



Learning to Work It Out

Workplace Soft Skills for Individuals with Significant Barriers

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PROGRAM INFORMATION

THE PROBLEM

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that more than 4.3 million Americans were receiving assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program at the end of 2010. More than half of these also struggle with other significant challenges, such as disabilities, substance abuse and addiction, mental illness, incarceration, functional illiteracy, domestic violence, and periods of homelessness.

To survive these challenges, many individuals in long term poverty have adopted a live-for-the-moment mindset. These attitudes and behaviors temporarily ease the anxiety of poverty, but paradoxically keep individuals from escaping the poverty itself. As a result, they often find themselves trapped in a multigenerational, self-defeating cycle of poor educational achievement and underemployment.

THE SOLUTION

Traditional interventions for this population have ranged from self-esteem building, feel-good programs on one end to practical-minded, job-seeking training on the other. The "Learning to Work It Out" (LWIO) curriculum bridges the gap by first challenging self-defeating thinking that keeps these struggling individuals from fully engaging in the job search process, then deliberately teaching the interpersonal skills needed to manage difficult work-related social situations.

Specifically, LWIO uses cognitive behavioral techniques and brain-friendly learning strategies to help hard-to-serve customers develop:

- (1) Insight into self-defeating personal beliefs which drive unproductive behaviors;
- (2) Awareness of employers' unspoken expectations,
- (3) Skills for managing strong emotions;
- (4) Skills for dealing with difficult social interactions; and
- (5) Skills for logically solving problems without relying on assumptions.

THE DETAILS

“Learning to Work It Out” is a newly revised 12-lesson cognitive-behavioral program which targets individuals with multiple barriers to employment, especially those struggling with low self-esteem and self-defeating patterns of behavior.

Through structured group activities, supportive role playing, and stories with realistic characters, LWIO participants come to develop the insights and skills necessary to successfully adjust to the interpersonal demands and social expectations of the workplace. The LWIO program deliberately integrates brain-friendly learning techniques to encourage participants to both gain essential knowledge and retain new interpersonal skills. The program works best when delivered to groups of 10-16 participants by 1-2 trained instructors over the course of 3-4 weeks. It is designed to complement rather than replace other programs which more specifically address self-esteem and substance use issues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

“Learning to Work It Out” consists of 12 lessons, each requiring approximately 90 minutes. The curriculum is divided into four modules, each focused on a different set of insights and skills needed to transition from poverty into the workplace.

Module 1: Self-Awareness

Lesson 1 Courage to Change

Lesson 2 Setting Positive Goals

Lesson 3 Understanding Conflict

Module 2: From Home to Work

Lesson 4 Personal Beliefs

Lesson 5 Unspoken Rules of Work

Module 3: Managing Emotional Situations

Lesson 6 Stop & Think

Lesson 7 Expressing Concerns at Work

Lesson 8 Dealing with Criticism at Work

Module 4: Problem Solving Skills at Work

Lesson 9 Problem & Goal

Lesson 10 Information & Insight

Lesson 11 Choices & Consequences

Lesson 12 Closing

More information about this program, including samples of the workbook and trainer’s manual, may be downloaded from www.WorkinItOut.com. Full examination copies may be obtained by contacting the author, Dr. Steve Parese, at SBParese@aol.com.