

# Employment Success Skills



Nebraska VR



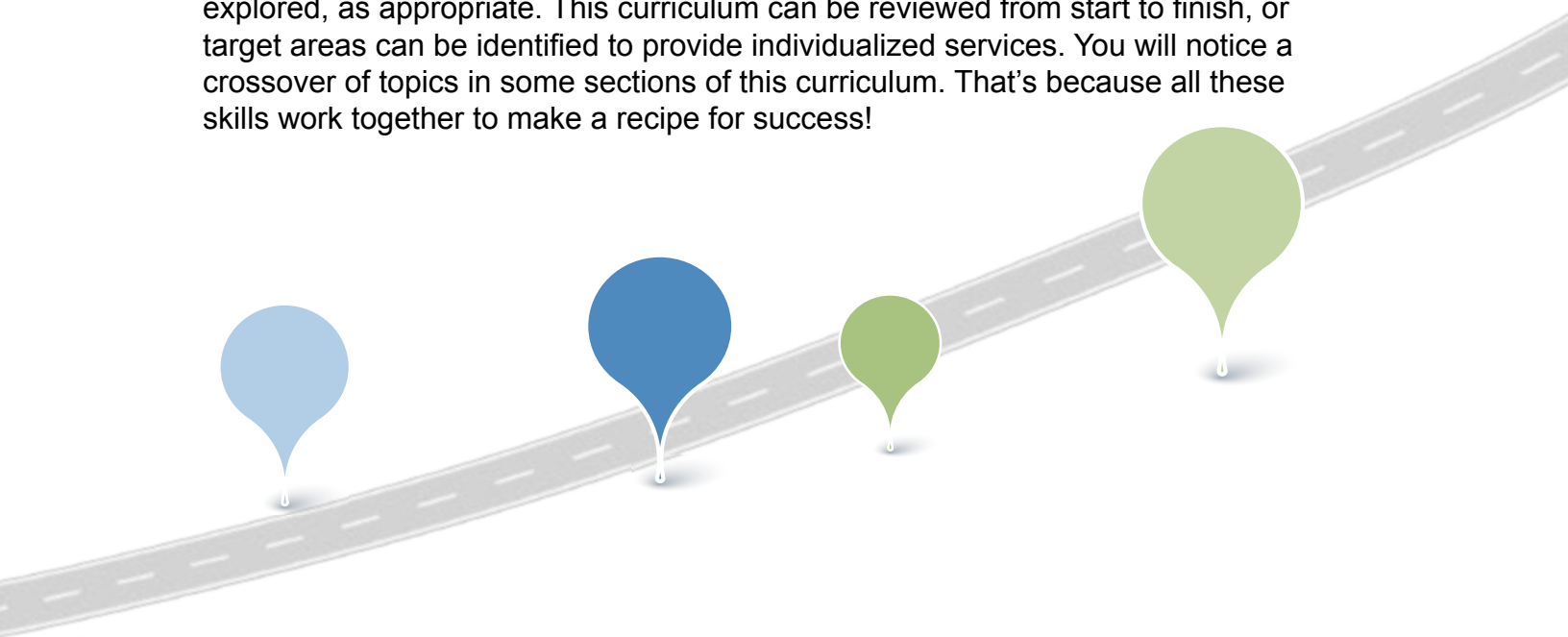
# Employment Success Skills

**Congratulations! You have successfully obtained a job! Guess what? That's only half the challenge....**

This curriculum has been developed to assist in learning and understanding the skills needed to keep a job. There are several important areas we will cover in this, including:

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Each of these sections will provide information and strategies to assist with success in the workplace. There are also some links for additional resources that can be explored, as appropriate. This curriculum can be reviewed from start to finish, or target areas can be identified to provide individualized services. You will notice a crossover of topics in some sections of this curriculum. That's because all these skills work together to make a recipe for success!



# Punctuality

## Punctuality is...

### 1. Professionalism and Reliability:

- Being punctual demonstrates your commitment to your job and colleagues.
- Arriving on time for meetings, deadlines, and work shifts shows that you take your responsibilities seriously.
- It builds trust and reliability, which are essential for professional relationships.

### 2. Efficiency and Productivity:

- Timeliness ensures smooth workflow and well-planned operations.
- When everyone sticks to schedules, tasks are completed promptly.
- Delays due to tardiness can disrupt productivity and affect overall team performance.

### 3. Respect for Others:

- Being late disrespects others' time.
- Colleagues, clients, and supervisors appreciate when you value their schedules.
- Punctuality reflects consideration for others' commitments.

### 4. Positive Image and Reputation:

- First impressions matter. Arriving late can create a negative perception.
- Consistently punctual people are seen as dependable and organized.
- A positive reputation enhances job and networking opportunities.

### 5. Stress Reduction:

- Rushing to catch up due to lateness increases stress.
- Being punctual allows for better planning and reduces anxiety.
- A calm start to the day positively impacts work quality.

### 6. Meeting Deadlines:

- Punctuality is crucial for meeting project deadlines.
- Late submissions can affect project timelines and client satisfaction.
- Professionals who consistently meet deadlines are valued.

### 7. Team Collaboration:

- Timely attendance fosters teamwork.
- Shared efforts rely on coordinating schedules.
- Punctual team members contribute to a balanced work environment.

### 8. Career Advancement:

- Employers notice punctuality.
- It reflects discipline, organization, and commitment.
- Professionals who consistently arrive on time are more likely to be considered for promotions.

Punctuality isn't just about being on time; it's about demonstrating respect, efficiency, and professionalism. Developing this durable skill contributes to personal growth and career success.

