

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT MEMBER WORKBOOK

“No one is unemployable.”
~Anonymous

Optional Module 8.0

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OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT COURSE OUTLINE

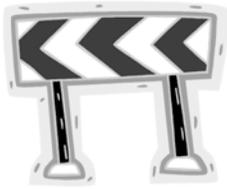
LESSON 1

Course Introduction and Outline
Overcoming Barriers to Successful Employment
Identifying Barriers- Real or Perceived? Checklist
Evaluating Barriers
Transferable Skills Checklist
Identifying and Overcoming Barriers Exercises
Action Plan

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TOPIC 10A: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT



bar-ri-er: (noun) *something that obstructs or separates, often by emphasizing differences*

Barriers....we will encounter a barrier every day! The nature of the barrier and the response which we choose defines the reality of the barrier. Is the barrier one that will be quickly removed by a decision or a risk, or will the barrier need further evaluation to determine the best resolution?

Habits are formed early in life. Good or bad, habits make you who you are. The key is to recognize them and manage them. If you know how to change your habits, even a small effort can bring big changes.

BREAKING BAD HABITS

1. Identify the negative results of your habit.

Write down the results of your bad habits. What is your bad habit costing you? Understanding what you are losing out on because of the bad habit, will motivate you to modify your behavior.

2. Understand the obvious benefits of getting rid of your habit.

Identify positive ways to meet the same needs that were filled by your bad habit. Practice these new habits!

3. Focus on your behavior.

Do you want to avoid the negatives of the habit or do you want to continue the habit?

4. Practice discipline in the moment.

If you are aware of the behavior that isn't good for you, be prepared to change it immediately!

5. Getting rid of a bad habit is learning good habits.

Remember to practice patience with yourself. If you fall back into the old habit, don't kick yourself around for it. Don't fall into self-pity and decide you can't beat the habit. Just get back to your healthy behavior.

6. Ask for support from friends and family.

When you talk to others, they might be able to provide advice or encouragement that you normally wouldn't get from yourself.

7. If your bad habit is an addiction (drugs, alcohol, etc.) it can be harder to break free from.

Seek professional help, addictions require medical assistance.



Being successful in our life's goals and responsibilities means not letting barriers, problems, or habits get in the way or become excuses. The same applies when looking for **employment**. A barrier to employment is anything that may be viewed by a potential employer as preventing you from being able to perform the duties of the position. Employers across the nation are looking for well-trained employees with strong and effective work habits and skills!

Attendance, work skills, life habits, attitude, physical presence, appearance, basic skills, ability to effectively communicate, and responsibility can be barriers to employment. What you must do is identify if there are issues or situations in your life that could be or are barriers that are preventing you from employment success. The next step is to know how to eliminate them in your job search and life. You must be able to manage your attitude, appropriate resources, and develop responses to prevent any problem or issue from becoming a hindrance to your work and career success.



Before you get started, place yourself in the position of the employer who wants to interview you for the open position. What are you looking for in the candidate sitting before you? In addition to appropriate responses, what else do you see and hear? An employer is listening and looking for potential barriers, too!

“The person who gets hired is not necessarily the one who can do the job best, but the one who knows the most about how to get hired!”

---Richard N. Bolles

To get started, take a quick assessment of your current status. Do you have a résumé and an appropriate outfit for your interview? Do you have transportation for the interview and to the job? Have you arranged reliable supervision for childcare or dependent care that will not interfere with your attendance? Are you ready to go to work tomorrow if a job were offered to you today?



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IDENTIFYING BARRIERS-REAL or PERCEIVED?

Let's take a look at some of the common barriers that job seekers face today. These can be **real or perceived**. In other words, real barriers are those that do, in fact, exist, but will require solutions to eliminate. Perceived barriers are those we "think" are keeping us from obtaining our goal of successful employment.

