The Essential Work Skills Workbook for Jobs, Community and Home
Self-Assessments, Exercises & Educational Handouts

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Using This Book *(For the professional)*

The need for educational reform and restructuring, to address the issue of the gap between the skill requirements for work and the skill levels of work applicants, are the topics of many management discussions. Business and industry representatives have expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the general level of preparedness of prospective workers. This lack of work skills is being addressed by both schools and work training agencies. Supervisors traditionally expect to train new workers in company-specific procedures and acquaint them with the corporate norms, standards and expectations of their workplace. They will also provide training in work-specific technical skills, but supervisors believe that prospective workers will have learned general work skills prior to applying.

- “The excellence of your work will be a key contributor to your survival at work. “Excellence” is not simply a buzzword anymore, and most supervisors expect excellence as an essential quality for survival in the highly competitive world of work.

- People will be asked to perform more functions, be more productive and use more skills in the workplace. Because the global market is demanding more of companies and organizations, supervisors are expecting more of their workforce. Flexibility, a wide-range of work skills and self-management is the key to work success.

- Workers’ “ladders,” ways for people to move up in a company or organization, through promotions and pay raises, are becoming less hierarchical and more web-like. This forces workers to have a greater variety of skills and to be ready to use them.

- The need for training and retraining will increase. People lacking effective work skills will face being downsized in the changing workplace. Workers are being asked to continually review and revise their specific work skills.

- Corporate restructuring in response to the pressures of competition will create hardships for workers who are unprepared. Mergers, takeovers, and businesses closing will continue to be the business norm. Workers with the most effective work skills will be the most likely to retain their position and even thrive in the workplace.

These trends indicate that workers need to be more cognizant of the need to learn, update and utilize effective work skills. Given the rapid rate of change in the workplace, prospective workers need to develop new skill sets to cope and thrive in this changing economy. The spotlight is clearly on skills for successful work positions. Work is being defined by required skills and skill gaps rather than duties assigned to occupational titles. Though research indicates that work skills can be taught and learned, the purpose of this workbook is to provide workers and prospective workers with the requisite skills they will need to be successful in any work setting.

Using This Book  *(For the professional, continued)*

The Essential Work Skills Workbook for Jobs, Community and Home contains five separate sections to help participants learn more about themselves and the work skills that they possess that are fundamental to their ability to work effectively. They will learn about the importance of these skills in the changing workplace and complete assessments and activities to define the required workplace skills and determine their skills gaps in the workplace.

**SECTIONS OF THIS BOOK:**

**LEADERSHIP SKILLS SCALE** helps individuals identify whether or not they have the requisite skills to be a good leader, and to help them develop effective leadership skills for the future.

**WORK STRESS SCALE** helps individuals identify how much stress they are currently experiencing at work and help them reduce their stress by learning more effective ways for dealing with work-related stress.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCIES SCALE** helps individuals explore how effective they are in working with and communicating with diverse people in the workplace.

**ORGANIZATIONAL STYLE SCALE** helps individuals explore and understand their specific organizational style when managing their work in a work setting.

**THE WORK-LEISURE BALANCE SCALE** helps individuals explore how effective they are in balancing work, leisure, community and family activities.

These sections serve as avenues for self-reflection, as well as for group experiences revolving around identified topics of importance. Each assessment includes directions for easy administration, scoring and interpretation. Each section includes exploratory activities, reflective journaling activities and educational handouts to help participants discover their habitual effective and ineffective work skills and provides instruction for enhancing their most critical work-skill strengths and reducing their weaknesses.

The art of self-reflection goes back many centuries and is rooted in many of the world's greatest spiritual and philosophical traditions. Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, was known to walk the streets engaging the people he met in philosophical reflection and dialogue. He felt that this type of activity was so important in life that he went so far as to proclaim, “The unexamined life is not worth living!” The unexamined life is one in which the same routine is continually repeated without ever thinking about its meaning to one's life

*(Continued)*
Using This Book *(For the professional, continued)*

and how this life really could be lived. However, a structured reflection and examination of beliefs, assumptions, characteristics, and patterns can provide a better understanding, which can lead to a more satisfying life. A greater level of self-understanding about important life skills is often necessary to make positive, self-directed changes in the negative patterns that keep repeating. The assessments and exercises in this book can help promote this self-understanding. Through involvement in the in-depth activities, the participant claims ownership in the development of positive patterns.

