

## CREATING AND MAINTAINING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The most successful workplaces are those in which co-workers and management work well together to create a positive work environment. All individuals in a workplace have developed particular learning styles, which work best for them – some people like to be shown; others work it out for themselves and others choose to read the instructions. The same applies to a person who is seen to have a disability – the strategies to ensure each individual can perform the duties of a particular job may need to be directed in specific ways.

- *Every* relationship or interaction requires people to adjust their behaviours to suit the needs and characteristics of each other.
- The best way to support someone in your workplace is to look at their strengths and abilities, then identify the areas requiring assistance.
- It is important to resist the temptation to assume that everyone with a particular disability has identical needs and interests.
- People who are seen as having a disability participate in the same range of activities as their peers without a disability.
- Everyone is a person first – with characteristics that make up an individual. All people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- A person's motivation for working (financial, companionship or as an activity) can influence what they expect from their workplace.

### **Past learning and life experiences**

We all have things in our past which affect the way we learn and the way we relate to people and situations in our life. A person who is seen to have a disability may have had a number of negative experiences in their life eg: teasing at school, bullied by others (including adults), being the object of jokes, being taken advantage of, placed in vulnerable situations due to misplaced trust, segregated through school or in residential settings. It is not appropriate to delve into this aspect of someone's life but it is our responsibility to think before we act or speak when referring to someone else's behaviour – we just don't know what life experiences that person has had.

### Keeping your workplace positive

*Respect each other*

*Remember teamwork*

**Smile** 

*BE COOPERATIVE*

*DON'T JUDGE OTHERS*

Treat others as you would  
like to be treated  
yourself

*Everybody has different  
strengths (specialities,  
abilities)*

*Be Helpful*

*Don't gossip*

*Support your  
co-workers and employer*

*Give praise when  
it is deserved*

*Constructive  
Criticism*

*Clear Expectations*

### **Who can you talk to for some ideas?**

*-Due to privacy reasons it is important not to discuss an individual within a group context. If you require specific strategies to assist you work with someone in particular, please refer to the following contacts:*

Advance Personnel: Speak to the Employment Consultant from Advance Personnel visiting your workplace

Visit our WEB site: [www.advance.org.au](http://www.advance.org.au)

OR contact by: Phone 6285 2466  
Fax 6282 2320  
E-mail [jobs@advance.org.au](mailto:jobs@advance.org.au)

OR See your supervisor, HR/Personnel Section or Workplace Diversity Officer

**PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IN YOUR WORKPLACE MAY REQUIRE  
 “THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE SQUARE”**



The areas individuals may require support can be grouped into the following categories:

**TASK SUPPORT**  
 (quality and quantity)

<b>Carefully plan presentation and explanation</b>	<b>Break task into logical, easy to follow steps</b>
<b>Keep instructions clear and concise</b>	<b>Check understanding before starting next part</b>
<b>Let trainee practice while you observe</b>	<b>Give frequent feedback and encouragement</b>
<b>Proceed at a pace the trainee is comfortable with</b>	<b>Structured daily plans</b>
<b>Access to any available assistance</b>	<b>Resist “taking over” allow time for independence</b>

◆ If someone takes a little longer to learn a duty, it may be necessary to extend the training period or create task cards.

**COMMUNICATION ASSISTANCE**  
 (directions, expectations, troubleshooting options, organisational structure)

- ∞ *Be aware of the workplace environment and how it may present difficulties*
- ∞ Be willing to communicate in different ways (written, language boards, sign language)
- ∞ *You may need to limit the number of instructions*
- ∞ Ensure a clear understanding of expectations and needs – from both people’s perspective
- ∞ *Check to see if the person understands*
- ∞ Do not talk about the person as if they are not present or cannot understand. Don’t speak for the person.
- ∞ *Ask the person if help is required and do not assist without asking first, but do not insist*
- ∞ If there is a low level of self confidence – make the person feel valued
- ∞ *Be aware of making assumptions – eg: someone’s expression or presentation*
- ∞ Accept the fact that disability exists, don’t try to pretend it isn’t there however, don’t ask personal questions about the disability until the person knows you well enough
- ∞ *Do not patronise or put people down*
- ∞ If a person becomes confused or anxious when given a number of tasks to complete – it may be necessary for all directions to come through one key worker, or written in a diary or e-mailed with clear timeframes and expectations

**SUITABLE EMOTIONAL RESPONSES WITHIN THE WORKPLACE**  
**& WORKPLACE DYNAMICS**

- ◆ Some people may have difficulties controlling their emotions – crying easily, laughing loudly, rapid mood changes and deep depression; therefore occasionally issues arise in many workplaces. ◆ Some disabilities may affect a person’s insight – this may cause impulsive behaviour, people may therefore do things without thinking through the consequences.
- ◆ Often people whose insight has been affected do not know the impact their behaviour may have on other people.

**1. Recognising a problem exists when a co-worker appears stressed and/or frustrated:**

◆ Changes in a person’s behaviour including: punctuality, appearance, irritability, sudden mood swings, declining standards in performance, refusing to mix with others, overly emotional when asked to perform tasks.

**2. Identifying the problem:**

- ◆ Change in routine? ◆ New or additional tasks? ◆ Changes to the office layout, seating etc? ◆ Staff turnover?
- ◆ Too much work or increased expectations? ◆ Has the person been reprimanded or disciplined? ◆ Need for positive reinforcement? ◆ Jealousy of a co-worker? ◆ Harassment by a co-worker when no-one else is present? ◆ Enough work to do? ◆ Do the duties need to be more varied or challenging? ◆ Is the person being treated fairly and well by managers and supervisors?

**3. Strategies to overcome personal frustration:**

◆ Remove the cause. However it is possible that no particular cause exists beyond the general pressures and expectation of carrying out a job. ◆ Be consistent. ◆ Ensure there are clear expectations for the worker. ◆ Try not to take comments made in anger personally.

The following are just some of the strategies that may alleviate everyday stress. These should be encouraged throughout the entire workplace and not directed at individuals.

Humour	Exercise	Talk to someone you trust	Take a short break
Healthy diet	Adequate Sleep	Relaxation Strategies	Explore counselling options

***Thankyou for taking the time to create and promote a positive work environment***