

Session 8

SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE LABOR MARKET: ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY OF PRISONERS WITH BETTER SOCIAL SKILLS

Purpose:

The purpose of this session is to explore the importance of social skills in the labor market and how these skills can significantly improve the employability of the prisoners. By addressing the development of social skills, we aim to empower prisoners with the tools needed to successfully reintegrate into society and secure meaningful employment, reducing the risk of recidivism. This session enriches educators with skills and knowledge on how to conduct exercises intended for participants to explore and develop their own image of what they want from a future job and build skills to help them reach that goal. Within it, the prisoners should be able to identify personal strengths and corresponding work possibilities, using effective communication.

Taking into account the wide range of social skills, especially 21st Century skill, as well as various social skills training programs, prison educators should focus primarily on job-based social skills, which are highly prized on the labour market. They are important for professional development, for vocational integration and employability as well.

Therefore, we can choose the following specific objectives of the session:

- Empowerment for employability by facilitating self-discovery, boosting self-esteem and creativity, emphasizing their skills and competencies, and providing insights into the challenges and opportunities they may encounter upon reintegration into society and in the workplace.
- To broaden employment prospects for prisoners through a practical approach, specifically by assisting them in identifying the most suitable job opportunities based on their individual skills and strengths.
- To equip prisoners with key personal competencies through the program, including:
 - Facilitating personal reflection to identify strengths and job skills.
 - Anticipating challenges and finding effective solutions.
 - Developing self-awareness within the context of work.
- Establish strong connection between training activities within the prison setting and reintegration opportunities in the community to enable better transition of prisoners into productive roles post-release.
- Boost the confidence of prisoners within the prison environment, particularly those without prior job experience or those who have been in prison for an extended period, by instilling belief in their ability to succeed in gainful employment.

- Promote and elevate cross-role conversations within the prison community regarding employability skills, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages the exchange of insights and experiences related to job readiness.
- Contribute to the creation of safer communities by actively participating in initiatives aimed at reducing re-offending rates, emphasizing the role of effective training and reintegration programs in breaking the cycle of criminal behavior.

While there are various crucial employability skills, this training session focuses on introducing the process of finding a suitable job through 3 different exercises including personal reflection, challenges that may occur and finally, finding a job.

Thematic units related to 21st Century skills:

1. **Communication Skills:** Understanding the significance of effective verbal and non-verbal communication in the workplace, including active listening and interpersonal skills.
2. **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Exploring the ability to work well in teams, resolve conflicts, and contribute positively to group dynamics, which is crucial in the modern workplace.
3. **Adaptability and Problem Solving:** Teaching participants how to adapt to changing work environments, solve problems creatively, and make informed decisions.
4. **Leadership and Responsibility:** Discussing leadership qualities and the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions, both of which are essential for career advancement.

Methods&Tools:

Exercise 1:

1. Storytelling and listening
2. Individual work and group discussions

Exercise 2:

1. Team work
2. Voting
3. Group discussions and presentations

Exercise 3:

1. Categorization
2. Writing and critical thinking
3. Team work and group discussions

Materials (resources) needed:

Exercise 1:

Prepared your own Job Tree to show as an example to the group.

Each participant will then need one large piece of paper.

Enough color markers, pens

Sticky notes or other materials that they can use for their individual Job Tree

Exercise 2:

One set of the Memory Cards for each group of five participants

PERSONAL PRESENTATION	INTEGRITY/HONESTY
A POSITIVE POINT OF VIEW AND INITIATIVE	PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVITY
COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY	TEAM WORK
TIME MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION	NEGOTIATION AND DECISION MAKING
MATHEMATICAL LITERACY	TECHNOLOGY/COMPUTERS SKILLS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be clean and tidy- Dress appropriately for the job- Show courtesy and respect- Speak and behave properly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use math in solving of everyday problems- Understand tables and graphs- Uses mathematics to support the your ideas or views when you can
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be positive about yours work- Do things the right way and finish them- Come up with ideas and try to make them come true- Have the will to learn and improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be honest and sincere- Make the right decision- Be persistent in what you say and you do- Be trustworthy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explain what you mean in writing or orally- Be clear and precise- Listen carefully to others and collect yourself information- Understand what you need to know	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ask questions to understand the situation- Divide the problem into smaller pieces- Come up with new ideas- Decide what will suit you best
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Plan your work and what will happen to you necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cooperate well with other people- Share the workload and be fair- Help others

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor your progress and meet the deadlines - Check your work - Pay attention to details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respect and value other people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Express your ideas - Listen to what others think - Use the facts as a guide - Avoid arguments and strive for agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses computers and electronics equipment - Communicate clearly via email and documents - Find information - Be safe and secure

Exercise 3:

- One set of 11 cards for co-worker tips per group.

