**APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS: SCENARIOS AND ACTIVITY**

Activity:

Sit down with your Job Seeker and brainstorm a list of appropriate workplace topics that they can use while at work. If helpful, separate this list between “topics appropriate for work” and “topics appropriate for break.” This will help differentiate between topics that are work-related and topics that are more personal/topical, but are still appropriate in the workplace.

Similarly, you can create lists of words and phrases that are appropriate for the workplace. Discuss why some kinds of language are not suitable for a work environment. Examples of these lists can be found below.

Your lists should be guided by what you already know about your Job Seeker’s communication strengths and areas of improvement. Lists can be then adapted into supports that the Job Seeker can bring with him/her into the workplace as reminders of appropriate topics and language.

If helpful, you may also choose to make a list of non-examples, or topics/language that are *never* appropriate in the workplace to compare with the list of appropriate topics/language.

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| Topics For Work | Topics for Break |
| Work related questions | Books |
| Greetings | Trains |
| Asking how someone’s day has been | Sports |
| The weather | Television shows |
| Discussing your performance with your supervisor | Music |
| Asking for more work or a break | Sharing one or two appropriate plans for the weekend |

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| Language for the workplace | Language for home |
| Asking “how are you?” | Any swearing or cursing |
| Praising others for their work, “you did a great job when you…” | Put-downs or bullying, “you stink” “It is so stupid that you like Star Trek” |
| Saying “excuse me” when you need someone’s attention | Yelling to get someone’s attention “Hey Jim!!” |
| Respectful questions, “are you free to talk for a while?” “may I ask you a few questions?” | Sarcastic or disrespectful questions |

Examples and Non-examples:

Below are scenarios that depict both appropriate and inappropriate workplace topics and language. When you read the scenarios with the Job Seeker, discuss whether the scenario was appropriate or inappropriate. This should help you assess your Job Seeker’s understanding of appropriate workplace conversation, and address any misconceptions that the Job Seeker may have.

1. You are sitting at a lunch table with a few of your coworkers. You are really excited about the new episode of a TV program that you know they watch too. When there is a break in the conversation, you ask them how they felt watching last night’s episode. You listen to their responses and share how you felt while watching it.
   1. Appropriate: the Job Seeker chose a topic of conversation that he knew would interest the people he was with. He engaged in the conversation when he was on a break. He waited respectfully to hear other people before continuing to express his opinion.
2. You are working near one of your coworkers. You think about something that you know he/she will find funny. You put your work down, walk over to your coworker and tell them the joke. You both laugh and your coworker tells you another joke. You leave and get back to work.
   1. Inappropriate: While it is nice that the Job Seeker has a good relationship with his coworker, this kind of conversation should be reserved for a break. While the Job Seeker should be encouraged to be social at work, taking an unscheduled break to tell jokes is considered inappropriate for the workplace.
3. You are talking to one of your coworkers while you are on a break. You tell your coworker that you really like a particular sports team. They respond that they like a different team. You immediately respond, “wow, that’s so stupid. I can’t believe anyone would like *that* team, *my* team is just so much better…” You then explain in detail why you think your team is better than your coworker’s team.
   1. Inappropriate: Job Seekers should strive to use as much positive language as possible in the workplace. Calling a coworker “stupid” for liking a different sports teams is negative language that may hurt the coworker’s feelings. Job Seekers should accept difference of opinion.
4. Your coworkers are all talking while on a break. You take your break and join their conversation. You listen for a minute to see what they are talking about. They are talking about where to find good restaurants in the area. Someone recommends a restaurant that you dislike. You chime in by recommending a restaurant that you *do* like. You describe how good the food is at your choice of restaurant.
   1. Appropriate: the Job Seeker did not undermine or insult the coworker with which he disagreed. The Job Seeker joined the conversation by adding something constructive, and speaking positively about the topic.
5. You are on a break and want to start a conversation with one of your coworkers. Your coworker is still working, but you stop by his desk for a chat. After saying hello and asking how their day has been, you start to tell them about a really awesome song you heard on the radio the day before. You offer to play the song for him, and start playing the song out loud on his computer.
   1. Inappropriate: while the Job Seeker was on a break, his/her coworker was not. While it was appropriate to approach his coworker with a simple greeting, he needed to respect that his coworker was not on a break and had work to do.
6. You are at lunch with coworkers. You have just come back to work after being sick for a few days. You tell them, “I went to get a flu shot, and it gave my symptoms. The next thing I knew, I was throwing up everywhere. And I mean everywhere. It was in the bathroom and the kitchen, and even the dog. I was just so sick. My fever was so high that I couldn’t get out of bed, and I was just sweating everywhere. Then when I tried to wash my sheets, I tripped and stubbed my toe. I was just so sick.”
   1. Inappropriate: while it *is* appropriate for a Job Seeker to let his/her coworkers know that they were sick, the Job Seeker should not go into graphic detail about their illness. Simply letting their coworkers know that they had the flu, and are now better is more than enough information to share.
7. You are at lunch with coworkers. You have just come back to work after being sick for a few days. You tell them, “I went to get a flu shot, and it ended up making me sick. I’m much better now!” They all express sympathy and are glad that you are feeling better.
   1. Appropriate: In this scenario, the Job Seeker communicated that they had been sick, and why. They avoided giving too much medical information about their illness.
8. You are walking out of work with a coworker, and she asks you what your plans are for the weekend. You explain that you have plans to go out to eat with your mother. You ask her what her plans are. She tells you that she is going to take her dog to a dog park.
   1. Appropriate: In this scenario, the Job Seeker sticks to appropriate activities when discussing her weekend plans. The Job Seeker keeps the explanation simple without giving too much information in the conversation. The Job Seeker listens to her coworker’s plans as well.