





# Surviving on the Job

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| Activity 14-1 | <b>What's New?</b>                              |  10-15 minutes   |
| Activity 14-2 | <b>Employers' and<br/>Workers' Expectations</b> |  30-40 minutes   |
| Activity 14-3 | <b>On-the-Job<br/>Negotiation</b>               |  40-50 minutes |
| Activity 14-4 | <b>Feedback/Wrap-up</b>                         |  10-15 minutes |

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## **Key Concepts**

- A job is a contract that spells out the relationship between a worker and an employer. Understanding the employer's expectations is the key to maintaining a good job relationship.
- Keeping a job often depends on the ability to negotiate. Negotiation is the process of communicating back and forth for the purpose of reaching a joint decision.
- Employers need workers who are hardworking, responsible, and reliable. The better an employee's job record is, the more successful he will be in negotiating with his employer to satisfy his needs.

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## Materials Checklist

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### Activity 14-2 Employers' and Workers' Expectations

- Newsprint
- Markers

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### Activity 14-3 On-the-Job Negotiation

- Leader Resource, "Elements of Negotiation"
- Newsprint
- Marker

## What's New?

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**Planning Note:** Tailor the following questions so that you are asking about specific concepts, ideas, and skills that the participants reviewed in Session 13, “Handling Anger and Conflict on the Job.” Focus on their reactions to the strategies for controlling anger in the workplace.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Can somebody please tell the group what we talked about in the last session?
2. Did you experience any conflicts at work since the last session? Were you able to use the strategies we discussed to control your anger? Which strategies? How did things go?
3. What about situations outside of work where you had to control your anger? What did you do in those situations?
4. Overall, what has been most helpful about our discussions of managing anger in personal relationships and on the job? What basic principles can you apply when you are angry?
5. How have our discussions changed the way you think about conflicts in your life? Have they changed how you respond to conflict and manage your anger? If so, how?

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## Employers' and Workers' Expectations\*

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**Purpose:** To help participants understand the importance of good relationships between workers and employers. To recognize that good relationships start with clear expectations on both sides.

**Materials:** Newsprint and marker.

**Time:** 30-40 minutes.

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**Procedure:** Begin by saying something like, "In the last session, we talked about how to handle anger and conflict on the job. We identified work situations in which anger caused problems, and then we examined strategies for controlling anger and avoiding explosive situations. Today we'll continue our discussion about work, focusing especially on ways to maximize the chances of having a good experience on the job."

**Next,** ask the men to think about a recent boss or supervisor and to imagine that they are in his or her shoes for a day. Tell them that this can be any boss they have had recently, whether on a one-day job or on a steady job. After everyone has identified such a boss or supervisor, tell the men to imagine being this person as he or she prepares to start the workday. Ask for two or three volunteers to describe how they imagine the boss's life, using the following questions.

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\*Adapted from Carol Hunter-Geboy, Pamela Wilson, and Kay Sherwood, *New Chance Life Skills and Opportunities Curriculum* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and Public/Private Ventures, draft of August 19, 1992).

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. As the boss, what tasks must you complete today?
2. What do you need your workers or helpers to do in order to complete these tasks?
3. What sorts of problems do you anticipate? (Examples: workers not showing up on time; people not working efficiently; errors being made; etc.)
4. What will happen if you fail to complete the tasks? Do you have to answer to anyone? Who?

*Continue* the discussion with the whole group by asking the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. What did it feel like to be in your boss's shoes?
2. What kinds of things have you done as a worker to help or hinder your boss's efforts to get the job done? (Examples: coming to work late or with a hangover; doing a sloppy job; working overtime; etc.)
3. How clearly has your boss explained what is expected of you?
4. What could your boss have done to improve the chances of getting the job done? (Examples: be clear about what is expected from workers; be more patient; etc.)
5. What did you like about your boss's style of supervising? What did you dislike?
6. How did most of your coworkers feel about this boss? Did they agree with your opinions?
7. What would you have done differently if you had been the boss?
8. To what extent did your relationship with your boss cause you to keep (or leave) this job?