# Tips for Being Punctual

- 1. Make Being Prompt a Priority:**
  - Acknowledge that punctuality is crucial.
  - Realize it's not a cute trait but a habit affecting your career, business, and relationships.
- 2. Know Why You Want to Be Punctual:**
  - Understand the reasons behind adopting this habit.
  - Reflect on what you'll gain by overcoming tardiness.
  - Write down the benefits, such as improved professionalism, efficiency, and trustworthiness.
- 3. Set Clear Goals and Deadlines:**
  - Break down tasks into smaller steps.
  - Assign specific timeframes for each step.
  - Stick to deadlines to maintain punctuality.
- 4. Prepare Ahead of Time:**
  - Organize your day the night before.
  - Lay out clothes, gather documents, and set reminders.
  - Avoid last-minute rushes.
- 5. Use Alarms and Reminders:**
  - Set alarms on your phone or clock.
  - Use calendar reminders for meetings and appointments.
  - Be proactive in managing your time.
- 6. Account for Unexpected Delays:**
  - Leave extra time for unexpected situations (traffic, delays, etc.).
  - Aim to arrive early rather than just on time.
- 7. Visualize Success:**
  - Imagine yourself being punctual.
  - Visualize arriving on time and the positive impact it has.
- 8. Practice Time Management Techniques:**
  - Prioritize tasks using techniques like the Eisenhower Matrix (page 8).
  - Learn to say no when necessary and acceptable to avoid overcommitting.
- 9. Track Your Progress:**
  - Keep a log of your punctuality efforts.
  - Celebrate small victories and learn from any setbacks.
- 10. Learn from Role Models:**
  - Observe punctual individuals in your life.
  - Understand their habits and apply them.
- 11. Hold Yourself Accountable:**
  - Set consequences for lateness. (For example, donate to charity if you are late).
  - Share your goal with someone who can encourage you.
- 12. Practice Mindfulness:**
  - Be present and aware of time passing.
  - Avoid distractions that lead to lateness.

**SOURCES:** [Indeed](#), [The Talent Point](#)

Here is a video that discusses the importance of Punctuality: [PBS Punctuality Video](#)

# Discussion

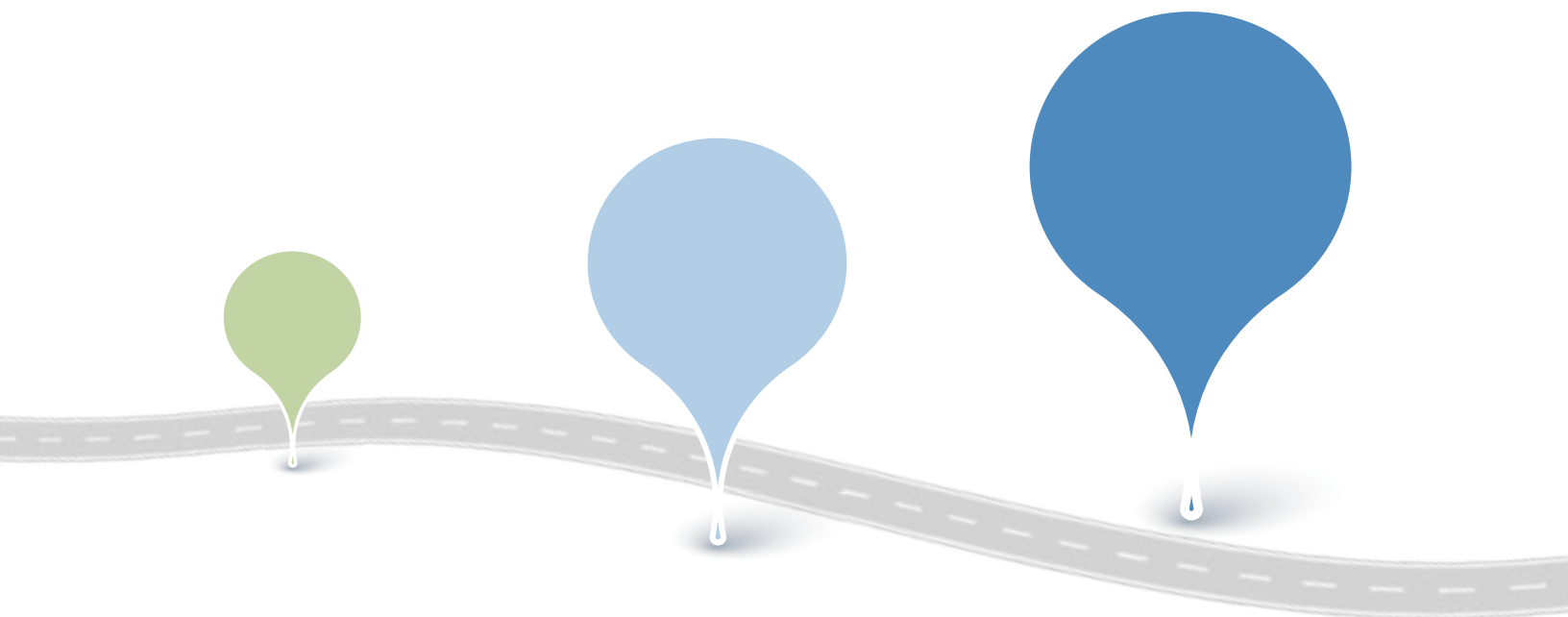
Next, we are going to look at some situations and discuss how they could best be handled.

**Scenario 1:** You miss the bus (or get a flat tire if you drive) on your way to work. How do you handle this situation? What are your next steps?

**Answer:** **Hold Yourself Accountable**, and doing your best to **Account for Unexpected Delays** are the skills that are relevant in this situation. Contact supervisor to notify them of situation. Explain that you still plan to come to work but will be late. You will -catch the next bus- or -get the tire replaced- and head immediately into work. Apologize for the situation and let employer know you will be there as soon as possible. Then take the next steps needed to remedy the situation.

**Scenario 2:** You have been working a specific shift at your workplace for some time now—11 am to 7 pm. An agreed upon change is coming in your schedule, and you will now be working 8 am-4 pm. What strategies may you need to consider to ensure Punctuality?

**Answer:** Several strategies are relevant, such as **Prepare Ahead of Time, Use Alarms and Reminders, Know Why You Want to Be Punctual, and Practicing Mindfulness**. Ensuring you are doing such things as setting alarms to ensure you have plenty of time to get ready and be to work on time. Knowing what your new morning schedule will look like and preparing for that. Possibly doing certain things the evening prior and going to bed at an earlier time to ensure you are up on time and feeling refreshed. Understanding and accepting that you do want to keep this job and new shift, so it is important to be timely in your attendance. Being aware of the new schedule, and how you may have to shift certain things you normally do in your schedule to account for the new work hours.



# Reliability

Reliability is...

## 1. Consistency and Trustworthiness:

- Reliable employees consistently meet expectations and fulfill commitments.
- When you deliver on promises, co-workers and supervisors trust you.
- Trust is the foundation of effective teamwork and collaboration.