Potential Barrier Category		1	2	3
Your Education and Skills	High school diploma or GED			
	Some college/college degree			
	Education related to career interest(s)			
	Can use a computer for word processing and am familiar with the Internet			
	Effectively speak and write English and/or Bilingual			
	Transferable skills useful toward any employment (see transferable skills list)			
Your Work Experience	Work experience related to my career interest(s)			
	Credible work experience, more than two years at a single employer			
	Confirmation of solid work history (Attendance, team player, positive evaluations, etc.)			
	Background check not an issue			
	Positive work references available			
Your Personal Behavior	Easy-going personality			
	Positive attitude/ Avoiding gossip			
	Sensitive and aware of others			
	Polite and respectful of others, even if I disagree			
	Honest person who does the right thing			
	Dependable and trustworthy			
Your Health	Generally healthy person			
	Exercise, eat well to avoid health issues			
	Awareness of good personal hygiene, clean appearance			
	Rarely miss work due to poor health			
	Any disability I may have does not interfere with my work success (hearing, vision, etc.)			
Your Personal Life Responsibilities	Childcare/dependent care established			
	Transportation established			
	Domestic issues or problems are in the past and/or counseling for managing situations is in place			
Your Job Search Skills	Appropriate résumé with accurate information			
	Have all required documents to accurately complete an application for a job			
	Can complete an application			
	Able to use computer/internet to search for jobs and complete on-line applications			
	Open to coaching and suggestions for successful job search			
	Prepared for a job interview			
	Know appropriate dress for interview and have the clothes			

1 = Real Barrier

2 = Perceived Barrier

3 = No barrier

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TOPIC 10B: EVALUATING BARRIERS



Where have you identified barriers to your successful employment? What in your life are you now managing well and do not see as a roadblock to employment success? Where do you need some help with resources, support, and/or training?

Your Education and Skills

With any employment listing, there will be specific skills, knowledge, and abilities that an employer is looking for to minimally do the job. In most cases, the position advertisement or description will list those minimal qualifications. Before applying for a job that you may find interesting, review the requirements for the position. If the position requires a high school diploma or GED, and you do not have one, what do you believe are the chances of getting a call for an interview? Ensure you have the requirements for that position before wasting your time in completing an application and the employer's time in throwing away your application.



Competence in using a computer for word processing is a must in today's job market. Many employers have their application online or have requirements that applicants must be able to demonstrate computer skills such as word processing, Excel, and PowerPoint. Knowledge of the Internet and using search engines are also skills preferred by employers. An employer may require that an applicant have basic computer skills even if there will be no further training required in computer software used in the job that is advertised. Communication is another area that demands proficiency, in writing and speaking English, as well as having secondary language skills in Spanish, French, and even Russian.

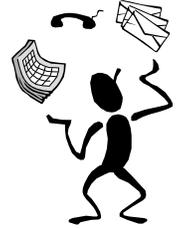
Inventory your skills! See a listing of Transferable Skills that you may have that can be used to qualify you for a position of interest. Additionally, these skills can help you to define your past work experience on your Résumé.

Solutions:

1. Complete your high school diploma or obtain your GED
2. Get additional training or take courses to add to your skills that produce a certificate (Work Certified!☺). There are courses you can take that are at no charge, so check with adult education programs, high schools, churches, community organizations, and/or community colleges. If possible, volunteer at a business that offers the type of work you are interested in pursuing. This can be listed on your Résumé.
3. Request letters of recommendation from prior employers highlighting any specific skills and talents that may relate to the position that you are applying for today.
4. Use your local career center for additional services as well as resources for locating funding and educational opportunities for the most active career areas in your community.

Your Work Experience

One of the most scrutinized areas of an application and résumé is that of your work experience. This reveals not only skills and knowledge, but length of employment and position. Employers are looking to determine if you bring adequate experience to the position and, ultimately, to their company. Employers like to see longevity in employment of at least 2-4 years at a single employer. It is at this point that the employer may choose to inquire into your attendance and work impression from these previous employers. To ensure these are positive impressions, offer a brief explanation to a prospective employer as to why a previous employer might give you an unfavorable reference. Be honest in your answers or reporting of relationships with past employers. Be prepared to answer without speaking critically about your previous employer. The interviewing employer will assume, perhaps, that if you spoke harshly about a previous employer, the chances are high that you will do the same to them if there are conflicts.



