

# Transition Practices to Develop Soft Skills for Youth with Disabilities

Illinois Center for Transition & Work Symposium  
Apr. 25-26, 2024

Rasha ElSaheli-Elhage, PhD  
Associate Professor of Special Education  
Department of Advanced Studies in Education  
Chicago State University  
[relhage@csu.edu](mailto:relhage@csu.edu)



A theater stage with red curtains and an audience silhouette. The text "Who's here?" is centered on the stage.

Who's here?



# Learning Outcomes

Attendees will be able to:

1. Distinguish between employment and employability
2. Identify what employers are looking for in the current market.
3. Distinguish between soft and hard skills
4. Apply practical strategies aimed at developing soft skills



MINGLE,  
MINGLE!

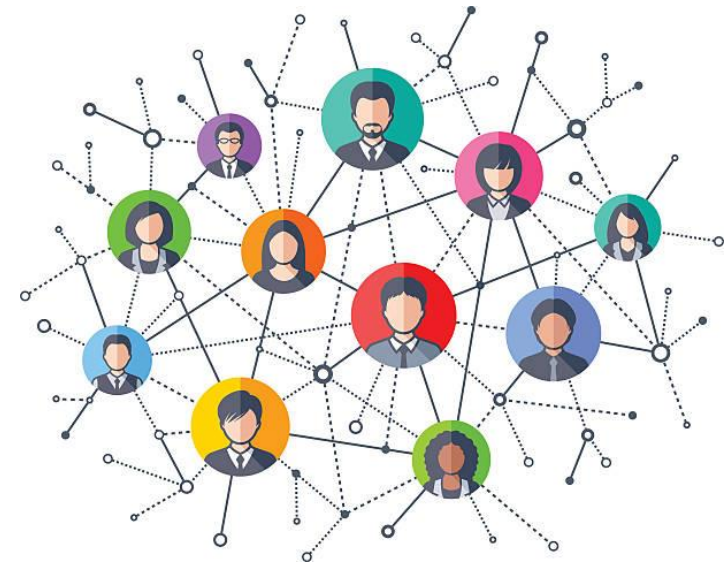
MINGLE,  
MINGLE!

- 1.If you were granted one superpower, which one would you choose?
- 2.If you were to live on a deserted island, and you are only allowed to take one famous person with you, who would it be?

# Networking

- Talking with friends, family members, and acquaintances about your employment goals, interests, and desires.
- Reaching out beyond people you already know in order to expand the opportunities that may be available to you.

According to Cornell University's Career Center, **80 %** of available jobs are not advertised



# Networking, Where to Start?



- **Make a list** of everyone who may be able to help you job search.
- Next, **talk to people on the list** and tell them that you are looking for employment.
- Ask if they know of any **openings** and to **introduce** you if they do. But don't stop with the names on your list.
- Talk to **cashiers, barbers, clergy**, and **anyone** else you meet about their work and ask if they know of any jobs that match your interests.
- It is also essential to **follow up** with those with whom you have networked. Talking with a person once will only provide leads available at that point in time. But by establishing an ongoing relationship, you may learn of other opportunities as they arise.
- Once you find a job, it is important to **continue to network effectively**. Through ongoing networking you can develop relationships with colleagues and increase your ability to move up in the organization.



# Current Statistics

## Persons without a Disability

Labor Force Statistic	September 2023		2022	
	16-64	16+	16-64	16+
Labor Force Participation Rate	77.9%	68.3%	77.1%	67.8%
Employment-Population Ratio	75.2%	66.0%	74.4%	65.4%
Unemployment Rate	3.5%	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%

## Persons with a Disability

Labor Force Statistic	September 2023		2022	
	16-64	16+	16-64	16+
Labor Force Participation Rate	40.3%	24.2%	37.8%	23.1%
Employment-Population Ratio	37.2%	22.5%	34.8%	21.3%
Unemployment Rate	7.8%	7.3%	8.2%	7.6%

Source: Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics





# Employment vs. Employability (Soft Skills)

## Employment

- Having a job



## Employability (Soft Skills)

- Employability is about having an effective mix of **skills**, **attributes** and **attitudes** to function **successfully** in required roles.

