

Priming Strategies - Workplace Hierarchies

Labeling Roles and Expectations in the Workplace

Instructor: *Priming students for social roles in the workplace is a critical preparation for effective performance at work. The classroom and school environments provide ample opportunities for practice of skills necessary in work settings. The instructor's ability to connect behaviors at school to future success at work is a key in skill development. At the same time, limiting the goals and consistent positive practice around specific behaviors in specific roles is crucial.*

Determine if the student needs to focus on one role (i.e., what to do with a supervisor) or if the student can conceptualize different roles in different situations (i.e., how to respond to supervisor vs. how to respond to experienced co-worker).

Consider a graphic organizer for the student who needs to see his role with a supervisor. Create two columns in the organizer – one for “What the Supervisor Does” and one for “What I Do.” Should you add a third column for “What I Don’t Do” or “What Will Lose My Job.”

Consider another approach in which you set up a graphic organizer that defines “What I Say To Supervisor” vs. “What I Say to _____ (Experienced Co-Worker). Over time, does this graphic show multiple columns that define “What I Do with Supervisor” vs.” What I Do with Co-Workers” vs. What I Do with Customers?”

Note that often, working with customers is quite difficult for individuals with ASD. The complexities of dealing with ‘surprising’ and unique customer interactions can be fraught with failure or even traumatic. Avoiding confrontation with an irate or bewildered customer may be so difficult that one solution is to limit customer interactions. Creating a separate and clearly defined graphic organizer or list of “Things I Do with Customers” is likely to be crucial. Practicing customer responses will be important.

Recognizing and Responding to Displeasure

Sometimes my teacher or employer is dissatisfied with my work. Sometimes he/she tells me what is wrong. Sometimes he does other things that show he is not happy. These include: _____

(facial expressions, gestures, statements to others, etc.)

I will work on _____ (watching faces, listening for _____, watching for _____) as a way of recognizing when my teacher or employer is unhappy.

If my teacher or supervisor is unhappy, I can fix it.

I can _____ (ask for feedback at specific times on my schedule, check with co-workers at specific times on my schedule, respond to feedback presented in writing at specific times on my schedule, etc.) to make sure that my teacher/employer is happy.

Recognizing and Responding to Customer Displeasure

Sometimes a customer looks unhappy or confused.

Instructor: *Define in concrete terms the behaviors that are important for the student to look for in his specific environment – i.e., The customer is frowning. The customer is shaking her head. The customer is looking for something and talking to himself. The customer is waving the check, holding his hand up, etc.*

When this happens, I can approach the customer and say: _____

(Examples: "Is there anything I can do to help?" "If you need help, I can get someone to help you.")

If I do not know how to help, I will say: _____

(Example: "I am sorry I cannot help you. I will get someone who can help you and be right back.")

2) Sometimes a customer may get angry about a particular service or item in the store.

Instructor: Define in concrete terms the behaviors that are important for the student to look for in his specific environment – i.e., The customer is frowning. The customer is shaking her head. The customer is talking in an angry voice. The customer is not smiling or eating, etc. When this happens, I can approach the customer and say: _____

(Example: "Is there anything I can do to help? If you need help, I can get someone to help you.")

If I do not know how to help, I will say: _____

(Example: "I am sorry I cannot help you. I will get someone who can help you and be right back.")

Accepting Negative Feedback or Correction

Sometimes my teacher or employer tells me that something is wrong. When this happens, I feel

When I feel this way, I can: _____

(Hints: Follow a self-calming strategy or sequence, ask for my supervisor to write it down, ask for a short break to write out what I can do, request a meeting after work to make a plan, etc.)

Following Instructions

Sometimes it can be difficult to follow verbal instructions (in school / at work). In particular, this happens in the following settings: _____

If I am upset by an instruction, I can: _____

(Hints: Follow a self-calming script; engage in a relaxation routine; read a rule card on how to respond to my supervisor or job coach, etc.)

When someone gives me instructions, it would help me if _____

(Hints: They provided me with time to write down these instructions; provided me a written to-do list; repeated the instructions; allowed me to repeat the instructions back to them to make sure I understood them.)

Conceding to Instructor/Supervisor

*Sometimes my teacher (supervisor, etc. - *this may be a specific person in initial practice) wants me to do my work a new way (different way - *choose words that fit the student).*

This may make me feel frustrated. To calm down (or to deal with my frustration) I can: _____

(Hints: Practice a short self-calming sequence; use a self-labeling statement such as "I can try another way"; take a deep breath and ask my teacher to say it again, etc.)

If I disagree with my teacher/supervisor, I can: _____

(Hints: State one time what I was doing, Explain why I am working this way, ask teacher to state it again, ask a question to get more information, etc.)

If my teacher says a second time that he wants me to do my work a new way, I can: _____

(Hints: Say "okay" and try it his way; Do it his way and ask if I can talk about it after class, etc.)

*If I am still upset, I can talk to _____ (designated helper) at
_____ (what time) about the problem.*