For some job seekers, you may be faced with having issues in your background such as arrests, serving jail time, or credit issues. Depending on the job you are applying for, all or some of this information will be sought for review by the company. Even if you have started the job, the employer can let you go based upon discovery of this information if you have not been “up front” in sharing this information. Some employers may state that you are hired for a position pending the review of a background check. If you have been honest, there should be no surprises upon reviewing this information. During the interview, you can share the history or circumstances and what you have done or are doing to put that situation or event in the past. An employer is more apt to bring you aboard based on your being honest and proactive in altering your behavior in a positive way.

There may be cases where you as a job candidate may be overqualified for the position for which you are applying. In this case, change your résumé to reflect the skills you have as they directly relate to the position you are seeking. Ask yourself why you are applying for this position and be ready to offer that genuine explanation to the interviewer.

Solutions:

1. If you have held several jobs in the same field, but different employers, focus your résumé on your skills rather than on your employment. This is more of a functional résumé and more skills oriented.
2. Provide certificates of achievement and completion in courses or training workshops that demonstrate and support your skills.

3. Be honest; not everyone has a positive employment experience. If you have been fired, tell the truth regarding the circumstances. Employers are more apt to take a chance with you for your honesty versus finding out later you were not truthful. Don't volunteer information! As difficult as it may be, try to offer the information in a positive manner with an emphasis on that fact that this situation was and will remain in the past. If it was for personal reasons, assure the employer that this has been addressed and is no longer a barrier to your employment responsibilities. **REMEMBER:** Do not lie or speak negatively of a previous employer!
4. Ensure that you reflect your individual talents and skills in a positive and a "can-do" attitude.
5. If you know there is something that may appear on a background check, which most employers will conduct, be up front with the employer and let them know ahead of time.

Managing Previous Problem Behaviors That Resulted in Job Loss

- 1. Identify the behavior that resulted in being a problem and interfered in your work.**
- 2. Take the responsibility for your actions.**
- 3. Why did the behavior occur? What were the causes that resulted in the behavior?**
- 4. What have you done to prevent the behavior from occurring again?**



Your Job Search Skills

Understanding the essentials of an effective job search is often the most difficult barriers job seekers face today. Where are you with your job search plans and skills? Your confidence and knowledge in being prepared and aware of the job market in your community will greatly improve your chances of a successful search!



Successful job searches today require you, the job seeker, to step outside your comfort zone of looking at the Internet and using the newspaper classifieds as your sole method of searching. Using only these two sources will not produce your desired opportunities. While these are not wrong steps to take in a job search, you must become a savvy seeker! And, no one will come knocking on your door and offer you a job...



So, what are the preparations you need to conduct a successful search? First, prepare yourself with a strong résumé and listing of your skills, abilities, and information generally requested for an application. It will take strong and effective writing skills to ensure your documents, inclusive of cover letters.

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Your Job Search Skills (continued)

are ready to offer to a prospective employer. These documents completed properly and professionally will increase your chances of becoming a candidate for the position you are seeking. Community career centers as well as community colleges offer workshops and programs to assist in preparing you for an effective search.

Keys to a Successful Job Search

- ☞ Allow yourself time to thoroughly research jobs you are interested in and have the skills to do!
- ☞ Be honest with yourself and on your résumé and applications regarding who you are and your work history/skills.
- ☞ Ensure that you have all the information (past employer information/dates, references, etc.) to completely fill out an employer's application.
- ☞ Seek assistance from a career counselor or professional to help you and direct you in understanding the best and latest successful tips and steps for creating a dynamic résumé and cover letter. Keep on top of local job fairs and career days within your community.

Universal Interview Dress Expectations

The standard is to “dress always one level up from the job for which you are applying”

Men:

- Clean shaven or if facial hair, neat and trimmed
- Suit: gray, black, or blue, jacket a must
- White or neutral collared shirt and simple patterned tie
- Blue Collar Work/Construction: Neat, clean, casual collared shirt and pants
- Simple watch, ring, but eliminate necklaces, bracelets
- Eliminate heavy cologne that arrives before you do in the interview room
- Tattoos and body piercings should be covered or removed



Women

- Neat hairstyle and moderate cosmetics
- Simple short, neutral polished nails
- Suit, skirt or pants with jacket and blouse
- Simple classic jewelry, make sure you don't jingle or clank during the interview (ex. bracelets, earrings)
- Eliminate heavy cologne that arrives before you do in the interview room
- Tattoos and body piercings should be covered or removed