Journaling is an extremely powerful tool for enhancing self-discovery, learning, transcending traditional problems, breaking ineffective life habits, and helping to heal from psychological traumas of the past. From a physical point of view, writing reduces stress and lowers muscle tension, blood pressure and heart rate levels. Psychologically, writing reduces sadness, depression and general anxiety, and leads to a greater level of life satisfaction and optimism. Behaviorally, writing leads to enhanced social skills, emotional intelligence and creativity. It also leads to improved writing skills which leads to more self-confidence in the workplace.

By combining reflective assessment and journaling, participants will be exposed to a powerful method of combining verbalizing and writing to reflect on and solve problems. Participants will become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their specific work skills. Inspirational quotes, facts and figures, as well as resources for further information are provided as an adjunct to the introspective activities.

**Preparation for using the assessments and activities in this book is important. The authors suggest that prior to administering any of the assessments in this book, you complete them yourself. This will familiarize you with the format of the assessments, the scoring directions, the interpretation guides and the journaling activities. Although the assessments are designed to be self-administered, scored and interpreted. This familiarity will help prepare facilitators to answer questions about the assessments for participants.**

Participants will be asked to respond based on their current work or any work situation from their past. Work can include any jobs they have had, contractual situations, work they did in the community, volunteer work, work at home, work with family or any other situation in which they were responsible for completing tasks. **THE RESULTS WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE IF THEY REFER TO THE SAME WORK SITUATION (PAST OR PRESENT) THROUGHOUT THE BOOK.** On the first page of each scale they can identify the work they will be thinking about as they complete the scale.
The Assessments, Journaling Activities and Educational Handouts

The Assessments, Journaling Activities, and Educational Handouts in The Essential Work Skills Workbook for Jobs, Community and Home are reproducible and ready to be photocopied for participants’ use. Assessments contained in this book focus on self-reported data and are similar to ones used by psychologists, counselors, therapists and career consultants. Accuracy and usefulness of the information provided is dependent on the truthful information that each participant provides through self-examination. By being honest, participants help themselves to learn about unproductive and ineffective patterns, and to uncover information that might be keeping them from being as happy and/or as successful as they might be.

An assessment instrument can provide participants with valuable information about themselves; however, it cannot measure or identify everything about them. The purposes of the assessments are not to pigeon-hole certain characteristics, but rather to allow participants to explore all of their characteristics. This book contains self-assessments, not tests. Tests measure knowledge or whether something is right or wrong. For the assessments in this book, there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask for personal opinions or attitudes about a topic of importance in the participant’s career and life.

When administering assessments in this workbook, remember that the items are generically written so that they will be applicable to a wide variety of people but will not account for every possible variable for every person. The assessments are not specifically tailored to one person. Use them to help participants identify possible negative themes in their lives and find ways to break the hold of these patterns and their effects.

Advise the participants taking the assessments that they should not spend too much time trying to analyze the content of the questions; their initial response will most likely be true. Regardless of individual scores, encourage participants to talk about their findings and their feelings pertaining to what they have discovered about themselves. Talking about health, wellness, and overall well-being as it relates to work can enhance the life of participants.

These wellness exercises can be used by group facilitators working with any populations who want to strengthen their overall wellness.

A particular score on any assessment does not guarantee a participant’s level of work skills. Use discretion when using any of the information or feedback provided in this workbook. The use of these assessments should not be substituted for consultation and/or career planning with a career counseling/coaching professional.

Thanks to the following professionals whose input in this book has been so valuable!

Carol Butler, MS Ed, RN, C
Kathy Khalsa, MAJS, OTR/L
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Kathy Liptak, Ed.D.
Eileen Regen, M.Ed., CJE
Lucy Ritzic, OTR/L
Layout of the Book

Materials in this book:

- **Assessment Instruments** – Self-assessment inventories with scoring directions and interpretation materials. Group facilitators can choose one or more of the activities relevant to their participants.

