

# Today's Key Points



## Key Point 1

Workplace success requires not only strong vocational skills, but mastery of a range of social skills as well. Many at-risk youth simply do not have these vital soft skills.



## Key Point 2

Most employers have unspoken expectations which they seldom explain directly to new employees. These often conflict with the beliefs young people use in their personal social lives.



## Key Point 3

Youth have a tendency to use personal beliefs when judging their work behaviors. We must help them develop both cognitive awareness and new interpersonal skills to better fit into the workforce.

### More about "Beginning to Work It Out"

The culture of the workplace can often seem like a foreign land to youth with little experience or exposure to its unspoken rules. Lacking an intuitive understanding of employer expectations, many young workers react personally rather than professionally to issues with coworkers and supervisors.

The "Beginning to Work It Out" training program addresses this problem by helping young workers develop the self-awareness and skills to successfully meet the interpersonal demands of the workplace. The program is available to instructors who complete a 2.5 day certification.

For more information about training in this program:

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# "Kids These Days!"



Preparing  
At-Risk  
Youth  
for  
Workplace  
Success

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Troubled youth often have problems with peers and authority figures in their personal lives, and bring these same issues with them to their first jobs. As a result, they typically have problems getting along with their co-workers and supervisors, and end up leaving otherwise promising jobs.

This interactive workshop explores 6 common attitudes and beliefs of at-risk youth, then contrasts them with employers' unspoken expectations. Participants gain new insights into these dynamics, and explore strategies for helping youth and young adults learn the skills and attitudes to succeed at work.

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# Today's Agenda

## 1. What are Soft Skills?

Which soft skills are most necessary for workplace success? Why do some young people fail to use them?

## 2. Cognitive Conflicts

What attitudes are most valued by employers? Why are many youth unable to fit in with the workplace culture?

## 3. Cognitive Interventions

How can we help youth better adapt to the workplace?



## Teen Lingo Quiz

Match the words or phrases on the left with the correct meaning on the right. Be careful! There's a couple of extras mixed in!



- |                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| [ ] 1. BAKED    | a. Your smile or mouth     |
| [ ] 2. CHEDDAR  | b. 9-mm pistol             |
| [ ] 3. FLOSSIN' | c. Carrying a weapon       |
| [ ] 4. GEL      | d. Trying to pick up girls |
| [ ] 5. GRILL    | e. Stoned on marijuana     |
| [ ] 6. KRUNK    | f. Obsessed with           |
| [ ] 7. NINE     | g. Stolen                  |
| [ ] 8. PUNKED   | h. Money                   |
| [ ] 9. PIMPIN'  | i. Showing off your wealth |
| [ ] 10. SPRUNG  | j. A promiscuous female    |
|                 | k. Wild and exhilarating   |
|                 | l. Get along with          |

# Thomas' Work Situation



1. After his release from juvenile detention, Thomas found a job in maintenance at a major hotel chain. He had a disagreement with his supervisor when asked to remove some of his facial jewelry and cover up his tattoos.

Thomas: "Why can't I wear a nose ring? Why do I have to cover my ink? What does that have to do with cutting the grass?"

*What personal belief does he still have?* \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: "He just doesn't understand about company image. All those tattoos and piercings scare some of our guests, and in our business, you have to keep up a certain image."

*What workplace rule does the supervisor have?* \_\_\_\_\_

# Lori's Work Situation

To impress the judge at her next court appearance, Lori got a job as a checker in a supermarket. During a slow moment, her boss asked her to clean up a spill in the back, but she ignored him.



Lori: "I'm a checker, not a janitor. He should get a janitor to do stuff like that. Why do I always have to do what HE says?"

*What personal belief does Lori still have?* \_\_\_\_\_

Boss: "If she's standing there doing nothing and everyone else is busy, I'm going to ask her to help out. She's always bending the rules, like they don't apply to her."

