

Empathy and Bias Awareness Exercise

Unit 3: Communication skills

An individual activity for trainers, career guidance counsellors, employers and professionals in human resource departments

Objective: Develop empathy and awareness of biases to improve communication with individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Aims: This activity aims to help you identify and break down biases, fostering a more empathetic and effective communication style when interacting with individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Duration: 30-45 minutes per session.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Reflective journal or notepad
- ✓ Bias checklist (see below)
- ✓ Articles or videos about cognitive disabilities
- ✓ Timer

Bias Checklist:

- Do I make assumptions about what people with cognitive disabilities can or cannot do?
- Do I find myself using overly simplistic language or tone that might be condescending?
- Am I impatient when communicating with people who need more time to understand or respond?
- Do I listen actively and attentively, or do I interrupt or finish sentences for others?
- Do I use inclusive language that respects the individuality of each person?

Instructions:

STEP 1. Educate Yourself: Spend 15-20 minutes reading articles or watching videos about cognitive disabilities to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with cognitive disabilities.

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Here are some suggestions:

- VIDEO: “**What is intellectual disability?**”

Description: Learn about what qualifies as an intellectual disability and the skills that people with intellectual disability offer.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6WmGhY8Q4I>

- VIDEO: “**Facts and Myths about Intellectual Disabilities**”.

Description: This video aims to raise awareness of several misconceptions related to intellectual disabilities and promote a better understanding of the barriers to learning that children with an intellectual disability may encounter.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOOVFnHccA>

- ARTICLE: “**Guide to Cognitive Disabilities**”.

Description: Useful definitions and descriptions to gain a better understanding of the terms.

Link: <https://adasitecompliance.com/guide-to-cognitive-disabilities/>

STEP 2. Reflect on Biases: Take 10 minutes to complete the bias checklist. Be honest with yourself about any biases or assumptions you may hold.

STEP 3. Self-Reflection Journal: In your journal or notepad, write a reflection on the biases you identified. Consider how these biases might affect your communication with individuals with cognitive disabilities. Reflect on past interactions and how they might have been influenced by these biases.

STEP 4. Empathy Exercise:

- ✓ **Scenario Practice:** Imagine a scenario where you need to communicate with someone who has a cognitive disability. This could be explaining a simple task or giving directions.
- ✓ **Empathetic Communication:** Practice explaining the task slowly, using clear and simple language. Pay attention to your tone and body language, ensuring they are respectful and supportive.
- ✓ **Patience and Understanding:** Allow yourself extra time to "listen" and "respond" as if the person might need more time to understand or ask questions.
- ✓ **Feedback and Improvement:** After practicing, write down what you did well and what you found challenging. Think about how you can improve your approach in future interactions.

STEP 5. Daily Practice: Commit to practicing empathetic and unbiased communication daily. Keep a log of your experiences and progress.