Priming Strategies – Interviewing for a Job

Interviewing is a complex set of skills involving proper attire and hygiene, attentive non-verbal behaviors that demonstrate investment, quality and clarity in verbal responses, ability to describe strengths and weaknesses as these might affect job performance, and professional behavior in contacting the business after the interview. The breadth of skills here requires not only systematic training by an instructor but careful selection of instructional targets so as not to deflate or confuse the student. In the case of interviewing, the instructor has specific self-assessments for the student that align with the Interview Strengths – Supervisor Assessment. As well, there is a Mock Interview Rating Scale in a Student Version and in an Instructor Version. Thus, the instructor has multiple options in approaching the priming of the student for instruction. Which of the self assessment instruments should be presented to the student?

Frequently, setting up the mock interview will be a first step in the process for most. Does the instructor set up a mock interview first and have the student self-assess with the Student Version? Then does the instructor help the student see the issues that the instructor saw in the Instructor Version? In priming, does the instructor choose to focus on a few specific issues in the interview and put other issues aside to prevent the student from being overwhelmed? **Might it be appropriate to abbreviate the Mock Interview Rating Scale by deleting certain questions so that the student can see specific targets?** *It is likely that an instructor would want to set up multiple mock interviews to build the student's skills with specific targets and to chain and build multiple targets before setting up a real interview in the community. Thus, the Mock Interview instruments are likely to be the primary tool at first. Use of the other instruments (Before the Interview, Before the Interview – Disclosure, During the Interview, and After the Interview) is encouraged when the student is engaging in actual community-based interviews.*

Consider creating a graphic organizer that portrays **My Strengths** *and* **My Needs** *with regard to "Interviewing for a Job." Because interviewing skills are complex, be careful to identify several strengths and to stop after identifying a few needs. This is why the instructor is encouraged to abbreviate the Mock Interview – Student Version in cases where the student has multiple needs. Prioritizing a target from a few needs may help assure investment by the student. Take this one step at a time and use your judgment with regard to how you present the instruments. Obviously, as a result of multiple mock interviews, the repeated process and student success with specific learning objectives will lead to expanding the length of the assessment. Hopefully, it also leads to a more detailed description within the graphic organizer on strengths and needs.*

When the student engages in actual community-based interviews, **consider using specific self-assessments** (Before the Interview, Before the Interview – Disclosure, During the Interview, and After the Interview) to focus student attention on specific aspects of the process. If possible, ask the interviewer to complete the Supervisor Assessment – Interviewing for a Job to compare student self-assessment with the interviewer's impressions. Again, breaking this down into chunks of before, during and after the interview may support student focus on specific needed skills.

How many skills can the student consider at one time?

For instance, one individual may be able to deal with multiple features, such as professional attire, hygiene, making good eye contact, smiling, shaking hands, facing the interviewer, answering questions completely, asking for clarification, sharing information about the company, etc. while another may need to focus only on making eye contact, smiling, shaking hands and providing an appropriate greeting. The instructor is encouraged to review student self-assessments to determine how many questions and issues a student can address at one time. Consider whether the student can look at only one part of a self-assessment, a whole self-assessment or multiple self-assessments at one time.

Can I compare the student's self-assessment with the instructor/coach's assessment?

The next step is visually setting up a comparison of self-assessment vs. instructor assessment. The instructor assessment has fewer questions because specific problems in interviewing for a job are combined within questions. The instructor can work with the student's self-assessment and point to the specific questions in the student self-assessment where there may be need for instruction. After a student completes even one community-based interview, the instructor may want to point to relevant portions of the self-assessment and the instructor's assessment to identify targets for instruction. If many needs are seen, does this mean that more practice is needed in mock interviews? Your goal is to set up comparison that supports the student in recognizing what he needs to do differently. Getting agreement on a goal involves self-assessment, comparison with trusted experts and re-assessment of what to do next.

JobTIPS
Transition Toolbox

Define clearly the areas of need

Does the graphic organizer of **My Strengths** and **My Needs** help the student agree on his target for skill development? One key is to identify multiple strengths within the organizer so that the student develops confidence. Just as importantly, limit the number of needs and narrow your focus so that the student can embrace the targeted goal.

Consider creating a social narrative that defines for the student in his own words what he will work on, why it is important and how he will do it. Does the narrative state:
I need to work on _____
This is important to me because _____
Here is what I can do to improve: _____

Consider scripts, role-playing, lists of instructions, and video models that will help address the "how" in developing the new skill.