## 2. Meeting Deadlines:

- Reliability ensures timely completion of tasks and projects.
- Meeting deadlines demonstrates your commitment to organizational goals.
- Dependable individuals contribute to overall team efficiency.

## 3. Client Satisfaction:

- Reliable service leads to satisfied clients and customers.
- Consistently delivering quality work builds a positive reputation.
- Satisfied clients are more likely to recommend your services.

## 4. Reducing Stress and Uncertainty:

- Unreliable behavior creates stress for co-workers and supervisors.
- When others can rely on you, it reduces uncertainty and workplace tension.
- A reliable team creates a healthier work environment.

## 5. Professional Image:

- Consistency in performance improves your professional image.
- Reliable professionals are seen as competent and dependable.
- A positive image opens doors for career growth.

## 6. Conflict Resolution:

- Reliable communication helps prevent misunderstandings.
- When issues arise, reliable professionals address them promptly.
- Conflict resolution relies on trust and dependability.

## 7. Career Advancement:

- Reliability is valued by employers.
- It positions you for promotions and leadership roles.
- Consistent performance sets you apart from peers.

## 8. Ethical Responsibility:

- Being reliable aligns with ethical behavior.
- Upholding promises and commitments is a matter of integrity.
- Professionals who act ethically gain respect and credibility.

Reliability is more than just punctuality; it includes consistency, trust, and ethical conduct. Developing this durable skill contributes to a successful and fulfilling professional journey.



# Tips for Being Reliable

## 1. Commit to Your Word:

- When you make a promise or commitment, follow through on your statements and actions consistently.
- Avoid half-hearted promises; instead, ensure that what you say happens.

## 2. Take Responsibility:

- Understand that you're accountable for your actions.
- If you make a mistake, own up to it and learn from it.
- Acknowledge both successes and failures.

## 3. Be Flexible:

- Adaptability is crucial for reliability.
- Be open to taking on new tasks, even during challenging situations.

## 4. Practice Honesty:

- Honest communication is essential.
- Be transparent about progress, challenges, and expectations.
- Honesty builds trust and reliability.

## 5. Prioritize Goals:

- Reliable individuals value achieving goal.
- Set short-term and long-term goals.
- Work to reach them consistently, even when faced with obstacles.

Reliability is an accumulation of strong habits. By taking your responsibilities seriously and holding yourself accountable, you can enhance this essential durable skill.

Sources: [Career Addict](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Zippia](#)

Here is a video that discusses the importance of Reliability: [Reliability Video](#)



# Discussion

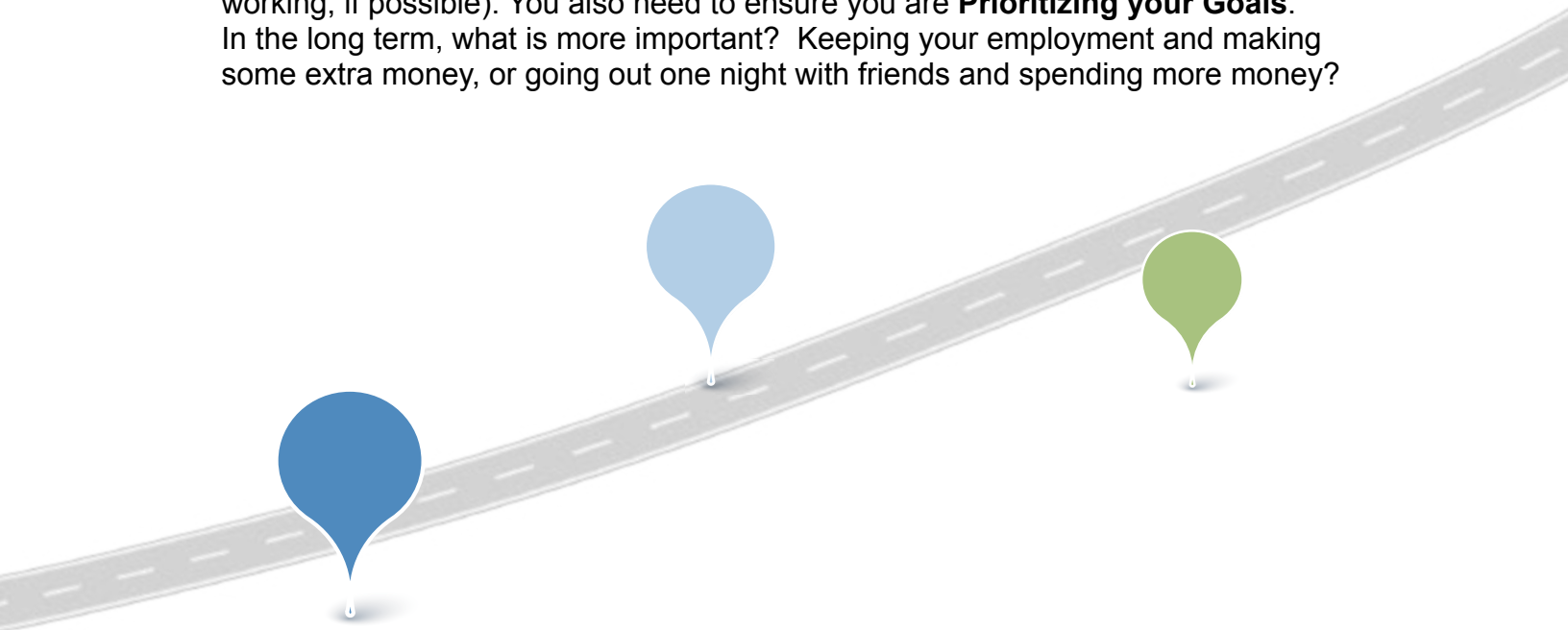
Now, check out these scenarios and discuss:

**Scenario 1:** Your supervisor discusses with you a project they would like you to complete. You agree on a deadline. As you are working on the project, you realize it is more complex than you originally believed. You miss your agreed upon deadline. How can you turn this situation around to show Reliability?

**Answer:** When possible, always discuss with the supervisor in advance if you feel you will not be able to meet a deadline. If a project suddenly seems to be more difficult than originally anticipated, it is important to meet with your supervisor to discuss this to see what changes may need to be made to either deadlines or who is involved in getting the tasks completed. If you are at the point where you have missed your deadline, and did not discuss this previously with your supervisor, the best thing you can do at this point is **Be Honest and Take Responsibility**. Be transparent with your supervisor about what occurred, take accountability for your actions, and work with them on a way to ensure the project can be completed.