TIP SHEETS

1. Forgive the co-worker if he has hurt you.
2. Decide if it is important for the co-worker to know that you are right.
3. Don't respond or wait to respond if someone has said something negative.
4. Don't talk to a co-worker about your negative feelings toward another co-worker.
5. Try to understand how your co-worker feels.
6. Try to understand how other people view your actions.
7. Learn lessons through conflict.
8. Ask yourself what the worst-case scenario will be if you react or do not react.
9. Avoid intense arguments or raising your voice.
10. Leave the office or close your office door for a few minutes to calm down.
11. Be kind to others, even if they are not kind to you.

- Board or flip chart paper
- Markers

Assessment:

The inclusion of all of the competencies and practical skills will give participants the knowledge and practice to be confident as they move forward with their lives. The exercises provide the participants and facilitators with a concrete way to provide and in searching and obtaining work and skills that make participants more hireable. For this purpose, as assessment of the competences you may use self-evaluation forms or group discussions.

Description of the exercises:

EXERCISE 1¹ PERSONAL REFLECTION = Job Tree

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Enable participants to reflect upon what they already know about work opportunities and resources in their community
2. Participants will discover what valuable resources and skills they already possess which will help them in their employment search. Reflecting on our dominant personality traits can help bring focus to our search for a job.
3. Participants will reflect on the dominant personality traits which can help bring focus to the job search.

TIME 90min

WARM UP CHAT (20MIN)

1. You may want participants to work on this activity individually, but they are able to work in groups if preferred. You may want to offer them examples of jobs, or have them reflect on the jobs of people they know in their communities, that they admire.
2. Ask participants if there is a specific person they know in their community (community centres, religious institutions, or even neighbours, shop owners, etc.) that they have great respect or even rely on for advice.
3. Ask them to reflect on why this person is special to them. How often and where do they see them? What does this person do (for a job or in their daily life)? Why do they trust their advice?
4. Ask the participants if they've ever asked adults in their community about what decisions and paths led them to their current jobs/life situation.
5. Explain that today they are going to map out jobs and begin to map out their community, specifically focusing on the work that people are doing and how they found these opportunities.
6. Gather the participants close enough so that they can see your Job Tree and talk them through it. Explain that today they are going to work on their own Job Tree and reflect on how different community members found these opportunities. Explain also that the tree they create in this session will be used again in the next session to expand to include others in the community.

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JOB TREE (30 MIN)

1. Next give each participant one large piece of paper and pen and ask him/her to draw the outline of a tree. Reassure those who are not confident at drawing that this is not an art exercise – that the tree just provides a basis for their story-telling. Give them five minutes.

Leaves – Community Members

2. Here the participants should draw one large leaf per person in the tree to represent different people in their communities and their jobs. Clarify that things like farming, gardening, care, etc which are sources of income are jobs that should be included and recognized. Inside each leaf, they should write that person's name and the job or type of work.

Trunk – Personal Job Ranking

3. Next, ask the participants to write their own name in the trunk. Underneath their name they should consider all of the different jobs done by the people represented in their job tree and they should rank them. For example, they will think about which of those jobs interests them most and write it as #1 under their name on the trunk. They will continue this ranking until they have listed all or most of the jobs found in their tree.

Sun - Required Skills

4. Now ask them to draw a large round sun in one corner above their tree. Looking at the top two jobs they ranked in their tree trunk, they should consider what kind of education, assets, training and/or experience is required to acquire that kind of job. They could also consider personal skills or characteristics. Have them list as many of these as they can fit into their sun. Explain how it is important to consider or find out how others have found their opportunities so that they can learn from them.

SHARING (30MIN)

1. Optional, depending on how you organized the exercise: Encourage each participant to come up to show her/his job tree, or in a few groups if the class size is too large. They should spend time explaining their reasons for their ranking of those jobs and their list of 'how to achieve it' which they wrote in their sun image. Encourage participants to engage with the presenter to ask questions or suggest other skills, traits, experience they may have left out.

NEXT STEP- COMMUNITY (10MIN)

1. Participants can begin thinking of whom these other members of the community or the neighbourhood might be that they would include. Brought up discussion about this. Who and why?

EXERCISE 2 FINDING A JOB = Getting the basics right

LESSONS OBJECTIVES To give participants an insight into the skills employers generally seek

TIME 30-45min

1. Ask participants which skills they think are most valued by employers e.g. arriving at work on time. Not all of these skills need you to go to a college. Some you can gain from your social lives. Which? Brainstorm list on board and vote for top five.