Think about 1  
or 2 examples



HARD SKILLS

VS

SOFT SKILLS

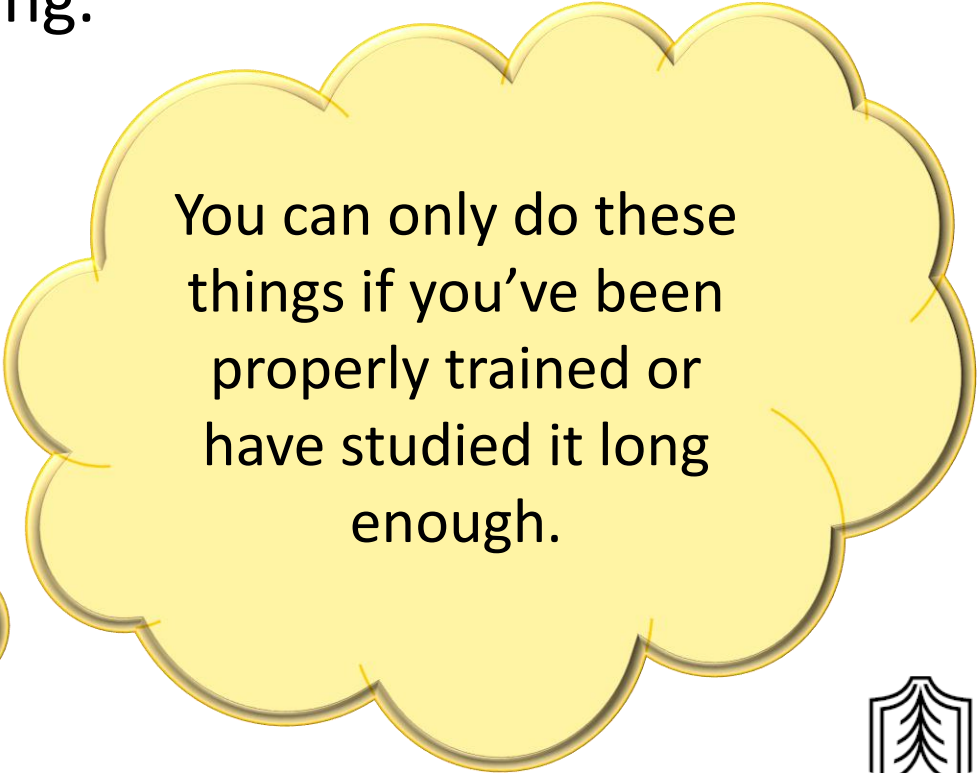


# Hard Skills

**Hard Skills** (Technical): concrete, job-specific skills which require varying degrees of expertise and they usually have been developed through experience or some amount of study and training.

## Examples:

- Wiring a building for electricity
- Preparing taxes for businesses
- Performing surgery
- Fixing bathroom plumbing




You can only do these things if you've been properly trained or have studied it long enough.

# Soft Skills = Employability Skills

**Soft Skills** (employability): transferable skills, used in any job setting, regardless of the technical skills required.

Examples:

