

Project E3
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>> Good morning, everyone and welcome to another in our series of webinars for the project E3. My name is Terry Donovan with the Stout Rehabilitation Institute. Joining me is Heidi Decker and Beth Garten who will be moderating the live question-and-answer session after the presentation.

Today we welcome and are pleased to have April Lynch who is a resident in counseling with Virginia Commonwealth University as part of the rehabilitation and research training center. As you may have seen obviously for the opening slides although I understand they may have been fuzzy, apologize for that, April is going to be talking about soft skills training and promoting success. Her presentation is 30 minutes long and at the conclusion Beth and April will be moderating a live question-and-answer session. If you have a question during April's presentation, please put that in the Q and A box as well as you can add questions as April and Beth are going through the questions after the presentation.

We also offer one CRC credit for this session. At the end after we exhaust all the questions, Beth will explain what will happen with that. And then also was in those opening slides. Heidi will be periodically putting a link to the powerpoint slides that are part of April's presentation. And also we record all of our webinars. And in approximately one to two weeks we will be posting that on the project E3 site.

Another comment because it has come up periodically in the past and it is wonderful, if you have something you would like to share with everyone else that's on our webinar, you can put that in chat. Check to see that you have checked the box that it will go to all panelists and attendees. I believe that the default is panelist. If you want to let us know something, a technical issue but if you have a resource, a website, something that comes up while April is doing her presentation or during the Q and A and you would like everyone to know about it, just remember to click all and type in your note in the chat, that you would like it to go to all panelists and attendees. With that we will get started. Thanks very much for joining us again.

>> APRIL LYNCH: My name is April Lynch and I am a vocational rehabilitation counselor at Virginia Commonwealth University research and training center. We will be discussing soft skills training which contributes to promoting long-term success and employability. So let's start with our discussion today about talking about hard skills versus soft skills. So first of all, there really isn't much competition between the two. We want to recognize that hard skills and soft skills are both extremely valuable to a job seeker or a current employee and workplace. Both of these skill sets are

extremely important because they balance out the different types of traits or skill sets that that person is bringing in to the workplace. Overall we can really talk about the value and needs throughout our discussion today.

So taking a look at hard skills at a closer look, we can say that they are more job specific or more relevant to the acquisition within a job. They are very task relevant. So whatever that job function may be that the employee is performing will fall within this hard skills and quantifiable. So when you are measuring these skills, an employee can really recognize how often these skills are being performed and to what rate of standards for production. These skills can be gained through our life experience or also developed in school settings. Overall hard skills are very job specific to allow the employee to continue functioning through their position.

So the examples of hard skills are computer proficiency, also hard communication, which can be specifically defined as foreign language and those different types of abilities that an individual may bring to the workplace and an individual encompasses certifications or licensures and specific skill sets that they have gone to school for to develop those skills. Additionally if an individual is a supervisor, has management experience this is a hard skill that's very vital in putting in a resume or applying for positions. Again with the idea in mind that hard skills versus soft skills is not a sense of competition between the two, but how they both can be extremely valuable to individuals seeking employment, let's take a closer look at how soft skills can be defined. They are people skills. It can be a way an individual interacts in the workplace and this exemplifies the different personality traits. Listening skills could also be a type of soft skill that an individual is performing in the workplace or within their community. Also understanding that soft skills can be measurable by self-report.

So often hard skills can be seen as more measurable but we will talk a little bit more throughout this presentation about ways that you can measure soft skills and increase the effectiveness of them. And in addition to hard skills, soft skills can also be skills that are gained in life experience.

So looking at some examples of what soft skills could look like, communication, the way the person is communicating effectively in their environment, overall professionalism, teamwork, how are they collaborating with others, work ethic, how is that individual displaying their overall work performance and motivation to work. Time management skills, what's important to accomplish in the day-to-day work. Problem solving skills, we know that this can be a very important soft skill across multiple environments. Flexibility, this is often a soft skill that is very important to employers because this allows them to see that the individual can take on different types of roles, or can be flexible in different scenarios that maybe not for them. Accepting correction and feedback are also forms of soft skills that make an employee more valuable. Creativity. Also punctuality and attendance. Keeping in mind can prompt for your job and being present

each day is considered a soft skill but also something extremely valuable to promote your employability.