**Scenario 2:** You work as a server, usually during the day, and your boss asks if you can pick up a Friday night shift. You agree to do this, as you can use the extra money. On Friday morning, your friends tell you they are planning on going out and want you to join them. What do you do?

**Answer:** In this case, it is important to **Commit to Your Word**. You have agreed to work a shift and you need to honor that commitment. You will need to let your friends know you have to work (but perhaps you can meet them after you are done working, if possible). You also need to ensure you are **Prioritizing your Goals**. In the long term, what is more important? Keeping your employment and making some extra money, or going out one night with friends and spending more money?





# The Eisenhower Matrix

This matrix can be used to help you determine the order in which tasks should be completed. This helps to improve reliability (can be done as an exercise with clients as well):

	<b>Urgent</b>	<b>Not Urgent</b>
<b>Important</b>	<b>Do:</b> <b>Tasks with deadlines or consequences.</b>	<b>Schedule:</b> <b>Tasks without clear deadlines that contribute to long-term goals.</b>
<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Delegate:</b> <b>Tasks that must get done but don't require your skill set.</b>	<b>Delete:</b> <b>Distractions and unnecessary tasks.</b>

# Following Directions

Sometimes when working, you might ask yourself the following questions. ‘Why do I have to follow directions? Why do I have to listen to you?’ Here are some things to keep in mind when it comes to your responsibilities at work and following directions.

- **Your Supervisor and Teammates will ask you to do things at work.** They are not doing it because they enjoy being bossy. They are asking you to do things that help the entire team. Bosses must assign tasks, it’s their job. You are being asked to assist in this process.
- **Yes. You have a Job Title and with it, a job description** (your duties). But if you have completed everything in your job description, you need to see what else you can do to help. The following video helps highlight the importance of this:

[Skills to Pay the Bills- Professionalism](#)

- **When you clock in at work, your time is now owed to the business.** They are paying you to do a job. Every minute you spend doing personal things, checking your phone, socializing, taking long, or frequent restroom breaks, is taking money out of your employer’s pocket.
- **Now that you understand that your employer has “invested” in you, you play your part by focusing on your work.** The more productive you are, the better the employer’s “investment”. This is usually rewarded when you have a performance evaluation and get a raise.
- **Your employer expects you take initiative and solve problems.** Once you have been trained, you should not have to continually ask what to do next, or how to solve basic problems. Here is a video that highlights these skills:

[Skills to Pay the Bills - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving](#)

- **When you have an urgent personal problem that needs to be dealt with immediately:** Such as an emergency at home, go ahead and ask to clock out and go home. Do not try and “solve” the problem through text messages and phone calls while you are working. At the very least, ask to take your 15-minute break and then deal with the issue if it does not require you to leave work.
- **Your cell phone.** Needs to be turned off and stored in your desk or locker or left in your car. Yes. You will miss the latest social media postings and text threads with friends. The immediate need to know (FOMO) will be replaced by the satisfaction of a job well done.



# Factors

One of the most important things that employees need to do to be successful is to follow procedures. However, there are times when employees refuse or struggle with following instructions. This problem can be due to a number of factors, such as:

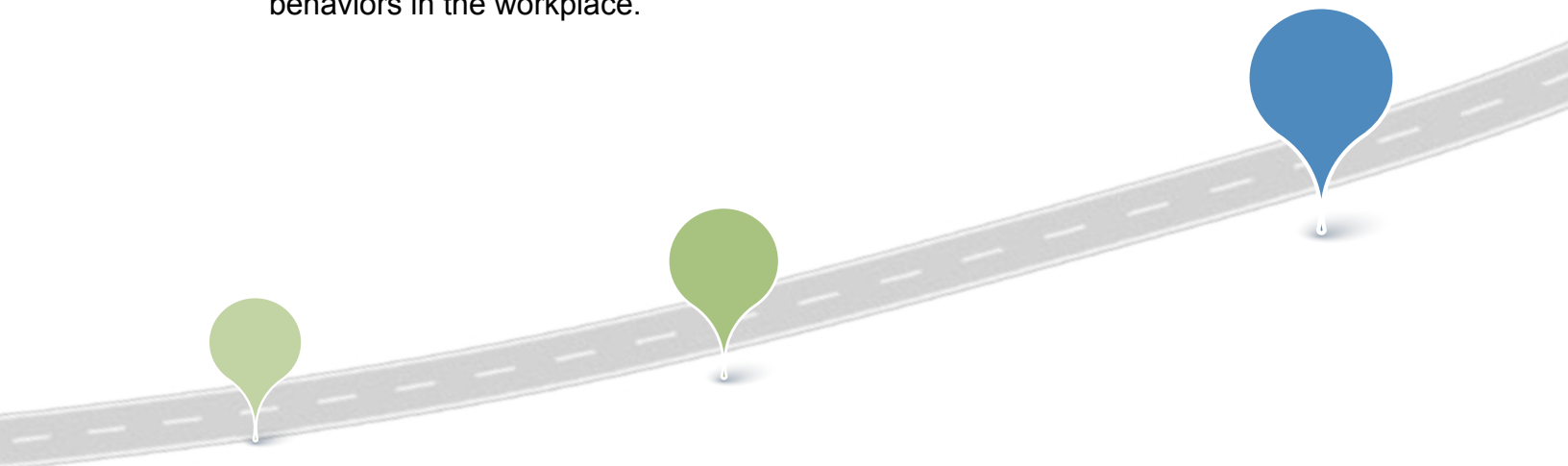
1. **Too difficult** – Procedures can appear difficult at times. Even though they are written in simple English, many details are difficult for individuals to comprehend. People believe that following instructions is challenging or time-consuming. They could imagine a longer time than it does. Moreover, they can feel overloaded by the volume of labor required.
2. **The procedure makes no sense** – Employers often assume that every step in their instructions makes perfect sense. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes the reasoning isn't always clear. As a result, people frequently decide that breaking the procedures is acceptable – whether intentional or not.
3. **The old approach** – Employees may already be aware of the following step if an organization has previously taken a similar approach. Therefore, they frequently skip a few steps because they have seen them previously. They're certain everything will be fine, so why do they have to bother with new ones?
4. **Employees are not informed** – Some procedures in many organizations aren't public. Or employees have never been explained the notion of these procedures. This is perhaps one of the most common reasons for an employee not following work instructions.
5. **Nobody else is carrying it out** – Your employees might observe someone else at the office is doing something in a manner that differs from what the policies call for. They might then decide it's okay to omit the instructions as those around don't seem to follow.
6. **Not practical** – Some staff members feel that the unique circumstance doesn't apply to their specific rule or practice. For instance, a task too small may not adhere to the entire list of guidelines. On the other hand, some methods are quite precise and deal with circumstances that don't happen very often.