- Work ethics
- Dependability
- Team Work
- Communication
- Critical Thinking

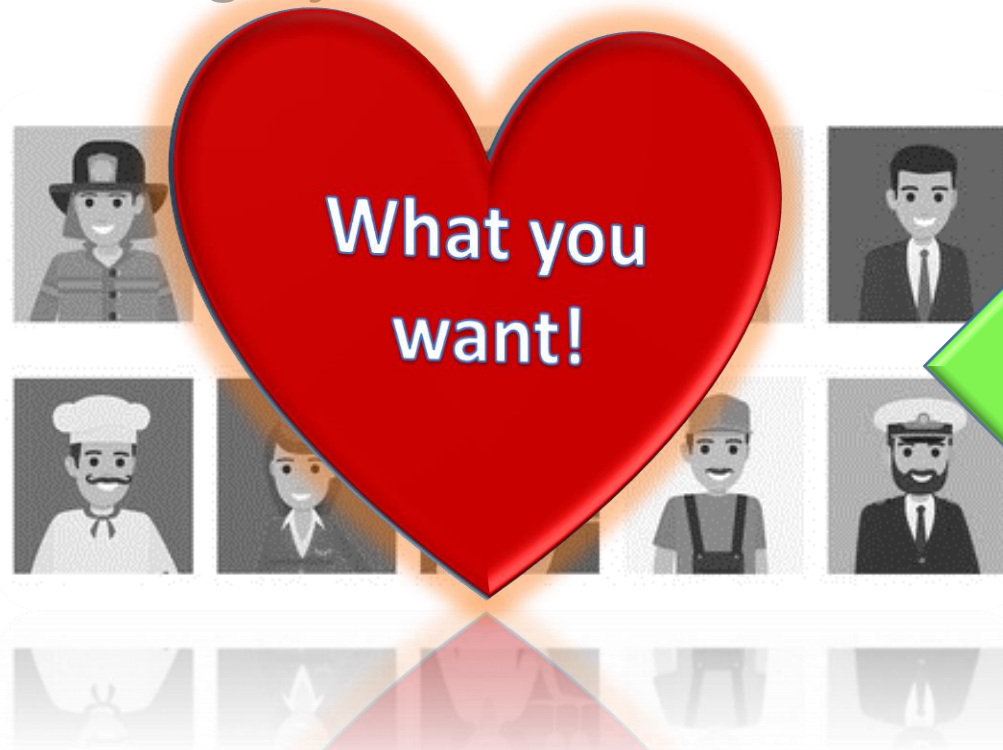


Soft skills are traits and abilities that you develop throughout your entire life.

# Employment vs. Employability (Soft Skills)

## Employment

- Having a job



## Employability (Soft Skills)

- Employability is about having an effective mix of **skills, attributes** and **attitudes** to function **successfully** in required roles.

What you need to get and keep what you want

Think about 1 or 2 examples



In your opinion, what  
are the attributes  
youth looking for in a  
job?

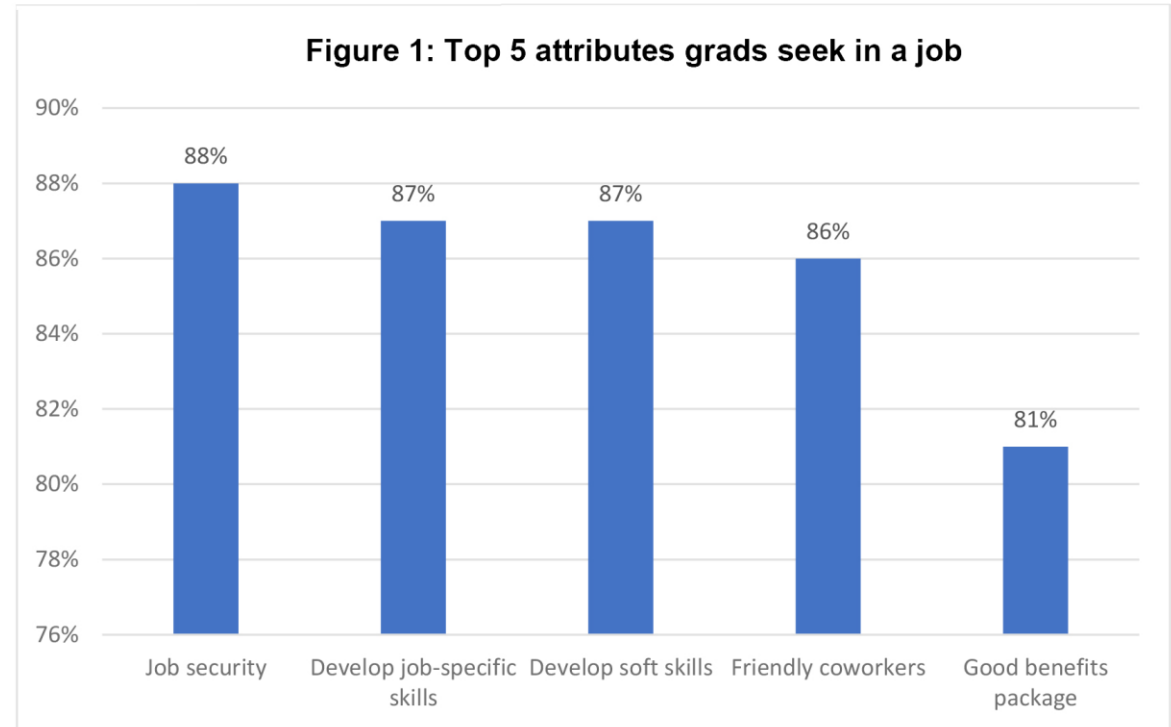
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# What do you want?