**Now tell** the men that you would like their reactions to the following statement (read it aloud, and post it on newsprint): “A job is a contract between an employer and a worker.” Begin by asking the men to define “a contract.” (If necessary, start them off with an example of a contract, such as a tenant’s lease.) The definition may include:

- A verbal or written agreement
- A deal
- An exchange or trade
- A promise or commitment

**Now tell** the group to imagine making a contract with an employer for a job that they have been offered. Ask: “What are some of the terms — the specific conditions of the job — that you would want to have spelled out in your contract?” Their list should include:

- Hours/days of work
- Pay
- Benefits (vacation time, sick leave, health insurance, etc.)
- Opportunities for advancement and training
- Who the supervisor is
- What the job responsibilities are
- How employees are evaluated for pay raises
- Whether and how often drug screening is done
- Length of probationary period
- Dress code

**When** the lists have been compiled (consider posting them on newsprint), continue by asking the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Does a contract have to be written out? Is a verbal agreement a contract?
2. In what way do you think a contract can help you keep your job?
3. Would an employer want to spell out the same terms that you listed in your contract? What other things might an employer want to state in the contract?
4. What happens when a worker doesn't understand what the employer expects?
5. Have any of you had an agreement or contract with your boss? (Remember to include union contracts in this response.)
6. Have you found that a contract or a clear agreement usually makes things better for you at work? Does the boss usually stick to the agreement?
7. What can you do if the terms of the agreement or contract are not followed?
8. If things are not working out, what can you do to negotiate changes in your contract?

***Tell*** the men that the next activity will give them practice in the art of negotiation in order to help them get what they need from their bosses.

## On-the-Job Negotiation

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**Purpose:** To help participants learn to negotiate effectively for the things they need on the job.

**Materials:** Leader Resource, “Elements of Negotiation”; newsprint and marker.

**Time:** 40-50 minutes.

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**Planning Note:** Copy the five steps of the Leader Resource “Elements of Negotiation” onto newsprint.

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**Procedure:** Tell the men that this activity will sharpen their negotiation skills, which will help them to get what they need on the job. Say something like, “Getting things like time off, a change in work schedule, a raise, or even the supplies you need to do your job may be difficult at times — especially if you have to rely on a boss or supervisor who is unpleasant or is just too busy. Often, however, the *way* you ask for something can have a lot to do with the outcome. This activity will identify some effective ways to negotiate for what you need from your boss or employer. But first we’re going to do a role play to demonstrate how the process of negotiation takes place in everyday life.” Then ask for two men to volunteer to role-play the following vignette:

Marcus and Stan have been overhauling Stan’s ’84 Mustang convertible for three months. They have rebuilt the engine, added a deluxe stereo and CD player with speakers, replaced the tires and hubcaps, and repainted the body. Stan originally paid \$2,000 for the car, and he bought most of the parts at cost from a friend who works in an auto shop. He now wants to sell the car and hopes to get about \$4,000. Marcus wants to buy it — but for only \$3,000, because that’s all the money he has.

**Divide the men** into two groups. One group will select a member to play the character of Stan and will work with him to develop a list of reasons why Stan should keep his price at \$4,000. The other group will select a member to play the character of Marcus and will help him develop a list of reasons why Stan should sell him the car for \$3,000. Give the groups about 10 minutes to develop the arguments they plan to use in negotiating a fair price for the car.

**After 10 minutes**, reconvene the entire group. Tell the two volunteers who are playing Stan and Marcus that they have about 10 minutes to negotiate with each other; at the end of that time, they must settle on a price for the car.

**After the role play**, when the men have agreed on a price for the car, discuss the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. How well do you think Stan and Marcus did in negotiating a price for the car?
2. Which arguments seemed most reasonable?
3. Which arguments seemed unreasonable or off the point?
4. How willing was Stan to compromise and lower the price? How willing was Marcus to compromise and pay more?
5. How satisfied do you think Stan was with the final price? How satisfied do you think Marcus was?
6. What could either Stan or Marcus have done differently to improve his negotiating position? Did either man take a strategy that worked against him?

**Tell the men** that there is a model for negotiation that may improve their effectiveness as negotiators. Post the newsprint “Elements of Negotiation,” and go through steps 1-5 with the group, explaining as needed (see the Leader Resource “Elements of Negotiation”).

*After* you have reviewed and explained the five steps, ask the men to analyze the role play between Stan and Marcus in terms of the model on the newsprint. For example:

### **Stan and Marcus Negotiate**

#### **1. State your position.**

(Stan wanted \$4,000 for the car; Marcus wanted to pay \$3,000.)

#### **2. Communicate the *reason* for your needs/interests.**

(Stan needs to cover the cost of the parts, labor, and equipment; he also wants to make a profit. Marcus has only \$3,000 to spend; he knows how much Stan paid to fix up the car; he wants to deduct money for his time and labor in rebuilding the car.)

