skills for expressing concerns and receiving criticism; and
- (5) Skills for logically solving problems without relying on assumptions.

### THE DETAILS

"Beginning to Work It Out" is a 10-lesson cognitive-behavioral program which targets youth and young adults who may have dropped out of high school and are attempting to enter the job market for the first time. The program was revised in 2016 to be topical for today's young people.

Through realistic stories with age-appropriate characters and thought-provoking activities, BWIO participants gain self-awareness, emotional self-control, and skills in interpersonal problem solving. The BWIO program works best when delivered to groups of 8-16 students by 1-2 trained instructors over the course of 3-5 weeks. It may be supplemented with academic and vocational skills training, as well as more traditional pre-employment training such as resume writing, job interviewing, etc.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

"Beginning to Work It Out" consists of 10 one-hour lessons. The curriculum is divided into four parts, each focused on a different set of insights and skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

### **Part 1: Gaining Self-Awareness**

- Lesson 1 Understanding Conflict
- Lesson 2 Power of Personal Beliefs
- Lesson 3 Unspoken Rules of Work

Part 1 focuses on self-awareness. It helps youth become aware of the dynamics of interpersonal conflict, then draws attention to beliefs, attitudes and perceptions which may justify self-defeating behaviors. It explains employers' unspoken expectations, and helps them understand how personal beliefs backfire in the world of work. Skills and insights are applied to specific personal and work-related situations.

### **Part 2: Managing Emotions**

- Lesson 4 Warning Signs
- Lesson 5 Stop & Think

Part 2 focuses on emotional self-management. It helps youth identify specific emotional triggers, then teaches a step-by-step strategy for keeping strong emotions in check. Skills and insights are role-played in specific work-related situations.

### **Part 3: Handling Difficult Conversations**

- Lesson 6 Expressing Concerns
- Lesson 7 Dealing with Criticism

Part 3 focuses on skills for communicating when having to express a concern or complaint, and while receiving criticism from a supervisor or coworker. These lessons offers a step-by-step methods for professionally handling each situation. Skills and insights are role-played in specific work-related situations.

### **Part 4: Solving Problems**

- Lesson 8 Problem & Goal
- Lesson 9 Info & Insight
- Lesson 10 Choices & Consequences
- Closing Lesson

Part 4 focuses on rational problem solving. It first helps youth simplify overwhelming situations by identifying useful, objective problem and goal statements. It then teaches them to avoid making false assumptions, and to analyze all possible choices before making an impulsive decision. Skills and insights are applied to specific work-related situations.

More information about this program, including samples of the workbook, may be downloaded from [www.WorkinItOut.com](http://www.WorkinItOut.com). Contact Dr. Steve Parese for details about becoming a certified instructor in this dynamic program.

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