## Employment

- Having a job



Source: 2022 Student Survey, National Association of Colleges and Employers



In your opinion, what are employers looking for in new hires?







What employers  
are looking for...

# What are employers looking for?

## Top 10 Skills/Qualities Employers Seek



National Association of  
Colleges and Employers

1. Ability to **verbally communicate** with persons inside and outside the organization.
2. Ability to work in a **team** structure.
3. Ability to **make decisions** and **solve problems**.
4. Ability to **plan, organize,** and **prioritize** work.
5. Ability to **obtain** and **process information**.
6. Ability to **analyze** quantitative data.
7. **Technical knowledge** related to the job.
8. Proficiency with **computer** software programs.
9. Ability to create and/or edit written **reports**.
10. Ability to **sell** or **influence** others.



What are employers looking for?



**Character Traits**

Having a strong character means making decisions based on a set of core values. Here are several examples of positive character traits.

- Ambitious
- Disciplined
- Creative
- Compassionate
- Patient
- Courageous
- Flexible
- Honest
- Humble
- Honorable (Integrity)
- Loyal
- Conscientious
- Persistent
- Resilient

indeed  
career guide



# What are employers looking for?

US Department of Labor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy



- The three "R's": Reading, Writing, & Arithmetic
- Professionalism or work ethic
- Oral and written communication
- Teamwork and collaboration skills
- Critical thinking or problem-solving skills