Solutions:

1. Take time to research employers that you are interested in! You will be “interviewing” them to find out more about who they are just as they are learning about you!
2. Research the job that interests you. Use your career center or the Internet or O-net to find out more about the job and what it requires and entails. Does it interest you and do you have skills that are applicable to the position? Will you need more training or education?
3. Preparing for the interview is crucial. Have your interview clothes ready! Know your route and locations to the interview location. You may want to confirm the date, time, and location at least a day or two before the interview. Ask who will be interviewing you so that you have a name to present upon your arrival.
4. It is only natural to be nervous at an interview! Allow yourself to be nervous, but do not make yourself appear overwhelmed. Practice answering common interview questions. Be ready to answer why you are the best candidate for the job. Make sure your answer is based on your interests, skills, and abilities. Eliminate questions about salary, benefits, and vacations at this time, unless the interviewer brings it up in the conversation. You will have the opportunity to negotiate or question the salary and benefits once the position offer is made.

5. **ALWAYS** send a thank-you note, e-mail or follow-up phone call to the interviewer. It is often this gesture that “seals the deal” for an applicant!

Your Personal Behavior

“First impressions are lasting ones”. How many times have you heard that? It is true that you will be observed, questioned, evaluated and judged during an interview. That is because the interviewer is looking to match you to their corporate culture and your skills to their open position.



Your personal behavior and habits affect how you manage your life and your performance at work. It is imperative that you avoid behaviors and habits that could destroy your future and that you work well with others.

Additionally, you need to be flexible and understand that you were hired for a specific job that is required for the success of the company. But, you may sometimes feel that your work is not appreciated or important. Even if you do not receive the notice or compliment you think is deserved, you should recognize that the future of the company depends on all employees contributing that which was expected of them when they were hired in. You must be able to complete your tasks and work well with others to ensure the company continues to stay in business to make a profit.

Solutions:

1. Avoid gossip! No good comes from it and ultimately, someone will get hurt.
2. Respect the supervision and team dynamics in your department. Ask questions and always present yourself with the best work ethics, respecting diversity, integrity, and simply, “doing the right thing.”
3. Dependability and trustworthiness will carry you to success in your career. Supervisors recognize that these traits are strong foundations for recognition and promotions.

Your Health



Just as your personality and personal behavior impacts your job performance, your overall mental and physical health is vital to your employment. Employers are cautious about hiring people who have excessive absenteeism due to illness. An issue you might have had regarding missing work in an amount considered above the norm may be disclosed in a reference check. All a former employer has to say is that there was excessive absenteeism or tardiness and that may reduce your chance of becoming hired. Additionally, with the cost of health care rising, employers are hesitant to hire people who may be unhealthy and costly to them.

In general, you are responsible for ensuring you are as healthy as possible and that you recognize feeling good and being able to perform your duties will impact your future with your company. Using alcohol in excess, illegal drug use, smoking, and poor eating and sleeping habits will affect your performance. Overweight people can be considered a liability to a company. While it may not ever come to light in an interview or in discussing a hiring decision, employers are skeptical about hiring someone who presents the potential to be unhealthy. These unhealthy habits may make you appear to practice poor hygiene and affect your ability to perform to a standard expected for your position.

Obvious physical challenges such as poor vision, hearing impairment, etc., should be addressed by you in a positive manner. When discussion of these disabilities arise, you should clarify that your particular handicaps would not interfere with your ability to perform the tasks required in the job for which you are

Solutions:

1. Take an honest look at your lifestyle. Are there habits that are detrimental to your overall health and your well-being? Perhaps these habits are causing problems for you now. Take this opportunity to eliminate them from your life. Smoking cessation programs really help.
2. Personal hygiene is imperative to your work habits and interactions with others.
3. Managing your health will strengthen your confidence, self-esteem, and your presence at the workplace.

Your Personal Life Responsibilities

Personal issues must remain separate from your work life. These barriers must be addressed and settled prior to your commitment to your employer. These issues can ultimately cause concern for the employer in trusting you can be held responsible for your job.