# Tips for Following Directions

Here are some tips on taking directions and fulfilling tasks, that can help offset some of the above listed concerns:

- 1. Actively listen:** Try to listen intently, not just hear. When you actively listen, you can better understand what you need to do. Here's a trick that may help: Pretend that there is going to be a quiz after the conversation. Visually think about what's being said and maybe even repeat it in your head.
- 2. Take notes:** Instead of trying to remember everything, write it down. There's nothing wrong with keeping notes; it shows that you are prepared, organized and want to do the job correctly.
- 3. Ask questions:** If you are even slightly unsure of what you are being asked to do, don't be afraid to question. Make sure the other person allows you the chance to find out all the needed details to move forward.
- 4. Repeat Back/Summarize:** It can often be very helpful to repeat back, or summarize, what your supervisor is telling you, to ensure that you are understanding everything they are asking and that you aren't missing anything. Repeating this information back gives you both a chance to check and make sure there is clear understanding on both sides when receiving instructions.
- 5. Before starting the task, make a checklist:** Whenever there is a job that requires multiple steps, try organizing a to-do list. Check things off as you go to make sure you don't miss anything. Then when you're done, be sure to review your work.
- 6. Respond with a good attitude:** Just as the person giving directions needs to speak respectfully, it's important to respond respectfully. If you go into the conversation with a bad attitude, it's likely that performing the task will be much more challenging.
- 7. You can only manage your own behavior.** It is not your responsibility to ensure everyone else is following instructions or exhibiting appropriate behaviors. It is your responsibility to ensure YOU are following the instructions you are given, adhering to policy and procedure, and maintaining appropriate and professional behaviors in the workplace.



# Discussion

The following are a few scenarios to help demonstrate Following Directions:

**Scenario 1:** Your supervisor gives you specific steps to follow for completing a project. Afterwards, a coworker says ‘Oh we don’t do it that way around here. You don’t have to do all these extra things. You can get the job done much faster by doing it this way.’ How do you handle this situation?

*The best solution is to follow the directions provided by your supervisor. You can **Ask Questions** of your supervisor about this alternative way of completing the project, and then follow the advice they provide. Maybe they were unaware of this different process, or perhaps there are reasons to do the steps they originally instructed.*

**Scenario 2:** You are meeting with your boss to receive instructions for the day. Because you are new to the position you don’t feel super comfortable. Therefore, you don’t ask any questions or repeat back what you hear to ensure you understand what is expected. Afterwards, you realize you don’t really know what you are supposed to be doing, so you start ‘winging it’. How could you better handle this situation?

*It is important to **Ask Questions** and **Repeat Back/Summarize**. These skills ensure when you are speaking with your supervisor, you have thoroughly understood work assignments. Supervisors in general would much prefer you ask questions and get clarification up front then to make mistakes in your work. This is also a good opportunity to **Make a Checklist**, so you remember everything they are asking of you.*

**Scenario 3 (You be the Customer):** You are in the checkout lane at the drugstore. You have several items and want to make sure you are not being overcharged. You notice the Cashier is watching YouTube on their phone as they scan your items and place them in the bag.

They do not look up to address you, and when it is time to insert your chip card, they have forgotten to total your sale. You are waiting, staring at the chip reader to prompt you to insert your card. After a minute the Cashier glances up and realizes they have not totaled the sale and you are not being prompted to insert your card.

They say “Oh...” pause their video, and then hit the total so you can complete the transaction. Immediately after doing so, the Cashier goes right back to watching YouTube on their phone. You grab your bag of items and walk away perplexed.

How do you feel as a Customer?

*As a customer you may be concerned about the distracted Cashier because it could cause them to make an error. Will you need to check each item against the receipt to be sure you were not overcharged. Maybe she didn’t scan an item and the alarm goes off when you walk out? Lastly, you may feel like your time was less important than the employee’s time because of the delay in cashing out due to the Cashier watching videos. This leads to frustration and resentment.*

Would you want to return to this business again?

*In the future, you may decide not to return to this business. You may not want to go through the headache of watching every item being scanned and tracking the cost just so you can be sure you were not overcharged? In addition, you may be in a hurry and there is another drugstore right across the street. Maybe you’ll give that one a try – just to see if the service is better – since they sell the same items at roughly the same price.*

# Effective Communication

Effective Communication is being able to: Listen actively and empathetically, self-advocate, resolve conflicts, and understand different communication styles and perspectives.

- Listening is by far the most important aspect of communicating. When working with customers listening empathetically means your full attention is focused on them and how you can make their experience better. Customers will know when you are not hearing them or not paying attention.
- Active listening in the workplace is essential to the workflow. If the message is not received and understood properly, your co-workers and supervisors are on the wrong page to begin with. Active listening requires patience and practice, it means to listen with intent to understand and learn, not teach. One important aspect of this is ensuring as the other person is speaking, you are listening to what they are saying, instead of internally forming your response.
- Advocating for yourself means to communicate when you do not understand, or when you have needs that are not met. Successful self-advocacy is being confident in asking for what you want, with a goal of learning about what you need to do to get there.
- One of the most frequently asked interview questions is how you handle conflict. An interviewer might say, 'can you tell us about a time where you faced conflict in the workplace and provide an example'. When we communicate well, conflict is often not an issue. The most important tactics are to remain calm, use facts, and avoid blaming.

- The most successful relationships are not free of conflict, they are the ones that resolve conflict well and move on. It is helpful to know that there are three primary communication styles:

**Aggressive** – Aggressive communicators will often dominate the conversation. They can leave little room for questions, and, if in disagreement with others, will often dismiss ideas from their audience members. Aggressive communicators will often insist that they are correct, are not good at accepting feedback, and make others feel like they do not have a voice. When we are communicating aggressively, we are only respecting ourselves.