# What are employers looking for?

The Top 5 Power Skills Employers Are Looking For  
In 2023

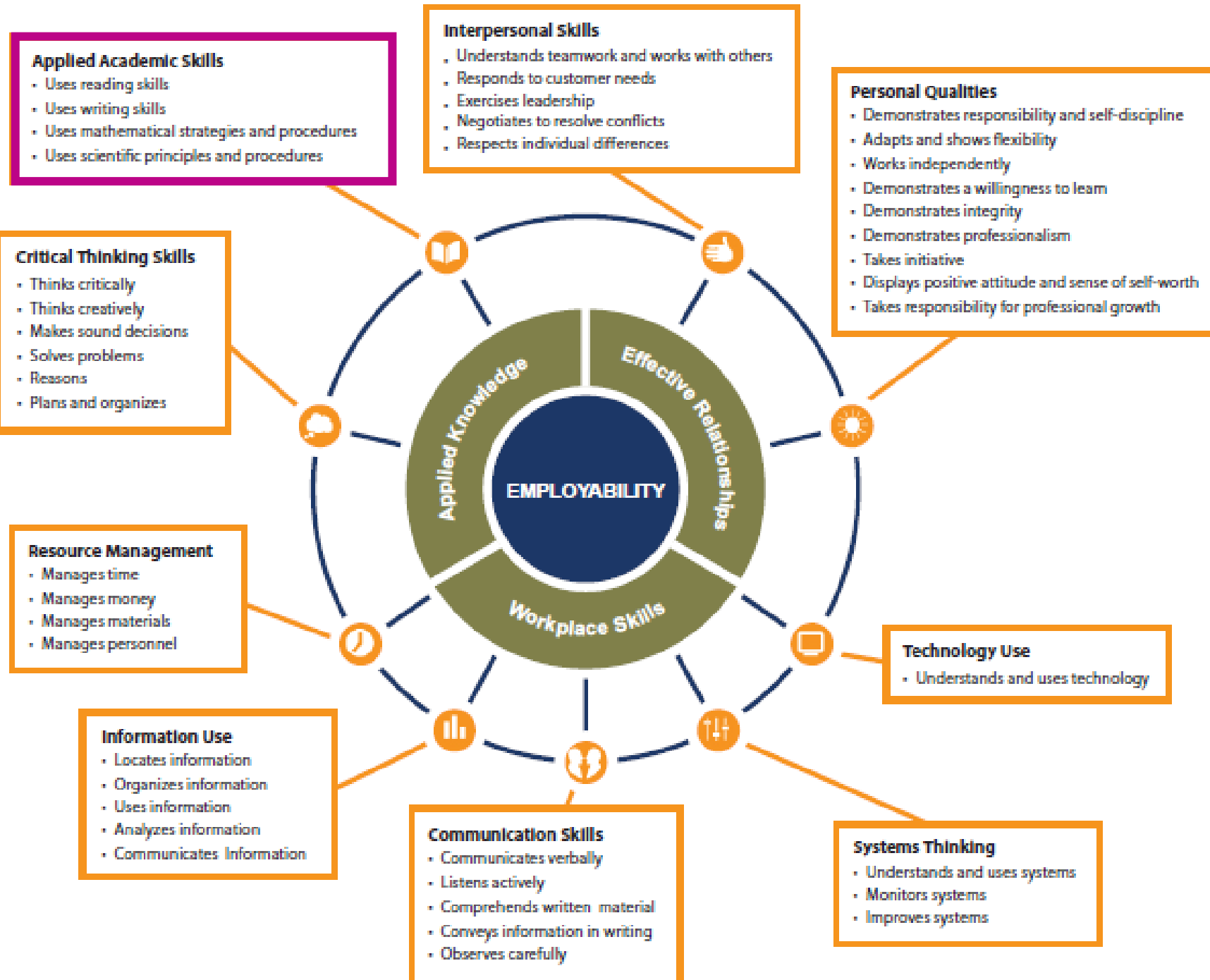
Forbes

- 1. Communication:** “The ability to express thoughts and ideas clearly, and to listen to, understand, and respond to others' ideas.”
- 2. Customer Service:** “The provision of service to customers before, during, and after a purchase.”
- 3. Leadership:** “The ability of an individual, group or organization to ‘lead’, influence or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations.”
- 4. Attention to detail:** “The ability to be precise and accurate in tasks, taking care to notice small details and ensuring that all aspects of a project are completed accurately.”
- 5. Collaboration:** “The ability to develop constructive and cooperative working relationships with others.”



# Aspects of Employability

*US Department of Education*



# Activity

What are employers looking for?

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What are employers looking for?

## The Top 5 Power Skills Employers Are Looking For In 2023

1. **Communication:** "The ability to express thoughts and ideas clearly, and to listen to, understand, and respond to others' ideas."
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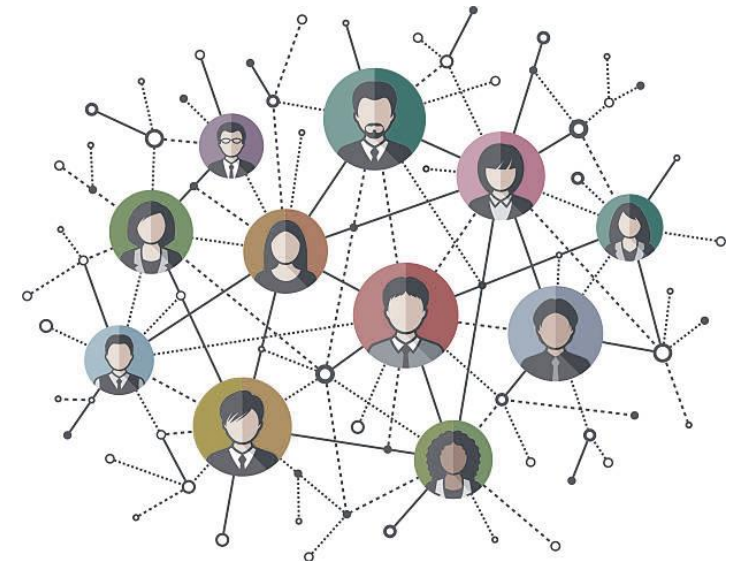




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## Self Advocacy Talking points

### Why Hiring People With Disabilities Is Good for Business

- It can increase your profit margin.
- It diversifies your company culture.
- It increases employee motivation and reduces turnover rates.
- There is a vast, untapped market.
- There are federal and state tax incentives.

