

Topic: Employment

Activity: Hard Work: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Objective

- ✓ Participants will become familiar with some values highly regarded in the U.S. workplace
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify some of the employment-related challenges they might encounter in the U.S. workplace
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify some ways to prevent or address challenges in the U.S. workplace

Lesson Time

25 minutes

Materials

- ☐ Copies of “Hard Work: A Critical Incident,” 1 per participant (included)
- ☐ Flipchart paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Tape

Introduction

Finding a job in the United States may be difficult and take a long time. The process can be very frustrating, and your first job may not be what you had hoped. Finding and keeping a job is critical, however. Not only does that first job provide money, but it also offers an opportunity to learn skills and to improve your English. Also, reliability is highly valued by employers, and this is most often demonstrated by staying at a job and working well for at least 6 months. This reliability and commitment will give you a good name when you apply for a promotion or even for a job with a different company.

Practice

1. Put participants into small groups of 3-4. Ask each group to choose someone to report back later to the larger group.
2. Distribute copies of “Hard Work” to each participant. Ask participants to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group. If the facilitator senses that most participants are unable to read, s/he should read the critical incident aloud to the large group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to deal with this situation. Some ideas might include the following: Working hard and hoping for a future promotion; taking advantage of having a job by learning English or other skills and making friends; considering the positive attributes of the job (such as health insurance or U.S. work experience); talking with others in their community to learn if they have been successful in finding other types of work, where and how; etc.
4. Bring the large group together and ask group reporters to summarize the main points of their small-group discussions. Record these on flipchart paper and discuss as necessary.
5. Lead a discussion addressing any of the following Reflection Questions that you feel may not have been adequately addressed during the previous discussion:

Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident? What is the challenge?
- What can the two friends do?
- What are some possible consequences of the choices the two friends could make?
- How would you handle this situation?
- Who can the men talk with about this? What resources are available?

Hard Work: A Critical Incident

Two friends found jobs together after taking part in a four-month hands-on construction training program. Their new jobs involved doing the same work they had been trained for: hard, physical, outdoor labor. Their employment began in December when it was very cold and snow was on the ground. It was very difficult, uncomfortable, and cold outside, and the two friends wanted to quit.

Our thanks to RefugeeWorks and its Employment Training Institute participants for the information on which this critical incident is based.



* This resource is based on the real-life experience of refugees resettled in the United States. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.

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