**Passive** – Passive communicators have a difficult time speaking up during one-on-one conversation, or in small groups. They will often not speak unless asked direct questions, and, when they do speak, they will do so in a way that allows others to retain control of the conversation and decision-making, even to the point of allowing mistakes to happen because of their silence. When we are passive, we lose respect for ourselves.

**Assertive** – Assertive communicators use active listening. They respectfully and patiently speak up. People who are assertive will allow others to voice their concerns, and they will even seek input from others to ensure that the conversation is fluent, and there is agreement on resulting decisions. They will use facts, and they will express their feelings using “I” language. When we are assertive, we are respecting ourselves and respecting others.

- Understanding these communication styles is important as it allows us to see why we may experience conflict in the workplace. When working as a team, if one team member takes control of the conversation by telling others what to do without team member agreement, we may begin to feel confusion or anger. Additionally, if we are working for a supervisor who does not take time to listen to our concerns, we may feel like we do not have a voice. These situations can be effective in getting work done, but they can also lead to resentment and employees feeling demotivated. If unresolved, this can lead to unhappiness in the workplace, and often, towards people beginning to look for a different job.



## Tips for Effective Communication

Here are some important tips to keep in mind for communication in a work setting:

- Demonstrate friendliness, adaptability, and politeness in group settings
- Present ideas in work settings
- Demonstrate speaking, listening and social skills as a team member
- Communicate thoughts, feelings to justify decisions or support position
- Ask for feedback
- Interact appropriately with those in authority
- Interact professionally with co-workers
- Respond appropriately to customer requests
- Engage in appropriate conversations
- Choose appropriate language/manners of expression
- Resolve conflicts appropriately
- Understand impact of work on others



# Factors

People often communicate differently and have different styles and preferences in the workplace. These can be due to a lot of different factors, with one of those being generational differences. The following highlights common traits of generations to improve communication and the ability to interact effectively. Keep in mind, this does not mean everyone from a certain generation feels this way, these are just common trends:

## **Baby Boomers** (born 1946-1970)

**Characteristics:** Strong work ethic and values teamwork, defines themselves by their career, good collaborators on a team but needs to know how this fits the mission of the agency. Also, financial success is very important but balanced with motivation towards organizations who have a more humanitarian mission.

**Preferences:** Face to face or phone communication, democratic (not hierarchical) supervision, flexible work schedules, ask for and hear their input, treat them as equals, offer opportunities for collaboration and teamwork.

## **Gen X-** (born 1970 to early 80s)

**Characteristics:** Independent thinkers, first to adopt and innovate new technologies, often completed higher education.

**Preferences:** Flexibility is considered the most important perk. Work-life balance is key to this generation. Communication is less formal, preference is to allow them time to figure things out independently and then process solutions, so voicemail and email or often ideal. As far as supervision, show interest in their personal goals and ambitions, give timely and specific feedback, don't micromanage, make the workplace fun, seek diversity, value their independence and freedom, and support training and growth.

## **Millennials** (born early 1980s-2000)

**Characteristics:** Goal oriented and great multi-taskers and collaborators. Prefer open and honest relationships with managers. Are very open minded and excited about career opportunities. Desire to genuinely enjoy their jobs as well as the people they work with. Are knowledgeable about technology with understanding of how to use technology solutions; they rely heavily on digital means of communication.

**Preferences:** Communication preferences are digital-text, IM, social media platforms, etc. Prefer opportunities to utilize the latest technology, have trainings virtually. With supervision, sharing with them how they are making an impact or difference; being collaborative and allowing multitasking of roles and responsibilities. Valuing them with recognitions, leveraging their tech knowledge, offering coaching and support, promoting and valuing volunteerism and civic duty.

## **Gen Z'ers** (born 1997-2013)

**Characteristics:** Native use of technology, utilize that first to seek answers and broaden knowledge, tend to be self-reliant and pragmatic, care deeply about others and working collaboratively, greater appreciation for diversity and finding their own unique identities.

**Preferences:** Prefer in-person communication, although text or email are acceptable. Prefer non-hierarchical leadership and like to work collaboratively and with flexibility that includes efficiency. They also value authenticity (feeling comfortable showing up as their whole selves) and relevance or feeling valued.



# Appropriate Social Interactions

**Appropriate social interaction at work** is crucial for fostering a positive and productive environment. Here are some basic characteristics of positive social interactions.

## 1. Building Strong Teams:

- **Social interactions** within the workplace contribute to team building.
- Collaborating, sharing ideas, and supporting one another create a sense of unity.
- Strong teams achieve better results and overcome challenges together.

## 2. Effective Communication:

- **Appropriate social interactions** involve active listening and clear communication.
- Engage in respectful conversations, ask questions, and provide constructive feedback.
- Effective communication prevents misunderstandings and promotes collaboration.

## 3. Creating a Sense of Community:

- **Interacting socially** with colleagues fosters a feeling of belonging.
- A sense of community encourages employees to invest in their work and organization.
- People who feel connected are more likely to stay motivated and committed.

## 4. Reducing Workplace Stress:

- **Positive interactions** reduce stress.
- Sharing experiences, laughing, and empathizing create a supportive atmosphere.
- A stress-free workplace enhances well-being and productivity.

## 5. Professional Image and Reputation:

- **Appropriate social behavior** reflects professionalism.
- Treating others with respect, kindness, and empathy builds a positive reputation.
- Colleagues and supervisors appreciate professionals who contribute to a harmonious work environment.

## 6. Networking and Career Growth:

- **Social interactions** expand your professional network.
- Building relationships with colleagues, mentors, and industry peers opens doors.
- Networking can lead to career opportunities and personal development.

## 7. Adapting to Remote Work:

- In a remote-first world, **virtual social interactions** are essential.
- Attend virtual coffee breaks, team-building sessions, or online events.
- Stay connected even when physically apart.

**Appropriate social interaction** at work enhances teamwork, communication, and overall well-being. Prioritizing this soft skill contributes to a positive work environment and professional success.

## How is developing professional relationships at work different than developing relationships outside of work?

Developing professional relationships at work and building personal relationships outside of work involve distinct dynamics. Here are some ways they differ:

### 1. Purpose and Context:

- **Work Relationships:**

**Purpose:** Professional relationships primarily serve work-related goals.

**Context:** These relationships form within the workplace, centered around tasks, projects, and organizational objectives.