Long – term: employee retention **data favors hiring people with disabilities.**  
Employers known for hiring people with disabilities have a significantly **improved public image and association with inclusivity.**



# Expanding the Comfort Zone

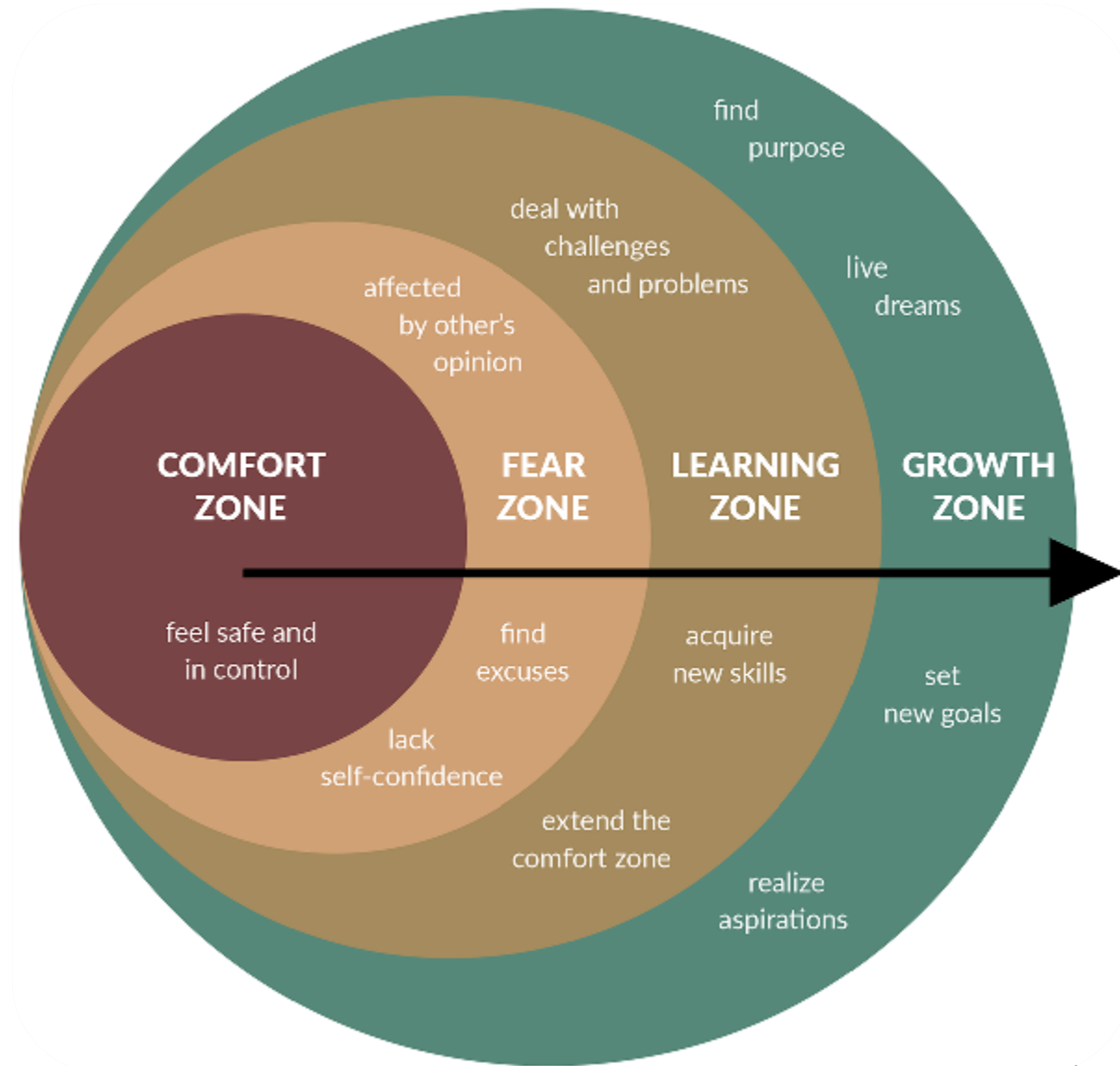
Challenges for youth with disabilities leaving their comfort zone

- Abandoning their **routine**
- Losing their **safety net**
- New **obstacles**
- Confronting **negative attitudes**
- Becoming more **vulnerable**
- Having to **rely more on others**



# Expanding the Comfort Zone

*“There are some things you simply have to do, and in many cases, the fear doesn’t go away. That means you need to do them while you’re afraid. You’ll likely realize that fear is an emotional reaction that passes, and once you experience it firsthand, you will be better able to navigate stressful situations down the line.” – Forbes (2023)*



# Ways to Encourage Expanding the Comfort Zone

1. Understand **why** it's hard in the first place.
2. Help them take "**just right**" steps.
3. Help them develop a **growth mindset**.
4. Create **forcing mechanisms**.



