

# Key Points

# “Kids These Days!”

## 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, creating “cognitive conflict.”

## 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 if they are going to adjust to the culture of the workplace.

For further information or additional training in this topic, including instructor certification in the “Beginning to Work It Out” soft skills program for at-risk youth, please contact:

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**Preparing At Risk Youth  
for Workplace Success**

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# Workshop Description

Troubled youth often have difficulty getting along with peers and authority figures -- difficulties sure to cause problems with co-workers and supervisors when they transition from school and home to the adult world of work.

This highly interactive workshop explores employer expectations, explains why at-risk youth and young adults have trouble adjusting to the culture of the workplace, and offers strategies for teaching them how to work through workplace problems, rather than blowing them out of proportion.

## Teen Lingo Quiz

- |                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| [ ] 1. BAKED    | a. Your smile or mouth     |
| [ ] 2. CHEDDAR  | b. Carrying a weapon       |
| [ ] 3. FLOSSIN' | c. Stoned on marijuana     |
| [ ] 4. GEL      | d. Money                   |
| [ ] 5. GRILL    | e. Showing off your wealth |
|                 | f. A promiscuous female    |
|                 | g. Get along with          |



## Thomas' Work Situation



1. 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

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 Intv'n

When youth are behaving unprofessionally at work because of strong underlying personal beliefs, consequences alone (i.e., getting in trouble) are often not enough.

Cognitive behavioral interventions are often more effective, helping youth learn to "code-switch" from the rules of their personal/social lives to those of the adult workplace.

Two approaches can be helpful:

## 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 a new SOCIAL environment."

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

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



## Employers Say:

CATEGORY

EXAMPLES

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

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

- A:**
1. S \_\_\_\_\_ Deficit
  2. M \_\_\_\_\_ Deficit
  3. C \_\_\_\_\_ Conflict

# 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 & friends come 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.**

## Thomas' Home Situation



1. Thomas has a fight with his parents when they criticize his choice of clothes. He storms off to his room, slams the door, and logs onto Facebook.

**"Pull your pants up! Change that shirt! Take out that earring! Why can't they just let me dress myself? It's MY body, not theirs!"**

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 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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