#### **3. What is important to you?**

(Marcus and Stan are friends; the '84 Mustang is a special car; both men feel that their efforts should be rewarded, etc.)

#### **4. What are your bargaining chips?**

(Marcus may agree to a higher price if he can pay it off slowly; Stan may give Marcus a break if he buys the car without the stereo or hubcaps; etc.)

#### **5. Outcome.**

(What price did Stan and Marcus agree on?)

*Now ask* each man to think about a work situation in which he had to ask his boss or supervisor for something he needed either personally or to do his job. Record their responses on newsprint. (The list might include time off, a change in schedule, a promotion, a pay raise, a new supervisor, needed tools or equipment, additional staff, etc.)

*After* everyone has stated at least one need, tell the men that now they are going to practice negotiating with a boss to get something they need. Have them divide into groups of three; in each group one man should volunteer to be the boss, another to be the employee, and the third to be an observer. Instruct the small groups to select a situation from the list you just developed (or, if they would like, to create a new situation where a worker is attempting to negotiate with his boss for something he

needs). When all groups have identified a situation, tell them to review the five steps outlined on newsprint (“Elements of Negotiation”) and then to spend about five minutes using those steps in a negotiation.

**After** about five minutes, instruct the observer in each small group to evaluate how well each of the two negotiators used the five steps in reaching their outcomes. Then ask for one or two of the small groups to role-play their situation for the entire group. After each role play, ask first the observer and then the entire group to critique how well the actors negotiated.

**Discuss** the role plays by asking the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. For those of you who played employees, how did you feel about your ability to negotiate with your boss?
2. For those of you who played the boss, how did that feel?
3. For those of you who played observers, how well did the boss and the employee use the five steps in negotiating?
4. In general, how willing were the characters to make compromises?
5. How helpful was it to use the five-step model for effective negotiation?
6. In general, what do you think influenced the outcomes of these role plays?
7. How helpful is it in negotiating to separate the person from the problem or need? (For example, when you need something from your boss, how do your feelings about him or her affect your request? How do your boss’s feelings about you affect your request?)
8. How much does your prior work record influence your ability to ask for and get things? (For example, if you know that you’ve been a responsible employee, do you feel more confident about asking for things?)
9. What happens when you feel that your request was denied because the boss just doesn’t like you? What can you do in this situation?

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## Leader Resource

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### Elements of Negotiation

Negotiation is the process of communicating back and forth for the purpose of reaching a joint decision.

**1. State your position.**

(What are your demands, preferences, or needs?)

**2. Communicate the *reason* for your needs/interests.**

(What are your supportive arguments? What are your rights? For example, "I have accrued a day's vacation and therefore would like Friday off.")

**3. What is important to you?**

(What are the values or principles at stake? For example, hard work should be rewarded.)

**4. What are your bargaining chips?**

(What are you willing to compromise, trade, give up?)

**5. Outcome.**

(Agreed upon by both parties.)

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### Points to Keep in Mind

- Separate the *people* from the *problem*. (Your personal relationship or opinion of your boss should have nothing to do with what you need from him/her. Your needs are based on what you are entitled to as a worker.)
- Invent *options* for mutual gain. (What can both parties get out of the negotiation? For example, your boss wants you to do good work and be responsible; you want your boss to be flexible and understanding.)
- Use criteria based on *objective* facts. (What are fair standards and fair procedures? My contract says that I am entitled to sick days, time off, etc.)

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Adapted from Roger Fisher and William Ury of the Harvard Negotiation Project, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981).

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## Feedback/Wrap-up

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Summarize and discuss today's session by asking the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Would somebody like to tell the group what he got out of today's session?
2. Has anything we talked about today changed the way you view working?  
What about the way you think about a boss or employer? What has changed?
3. Does anyone plan to use the five steps in negotiation that we discussed today?  
If so, how will you use them?
4. What, if anything, did you learn today that will help you keep your job when things are rough? What new approach did you learn?

**Remind** the men that this and other sessions have offered strategies to help them keep their jobs so that they can provide for themselves and their children. State that the next session will focus on issues relating to race, including how race affects people's personal lives and their opportunities to work and take care of their children. Ask each man to think about where he stands on the issue of race — and particularly about what he tells his children and what his behavior shows his children about where he stands.

**Remind** the men of when the next session will meet, and thank them for their participation.