*What workplace rule does the supervisor have?* \_\_\_\_\_

# Cognitive Behavioral Intervention

Cognitive behavioral intervention (CBI) focuses on promoting positive self-change by developing:

1. Awareness of the thinking and beliefs which drive one's unproductive behavior (cognitive); and
2. Stronger interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for managing difficult situations (behavior).

"Seek first to \_\_\_\_\_

Then to be \_\_\_\_\_."

*Stephen Covey*  
"Seven Habits of Highly Effective People"

## Two CBI Strategies

When youth are behaving unprofessionally at work because of strong underlying personal beliefs, consequences alone (i.e., getting in trouble) are often not enough. A combination of cognitive coaching and direct instruction in social cognitive skills is often a more effective strategy.

### 1. Cognitive Coaching: Indirectly teach workplace attitudes and skills by coaching students through problems.

When processing workplace problems, help students to first identify their own beliefs. Then, help them recognize the opposing perspective their employers may hold.

### 2. Cognitive Skills Instruction Directly teach workplace attitudes and skills by providing classroom-based instruction.

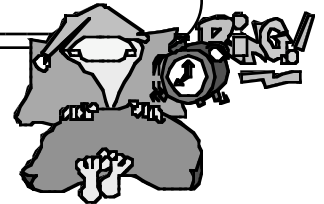
Many students benefit from direct instruction in the skills and perspectives needed to code-switch from the culture of their home lives to the culture of the workplace.

# What are "Soft Skills?"

**Soft Skills:** "Personal and interpersonal skills needed to successfully adjust to the SOCIAL environment of work."

Brainstorm soft skills needed to succeed in today's world of work:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



## Essential Work Soft Skills:

### CATEGORY

### EXAMPLES

- |                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| 1. _____<br>_____ | _____ |
| 2. _____<br>_____ | _____ |
| 3. _____<br>_____ | _____ |
| 4. _____<br>_____ | _____ |

**Q:** Why do youth fail to use important soft skills?

- A:**
1. S \_\_\_\_\_ deficit
  2. M \_\_\_\_\_ deficit
  3. C \_\_\_\_\_ incompatibility

# Personal Beliefs Survey

Rate how strongly you believe in these statements in your personal life.

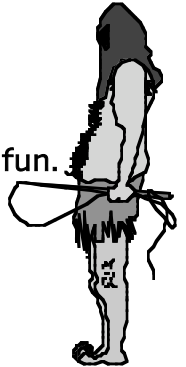
- 1: Not at all      3: Somewhat      4: A lot  
2: A little      5: Very Strongly

- \_\_\_ 1. Life should be fun.
- \_\_\_ 2. Family comes first, no matter what.
- \_\_\_ 3. It's okay to take a break when you've worked hard.
- \_\_\_ 4. Friends should help each other out with problems.
- \_\_\_ 5. Personal appearance is a personal decision.
- \_\_\_ 6. No one has the right to boss you around.

# Unspoken Rules of Work

Every workplace has its **WRITTEN** policies and procedures.  
But there are also a number of **UNSPOKEN RULES**  
which employers believe they shouldn't have to explain.

- [ ] A. Work comes first. Don't let home issues get in the way.
- [ ] B. Do what you are asked to do, even if you don't want to.
- [ ] C. Do your best to fit in. Don't act or dress TOO different.
- [ ] D. Always stay busy, or at least LOOK busy.
- [ ] E. Work is work. Don't expect it to always be fun.
- [ ] F. Stay out of other people's problems.



Based on a survey of Denver, CO employers

## Thomas' Home Situation



1. Thomas has a fight with his parents when they criticize his choice of clothes.

"Pull your pants up! Change that shirt! Take out that earring!' Why can't you guys just let me dress myself??"

Which personal belief is Thomas using?

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## Lori's Home Situation

2. One night, Lori decides to have a few drinks with her friends and stays out past her 11PM curfew. When she gets home, her aunt is furious with her. Lori blows her off and says:



"It's my life. I'm old enough to make up my own mind about what I can and can't do."

Which personal belief is Lori using?

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