2. Explain that it's important not only to have these skills, but also to be able to talk or write about how you can demonstrate each one. Help participants see that they might need to provide this information to colleges or potential employers and that they might need to write it in letters, email or application forms, or talk about their skills in an interview or on the telephone.

3. Ask participants to work alone to rank each of the ten skills provided by you. Which are they best at currently and which are they weakest at? Ask them how they can improve in their weakest areas?

4. Put players into groups of five and give each a full set of memory cards. Explain that the set is made up of pairs. Half of the cards are 'skills definition' and half are 'examples' cards. For each 'definition' card there is a matching 'examples' card. Ask them to shuffle these and spread them out on the table/floor, face down.

5. The first player turns up a card and reads it aloud. He then turns a second card over and reads that aloud. If the two make a matching pair they are taken off the table/floor and the participant keeps them. Then he would take another turn. If the two cards do not make a pair, they are turned back face down in the same position they were in before and the turn is over.

6. It is now the turn of the second player. He too turns over two cards and reads them aloud. If they make a pair he can keep them. If they don't make a pair he must turn them over face down again, and leave them where he found them.

7. The game requires each player to try and remember the position of each card. It ends when all the cards have been removed. The winner is the person with the most card matches.

8. Once a group has finished, they should set the pairs out together and review them.

Key Messages

- To make an informed decision about the sort of job to pursue you should think of lots of different criteria.
- Employers typically look for certain key skills, not matter what position they are recruiting for.
- You need to be able to demonstrate that you possess those skills.

EXERCISE 3² ANTICIPATING CHALLENGES = Getting along with your colleagues

LESSONS OBJECTIVES Developing professional maturity in preparation for dealing with difficult situations in the workplace

TIME 30-45 min

1. Ask participants if they ever encountered difficulties at work with a difficult fellow inmate or colleague. Encourage them to share stories describing how these difficulties arose and how they dealt with them. Remind them not to use anyone's name. Spend five or ten minutes on this.

Examples could be:

- A new co-worker not being accepted into the group, or not being helped with training
- Jealousy
- Competitiveness
- Dishonesty
- Being taken advantage of, i.e. a co-worker who always asks them to cover for their bad habits or mistakes or always being asked to take extra shifts
- Claiming others' work or ideas

2. Tell participants that this next exercise will explore strategies for dealing with difficult colleagues/co-workers.

3. Divide them into groups of 11. One group may have slightly less than 11.

4. Explain that each person in the group will read one of the 11 slips of paper. As they read it, everyone will copy this down into their notebook. If one group has less than 11, then they will continue around the circle until all 11 slips have been read.

5. These slips all represent ideas and strategies about how to deal with difficult situations at work regarding colleagues.

6. Once they have read and copied down all 11 tips, have them discuss the following in their small groups:

- Can anyone think of a time, or share a story of when they used one of these tips?

Or when they should have but instead did not and the situation became worse?

- Which of these tips do you think is hardest to follow? Why? This will be different from person to person based on personality.

- List the tips that you think are common sense and easy to follow. Does anyone disagree? Say why and share an example.

7. As a team, or if they prefer, as individuals, participants should follow along in their notebooks and write down the three tips that they think give the best advice. They should also give a reason for this.

8. Finally allow a few participants to share one or two.

Key Messages

- Preparation is necessary to stay on task and to achieve goals.
- Finding a job is not the end of the road- there will be many inevitable challenges to face in the workplace.
- Some challenges will be more serious than others. Following the tips received in this session will help avoid more minor conflicts. Large problems that deal with rights will be covered in the next session.
- Everyone has personal challenges that they need to overcome to reach their goal. Good planning, a willingness to learn, and a focus on professionalism is always helpful.

INFORMATION FOR THE FACILITATOR

Participants may feel that finding employment represents the greatest challenge to them. And certainly they are likely to have to overcome many obstacles as they search for work. But finding employment is not the end of the story. Participants will very probably continue to face many challenges at work, often relating to conflict. The purpose of this session is to help participants understand that finding work, although a cause of celebration, does not of itself constitute a 'happy-ever-after' scenario. Participants are encouraged to anticipate such challenges and experiment with strategies and solutions for coping.

The exercises strive to develop the participants' confidence and self-awareness and guide them in a sequential manner towards a complete idea of what to expect and to prepare for entering the workforce. However, these exercises are aimed at convicts who do not have significant work skills, but can work in warehouses, shipment distribution, kitchen, utilities, parks maintenance, other facilities, agriculture etc.

Although each work task requires special knowledge, skills and abilities, based on the interests and capacities of the prisoners, they should be encouraged and developed so that they can use their potential. Every person is capable of work, but you need to work on motivation, on discovering your own abilities, and therefore the task of educators is to motivate and stimulate them to develop a career and employment paths.