*Reach: A New Strategy to Help You Step Outside Your Comfort Zone, Rise to the Challenge, and Build Confidence* by Andy Molinsky

<https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/comfort-zone-activity/>



# Working through Conflict

Teach the pre-requisites:

- **Empathy** – the ability to consider another person’s perspective (this is crucial)
- Identifying and **regulating emotions** when faced with a disagreement or conflicting situation.
- Communicating with others in a **composed manner**, even when feelings of anger or frustration arise.
- **Problem-solving** - identifying the source of the conflict and coming up with possible solutions.



# Working Through Conflict

*“Since conflict is an essential part of being human, effective conflict resolution is not designed to avoid disagreements. Instead, conflict resolution skills are used to facilitate discussions, increase understanding and control emotional responses.” Imm (2022)*



# Personal Branding

*"Your personal brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room."* Jeff Bezos







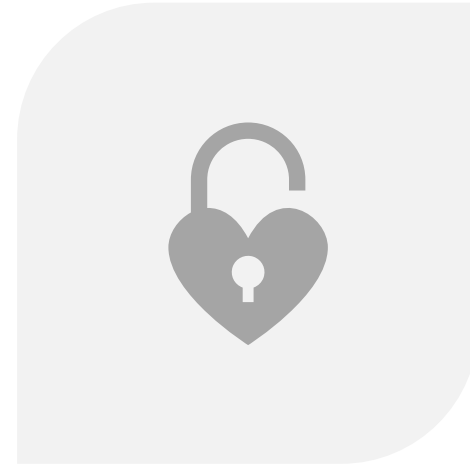
# Personal Branding

*A personal brand is a **set of messages** that reflects your **current perceptions about yourself and your identity**. These messages are spread across various platforms like social media, blogs, public speaking, etc. They are often accompanied by various types of content — text, images, quotes, or videos.*



IN TODAY'S DIGITAL WORLD, PERSONAL  
BRANDING HAS BECOME A PART OF OUR  
DAILY LIVES—HELPING US SHOWCASE OUR  
INDIVIDUALITY, PROFESSIONALISM,  
EXPERIENCE AND MORE.

# Personal Branding



IT IS ALSO A KEY INGREDIENT TO  
UNLOCKING BETTER  
ENGAGEMENT, MORE CAREER  
OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT.

# Ways to Teach Youth about Branding



Have a logo contest with your class.



Have students create their brand slogan: Example: I am an innovative thinker who likes ...



Help them create a linkedIn Profile.



Teach them how to use platforms like Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok to share their insights, experiences, and projects and to showcase their interests and skills.



Help them create an online portfolio showcasing their best projects, assignments, and work samples.



Help them develop a personal pitch.

Stay genuine



# Practical Suggestions



- Identify the job and **job description** items
- Locate **transportation** to and from access point
- Identify web page and **goals of organization** for interview preparation
- Locate **key documents** or items of information needed for the application
- Store **Log in** Information
- Store **contact information** listed on application for a follow up introductory email or phone call of introduction
- Assess **network connections** in family, friends, neighbors, etc. who help identify connections to the organization
- Locate a **printer**



# What could hold the students back?

---

- Fear of not being qualified based on job descriptions, Internal doubt of total qualifications (depth of knowledge)
- External barrier of overstating requirements in job description

→ Incomplete qualifications can be opportunity to create goals in the interview



There is no perfect  
candidate – so  
**APPLY!**

THANK YOU!



[relhage@csu.edu](mailto:relhage@csu.edu)



CHICAGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY





# M&M Mixer

- **Red**- embarrassing moment
- **Green**- favorite sports team
- **Yellow**- favorite movie
- **Brown**- a place they like to travel
- **Orange**- hobbies
- **Blue**- favorite sea creature