Domestic Violence Statistics

- **Every 9 seconds, a woman is battered in the U.S. AMA, 1998, Georgia Department of Human Resources, 1999.**
- **95% of all victims of domestic violence are women.**
Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, U.S. Dept. of Justice.
- **Domestic Violence is the single major cause of injury to women, more than muggings and car accidents combined.**
First Comprehensive National Health Study of American Women, The Commonwealth Fund, 1993.
- **Domestic Violence is the cause of 30% of physical disabilities in women.**
California Department of Social Services, 1994.
- **50% of all women murdered in the United States are killed by a spouse or an acquaintance.**
Journal of Trauma, 1992
- **Domestic Violence occurs in 60% of marriages and is the most underreported crime.**
National Crime Statistics Report, 1993.
- **90% of battered women reported that their children were present when they were beaten.**
National Crime Statistics Report, 1993.
- **175,000 workdays each year are miss due to absenteeism from the result of domestic violence.**
California Department of Social Services

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used by one person to maintain power and control over another. Physical battering is not the only form of abuse. Emotional and sexual abuse such as insults, intimidation, threats and forced sex are also part of an abusive relationship.



Domestic violence occurs between people in relationships, such as current or former: husbands and wives; boyfriends and girlfriends; gay and lesbian partners; the elderly and their caretakers; parents, children and/or relatives; as well as victims of stalking or trafficking. Although anyone may be a victim, the majority are women and their children.

(<http://www.rileycenter.org/domestic-violence.html>)

Everyone has personal issues that arise for which they are not prepared; however, the lack of consistent childcare or transportation, including the absence of a back-up plan, is not acceptable as an excuse for frequent absenteeism or tardiness. Another unacceptable occurrence is receiving frequent personal calls during work hours while you are on the clock. Essentially you are taking time away from your employer if not on an authorized break. Furthermore, not having these responsibilities taken care of before beginning that new job can demonstrate that you are not work-ready.

Solutions:

1. Make reliable arrangements for your child or dependent care. Have a secondary plan or resource to help in case of an emergency with your primary caregiver.
2. Transportation must be reliable and, like childcare, you will need to have a back-up plan. Use community transportation or try to carpool if you need temporary solutions.
3. Personal business should be handled away from work. It is not the place to deal with it and you certainly do not want everyone to know your personal situation. This can indicate to your employer a lack of responsibility.
4. In domestic abuse situations, remember, you are not alone! No person deserves to be abused for any reason. You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship. If you are in an abusive relationship and want help, seek assistance from a local hospital or counseling center for domestic abuse.

TOPIC 10C: TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills are those skills and abilities that you have that are considered universal to many career fields. Although not a complete listing, perhaps these few will help you to identify those areas you do have skills that can apply to several jobs/careers!

Key Transferable Skills

- Meet deadlines
- Ability to delegate
- Ability to plan
- Results oriented
- Customer service oriented
- Supervise others
- Increase sales or efficiency
- Accept responsibility
- Instruct others
- Desire to learn & improve
- Good time management
- Solve problems
- Manage money/ budgets
- Manage people
- Meet the public
- Organize people
- Organize/ manage projects
- Team player
- Written communications
- Work independently
- Computer skills

Other Transferable Skills

(Working with hands/equipment)

- Use my hands
- Assemble or make things
- Safety conscious
- Build, observe, inspect things
- Construct or repair
- Commercial Driver's License
- Follow instructions

- Classify data
- Compare, inspect, or record facts
- Count, observe, compile
- Research
- Detail-oriented
- Take inventory

Working with Others

- Patient
- Care for well-being of others
- Persuasive
- Non-confrontational
- Pleasant
- Counsel people
- Sensitive
- Demonstrate something
- Supportive
- Sensitive
- Supervise
- Speak in public
- Help others
- Tactful
- Insightful
- Direct projects
- Teach
- Interview others
- Anticipate needs
- High energy
- Open minded
- Kind
- Take orders

- Research
- Create new ideas
- Outline plans
- Speak in public
- Proofread
- Write clearly
- Prefer details
- Goal-oriented