- **Activity Handouts** – Practical questions and activities that prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors.

- **Journaling Activities** – Self-exploration activities and journaling exercises specific to each assessment to enhance self-discovery, learning and healing.

- **Educational Handouts** – Handouts designed to enhance instruction can be used individually or in groups. They can be distributed, converted into masters for overheads or transparencies, or written down on a board and discussed.

Who should use this program?

This book has been designed as a practical tool for helping professional therapists, counselors, career counselors and coaches, psychologists, teachers, group leaders, etc. Depending on the role of the professional using *The Essential Work Skills Workbook for Jobs, Community and Home* and the specific group's needs, these sections can be used individually, combined, or implemented as part of an integrated curriculum for a more comprehensive approach.

Why use self-assessments?

Self-assessments are important in teaching various health and wellness skills. Participants will:

- Become aware of the primary motivators that guide behavior.
- Explore and learn to identify potentially harmful situations.
- Explore the effects of messages received in childhood.
- Gain insight that will guide behavioral change.
- Focus thinking on behavioral goals for change.
- Uncover resources they possess that can help to cope with problems and difficulties.
- Explore personal characteristics without judgment.
- Develop full awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses.

Because the assessments are presented in a straightforward and easy-to-use format, individuals can self-administer, score, and interpret each assessment independently.
Introduction for the Participant

Work is of central importance in your overall career, volunteer or home satisfaction and general well-being. People who love the work they do, and who feel competent at their work, are more successful and satisfied than those who do not. You take a large part of your identification from the work you do and thus it forms a significant part of your self-concept. The problem is that many workplaces have changed and continue to do so. In this “new” workplace, it is important to develop the requisite work skills that supervisors expect from their workers.

While specific knowledge and technical skills gained from formal education, or at work training, have been necessary for people in the workplace, work-related or work skills are considered as important as technical expertise. Supervisors are requiring a much broader skill set from their workers, thus increasing the demand for more well-rounded workers. It is estimated that workers in the workforce will go from school to school from school to work, from work back to school and then from retraining back to the workplace in an ongoing cycle of trying to learn the necessary work skills required in most positions and demanded by the ever-changing requirements of the fast-moving workplace.

It is imperative to be responsible for managing your own skill development to keep up with the changes and new developments occurring in the workplace. The development of effective work skills in order to stay competitive is critical. Supervisors will expect you to be able to do your work, but they also expect you to be able to apply your knowledge of work skills. Adaptability will also be a key to your employment success.

Now that you know the importance of applicable skills in the workplace and you know you need to continue developing these important skills, the good news is that work skills can be taught, acquired, learned and practiced by anyone interested. You now need to be a self-manager of your own skill development and work development. Learning and practicing effective work skills does not stop with this book. You need to be a lifelong learner of skills, other than technical expertise, that will help you to be an effective worker regardless of the changes in society and the workplace.

This book, The Essential Work Skills Workbook for Jobs, Community and Home, is designed to help you learn more about yourself, identify your effective and ineffective work skills, and find better ways to use these newfound work skills to positively adapt to, and deal with, the unique challenges of the workplace today.

You will be asked to answer questions based on your current work or any work situation from your past. Work can include any jobs you have had, contractual situations, work you did in the community, volunteer work, work at home, work with your family or any other situation in which you were responsible for completing tasks. The results will be most effective if you refer to the same work situation throughout the book.
The Essential Work Skills Workbook
for Jobs, Community and Home

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Leadership Attributes

Regardless of the type of leadership situation you find yourself in, the necessary attributes rarely change. Think about a leadership position in which you found yourself in the past.

MY LEADERSHIP POSITION __________________________________________________________

(1) Creating a Vision

How did you create a vision for the final outcome for your team?

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

How did you communicate your vision to the other members of the team?

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

What could you have done differently?

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

When you are leading your next team, how will you get people to be passionate about what they are doing so that they cannot wait to get started?

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________