**Boundaries:** Clear boundaries exist to maintain professionalism.

- **Personal Relationships:**

**Purpose:** Personal relationships focus on emotional connection, companionship, and mutual support

**Context:** These relationships develop outside work settings, such as social gatherings, hobbies, or shared interests.

**Boundaries:** Boundaries are more fluid, allowing for deeper emotional connections.

### 2. Frequency of Interaction:

- **Work Relationships:**

**Frequency:** Interactions occur regularly during work hours.

**Consistency:** Colleagues see each other daily, fostering familiarity.

**Structured:** Meetings, emails, and collaborative efforts drive interactions.

- **Personal Relationships:**

**Frequency:** Interactions vary based on personal schedules and preferences.

**Spontaneity:** Friends and family connect informally, often outside set routines.

**Unstructured:** Conversations happen naturally, without formal agendas.

### 3. Depth of Connection:

- **Work Relationships:**

**Depth:** Typically surface-level, focused on work-related matters.

**Professionalism:** Colleagues maintain a level of formality.

**Task-Oriented:** Conversations revolve around tasks, deadlines, and projects.

- **Personal Relationships:**

**Depth:** Can be deep and multifaceted.

**Authenticity:** Friends and family share personal experiences, emotions, and vulnerabilities.

**Life Events:** Conversations cover life events, dreams, and aspirations.

#### 4. Emotional Investment:

- **Work Relationships:**

**Emotions:** Emotions are often controlled and professional.

**Objective:** The focus is on achieving work-related outcomes.

**Stability:** Emotional investment may fluctuate based on work circumstances.

- **Personal Relationships:**

**Emotions:** Emotions are raw and genuine.

**Subjective:** The focus is on mutual care, empathy, and understanding.

**Stability:** Emotional bonds deepen over time.

#### 5. Impact on Well-Being:

- **Work Relationships:**

**Impact:** Positive work relationships enhance job satisfaction and reduce stress.

**Support System:** Colleagues provide professional support.

- **Personal Relationships:**

**Impact:** Strong personal relationships contribute to overall well-being.

**Emotional Support:** Friends and family offer emotional support during life's ups and downs.

#### 6. Longevity and Flexibility:

- **Work Relationships:**

**Duration:** May change due to job transitions or organizational shifts.

**Adaptability:** Professionals adjust to new colleagues.

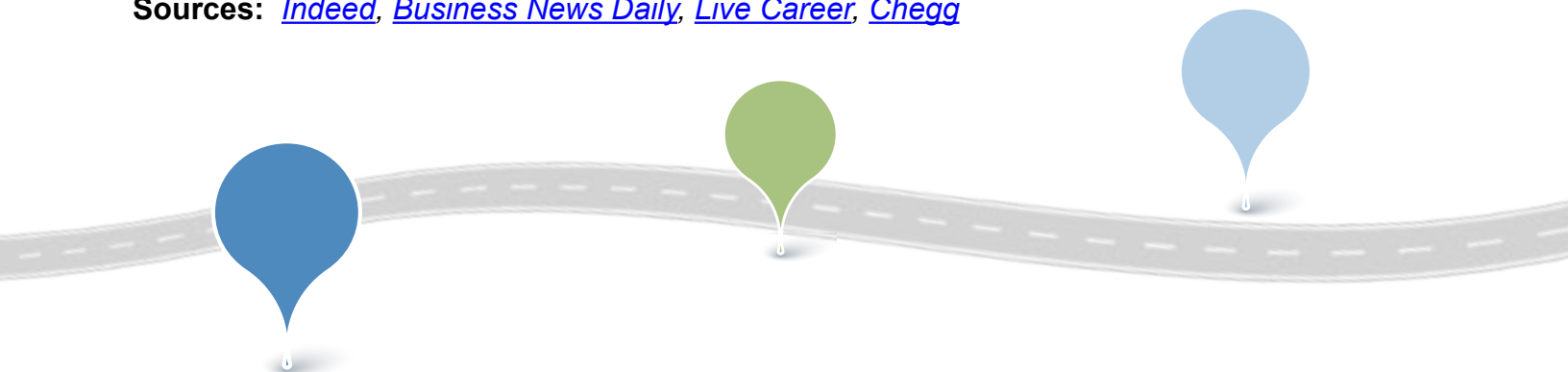
- **Personal Relationships:**

**Duration:** Often lifelong.

**Consistency:** Friends and family remain constant through life changes.

Professional relationships facilitate productivity at work, while personal relationships enrich our lives outside of work.

**Sources:** [Indeed](#), [Business News Daily](#), [Live Career](#), [Chegg](#)



# Discussion

Here is a video that demonstrates: [Effective Communication and Social Interaction](#).

**Scenario 1:** A new co-worker you are not familiar with is being overly friendly with you and asks if you would like to go to lunch together. You do not feel comfortable with this. How would you handle this scenario as a professional?

**Answer:** Set clear **boundaries**. You may politely, but firmly, explain to the co-worker that, at this time, you would like to keep work relationships focused on work-related matters. In the future, if you do eventually develop a “work friend” relationship with this co-worker, you can reconsider the offer.

**Scenario 2:** Recently, a co-worker has picked up the tendency to stand within your personal space while interacting with you and has made improper comments such as, “We would make a great team both in and outside the office.” How would you handle this situation as a professional?

**Answer:** Again, set clear **boundaries** in your working relationship with this co-worker, but also explain to the co-worker that they need to respect your **personal space**. You may firmly tell your co-worker that you are uncomfortable with how close they have been standing in proximity to you of late, and that they need to maintain a professional distance moving forward. You may also explain to the co-worker that you do not wish to be involved in an intimate relationship with a co-worker, and would like to keep interactions work-related. If your co-worker continues to make advances, you should speak with your supervisor and HR team.

# Your Role as an Employee and Your Rights

- **What does “On the clock” mean?**
  - You were hired to complete a task or service. If that task or service is not completed, you could have a reduction of your hours, receive a written warning or improvement plan, or up to termination of your employment.
  - There is an expectation that you will be professional, honest, and be as efficient as possible.
  - Give the employer a reason to keep giving you hours
  - If you’re driving a company vehicle, the way you drive may also be a representation of the company. Especially if there are company logos or a phone number to report, “How am I driving?” stickers that may appear on the vehicle.
  - Even if you are “off the clock” it’s possible you are still representing the company while on or off company property. Wearing company provided clothing, company branded colors or logos, or using company materials such as lanyards, binders, or other branded materials.