Leadership/Management

- Arrange social functions
- Motivate people
- Negotiate agreements
- Decisive
- Plan
- Delegate
- Run meetings
- Direct others
- Explain things to others
- Self-motivated
- Get results
- Share leadership
- Think of others
- Team builder
- Solve problems
- Mediate problems
- Take risks
- Empowering others

Creativity

- Artistic

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- Operate tools and machinery
- Drive or operate vehicles
- Repair things
- Good with my hands
- Use complex equipment
- Use equipment

Processing Data/Facts

- Analyze data or facts
- Investigate
- Audit records
- Keep financial records
- Locate answers or information
- Balance financial records
- Calculate, compute
- Manage money

- Listen
- Serving
- Trust
- Working with others
- Negotiate
- Understand
- Adaptable
- Outgoing

Communication/Judgment

- Articulate
- Innovative
- Communicate verbally
- Logical
- Remember information
- Accurate

- Music appreciation
- Dance, body movement
- Perform, act
- Draw, sketch, render
- Present artistic ideas
- Play instruments
- Expressive

Add any other Transferable Skills that you think are important

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

(Resource: <http://www.roguecc.edu>)

EXERCISES: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS

The following are real life scenarios that job seekers just like you have faced in their quest for employment. You will be divided into groups for discussion. The discussion questions that follow should be answered first by yourself, and then in discussion with your group. Be prepared to offer a group explanation of how to manage and overcome the barriers or bad habits of the job seeker.



Scenario 1: Eric

Eric applied for a position with a welding company. He had been incarcerated for the last 5 years and was recently released. While incarcerated, he obtained a certificate in welding and was ready to use that to assist in gaining a new career. In applying for a position, he gained an interview opportunity with Jones City Welding, Inc. In his interview, Eric shared with the interviewer that he had recently been incarcerated and released, and that he gained his certification in welding through the community college course offered at the prison. He has successfully completed a re-entry program and felt he had overcome a lot of obstacles. He further stated that he wanted to share this information in case of a background check for the job.

1. What is the barrier? Is it real or perceived by Eric?

2. Was it appropriate for Eric to share his background with the interviewer? Why or Why not?

3. What are some additional steps Eric could take to make his job search efforts successful if this job is not offered to him?

4. Is Eric ready to work? Why or Why not?

Scenario 2: Sally

Sally completed an application and was called for an interview with Digits Telephone Company as a Customer Service Representative. On the application she listed a previous job and the supervisor's name. She listed the reason for leaving was "poor management." Sally was asked during an interview to explain what the particular circumstances surrounding her leaving. Sally proceeded to go on a 5-8 minute rant about the poor managers at the former company, that they were all jerks and didn't know what they were doing. She was written up for exceeding break times, but she felt that it was because the supervisor didn't like her. She just got fed up with the favoritism and walked out and left the job.



1. What is the barrier? Is it real or perceived by Sally?

2. Was it appropriate for Sally to share the background of the issue with the interviewer? Why or Why not?

3. What are some additional steps Sally could take to make her job search efforts successful if this job is not offered to her?

4. Is Sally ready to work? Why or Why not?

Scenario 3: Jack

Jack is a human resources professional who recently retired and relocated to another state. He has over 34 years of experience in human resources and holds an MBA in HR Management. He has applied for a position with a company as a front desk receptionist. His résumé is quite impressive and his salary requirements are almost double what the receptionist position is offering. Jack is desperate; he has applied for over 15 jobs and had 6 interviews, with no job offers. He just received a letter thanking him for his interest in the receptionist position, but that the position has already been filled with a qualified candidate. Jack is furious and decides he wants to call the company and demand why he did not even get an interview as he was qualified for the job. He has mentioned that he believes his age is a factor, too.



1. What is the barrier? Is it real or perceived by Jack?

2. What are some additional steps Jack could take to make his job search efforts successful since this job was not offered to him?

3. Should Jack make the call to the company to seek information as to why he was not considered for the position? Why or Why not?

4. Is Jack ready to work? Why or Why not?

ACTION PLAN

Let's create your action plan to put in perspective where you are and the steps you will need to take to better manage your work-life balance and ultimate achieve success in your new job/career!

Barrier	Why is it A Barrier?	How It impacts my Life/Job Potential	Solutions	Resources and Supports