## **For example:**

You’re a cashier working for a local retailer that wears a red t-shirt as part of their dress code. You just finished your shift and wanted to grab some items to purchase before leaving work. While still wearing the ‘red’ shirt, you’re talking on your cell phone having a conversation not appropriate in the workplace and customers can hear your conversation.

You are still subject to disciplinary action because while wearing the ‘red’ shirt, you are representing your employer regardless of being “off the clock.”

- **Personal phone usage, social media during work time:**
  - Electronic devices (tablet, phone, or smart watch) should be used rarely while “on the clock.” Remember, you are being paid to complete a task or service by the employer, not checking your devices.
- **How social media can affect the workplace?**
  - Anything on the internet is hard to delete once it’s been shared, liked, or commented on. Things can be screenshot, recorded, or archived. If you don’t want your thoughts, feelings, preferences available to everyone, it’s recommended not to post, comment, or share.
- **Friends at work:**
  - As soon as you walk into the workplace, an imaginary light switch is flipped from personal time to work time.
  - Texting a supervisor, co-worker, and/or friend non-work-related conversations can have a similar situation as social media. Conversations can be screenshot, recorded, or archived.
  - The workplace is not the place to host your social life. When appropriate, you can be friends at work. However, most non-work-related conversations should be taken outside of the workplace during a time you are not “on the clock.”

# Highly Valued Employee Qualities

Sometimes, as an employee, we are interested in advancing/promoting. Here are some highly valued personal qualities to keep in mind for your role as an employee when you are interested in moving up within the company. *(Encourage discussion and see if client(s) can identify any of these characteristics before sharing the list)*

- Exert high levels of effort and perseverance
- Seek out information to improve skills
- Believe in self-worth and maintain positive attitude
- Be a self-starter
- Have self-confidence
- Project a positive self-image
- Be flexible, adaptable
- Possess honesty and integrity
- Demonstrate self-control when responding to workplace requests
- Demonstrate trustworthiness
- Understand impact of violating organizational values
- Demonstrate honesty when faced with critical decisions
- Select appropriate and clean clothing and maintain personal hygiene
- Complete task even when unpleasant

## Resources

Here are some resources to assist with rights as an employee and accommodation rights:

- NDOL: Employee Rights  
<https://designgov.nebraska.gov/employment/employee-rights/>
- Job Accommodation Network  
<https://askjan.org/info-by-role.cfm#for-individuals>
- DOL: Resources for Workers  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/workers-resources>
- DOL: Worker Rights  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/workers>
- EEOC: Employees & Job Applicants  
<https://www.eeoc.gov/employees-job-applicants>
- OSHA Worker Rights and Protections  
<https://www.osha.gov/workers>

# Self-Care

Understanding how to care for yourself outside the workplace is critical so you can work effectively when on the job (sleep times, diet, organization, work/life balance, etc). Grooming and attire is appropriate for the workplace. It is also important to ensure self-care while in the workplace (taking appropriate breaks when needed, know when to walk away if it's okay).

- Self-Care outside of the workplace means making good choices for a healthy lifestyle. Most commonly this means getting regular sleep, eating healthy, and participating in physical activity.
  - Ask yourself, how many hours of sleep do I get at night. Between 7-9 is recommended.
  - If you are not getting good sleep, ask yourself, what kinds of things am I putting into my body? Foods, medications, drinks, etc... Most of us know what a healthy diet looks like, fewer of us have the means to eat healthy, such as buying healthy vegetables, fruits, or meats, when it is often easier to stop and buy a fast-food burger and fries.
  - Physical activity is important because if we are sitting at a desk all day, or on our feet all day, having a healthy balance of rest and physical activity is essential.
- There are many other factors to effective self-care. If we are in a high-stress job, finding time to relax or 'unwind' is important. Ask yourself, what are some of the things I do to relax or have fun?
- Many of us have had jobs where we sometimes, 'take our work home with us'. This is ok if we stay mindful of our responsibilities with our employers, but not ok if we or our family members are suffering our stress outside of work. Finding a balance here can be a constant struggle, but making good choices are good place to start.



# Tips for Self-Care

Here are some important tips to help maintain self-care and work/life balance:

- **Creating Space for Ourselves:** Despite the demands of work, family and other responsibilities, it is important to carve out a time for self-care. Whether it's starting your day with a few moments of mindfulness, taking a lunch break to go for a walk or winding down in the evening with a relaxing activity, intentionally create space for yourself in your schedule.
- **Setting Boundaries:** Boundaries play a crucial role in safeguarding our well-being. Learn to say «no» to extracurricular activities or commitments that drain your energy or overwhelm you. Prioritize self-care by protecting your time and energy, allowing yourself the space to recharge and focus on what truly matters.
- **Making Self-Care Non-Negotiable:** Treat self-care as a non-negotiable aspect of your daily routine, just like eating or sleeping. Recognize that self-care is not a luxury but a necessity for your overall health and happiness. By making it a priority, you send a clear message to yourself and others about the importance of taking care of your well-being.
- **Customizing Self-Care Practices:** Self-care is a deeply personal journey, and what works for one person may not work for another. Explore different self-care practices and identify what resonates with you. It could be engaging in physical activity, practicing meditation or mindfulness, journaling, pursuing a hobby, or simply spending quality time with loved ones.
- **Integrating Self-Care in Small Ways:** Incorporating self-care doesn't always require significant time commitments. Look for opportunities to use self-care into your daily activities. It could be listening to uplifting podcasts during your commute, practicing deep breathing exercises during stressful moments, or incorporating nutritious meals into your diet. Small acts of self-care throughout the day can have a progressive positive impact on your well-being.
- **Mindfulness and Reflection:** Stay attuned to your needs and regularly assess how well you are incorporating self-care into your daily life. Practice mindfulness to check in with yourself and make adjustments as needed. Reflect on the impact that self-care has on your overall health and happiness, reinforcing the importance of making it a consistent practice.

Here are a couple of additional resources for Self-Care and the Workplace:

[Improve Social Relationships In the Workplace](#)

[How To Start a Self-Care Routine](#)

Sources: [Indeed](#), [Business News Daily](#), [Live Career](#), [Chegg](#)





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