So taking a closer look at the value of soft skills, these truly make us who we are. And soft skills can increase your employability and retention within that. We know that soft skills can promote positive interactions in the workplace. Whatever your soft skills may be taking a look at how those fit in to that particular environment. And we will talk a little bit more about what this might look like between the vocational rehabilitation counselor and their client when they are seeking out employment.

The value of adaptability to various environments we briefly touched on but just imagine how that employee can adapt to different scenarios in the workplace and if novel experiences come up allow the employee to feel comfortable in that environment and recognizing that that employee can take on additional duties or expectations in the workplace. We can also see potentially promotion in reciprocity. So at times we may see that reciprocity and communication with, for example, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, through specific techniques, shaping those soft skills, specifically reciprocity can allow for those positive interactions in the workplace and increase that adaptability and flexibility.

So summing up the value of overall soft skills we know that this cannot only contribute and increase the employability but the overall retention of employment. So now we are going to take a closer look at how we can measure soft skills. So as we spoke about earlier, hard skills are very quantifiable in the way that you can measure those. There are plenty of specific measures and techniques with that. But we would like to talk today specifically about how soft skills can be measured as well. So let's take a look at how connecting those soft skills in a job description can allow that employee to foster and increase their own positive performance with those skills. So let's just say that the employment specialist or VR counselor is taking a look at a job description and there are --a majority of them are hard skills. However you will get to one section of the job description and it talks about the individual's personality traits and how that may fall in to their functioning in their job. And that could look like inner personal interactions, communication skills, independence, time management. All of those examples we talked about earlier can be on the lookout in a job description how can best match that job to the employee that is seeking.

Behavioral interviewing can often be seen as what we call a working interview in the supported employment world. However, employers take an approach often with behavioral interviewing in a sense that they may not be doing a work interviewing and having the person actually do the job skills, but within the interview they are discussing behaviors. So this would look like the employer rephrasing the questions to identify the soft skills through different scenarios that the individual is describing.

Tell me about a time where you demonstrated teamwork in collaboration

with a previous employer. So this is an example of the employer seeking out these soft skills. And this is an opportunity for the individual to really express what soft skills they obtained and how they were able to utilize those in that particular scenario. Ways that we can look at specifically measuring behaviors. Let's say an employee is hired and the employer is working towards identifying behaviors and soft skills they would like to increase. They can work with the employment specialists or VR counselor to promote the frequency of these soft skills. And this so simply be identifying what those soft skills are, how they can be particularly measured, so how often that individual is having a positive interaction with his coworkers or how often a person is greeting his coworkers in the hallway as he practices them. And that's the type of soft skill that we can continue to shape and increase to also promote customer satisfaction and productivity and efficiency in the workplace.

So really working to tie those hard and soft skills together in the workplace but we are focusing on the frequency of how the soft skills are occurring. Another method could be employee Rubrics. So identifying whether that employee is exceptional, whether they rate as acceptable, room for improvement. It varies based on employers. This is a great way to identify areas where an individual in that job can increase their soft skills in communication or interpersonal interactions. So looking at design employee Rubrics and having a VR counselor work with you to potentially modify so that the soft skills that that individual obtains can continue to be maintained but also increased.

To get an idea of what type of soft skills are most beneficial in that workplace could really be measured through using employee engagement surveys utilizing that method to see what your employees are noticing and what soft skills are occurring in that workplace to identify what the benefit is or areas that you need to increase. And finally, self-reporting assessment methods are a great way allowing an individual to really explore and notice what their current soft skills are. And although this may be seen as a more subjective type of reporting, this can also be a way to help the VR counselor or employment specialist shape that skill set within that individual based on their own self-reporting. If they self-report that their self-esteem or confidence rates at a 2 instead of a 10, then what can we do to boost that up to a 10? What interactions are happening in the workplace that we could increase documentation and confidence? Or time management skills, time management is at an 8, but we want it to be at a 10. Well, what could -- what supports could we be implementing to effectively measure these time management skills and continue to increase them? So overall it is possible to measure soft skills. Sometimes it just takes a little thinking outside of the box and identifying exactly which soft skills you want to measure and how and what method is going to be most appropriate for that environment.

So focusing on the job seeker and soft skills, we know that soft skills can make a job seeker extremely marketable. And allowing this individual to identify exactly what their soft skills are will help them feel more valuable in their job search and obtaining employment.

So taking a closer look at local employers and really researching what the missions are of these companies can also allow an individual to identify whether their own soft skills and their own personality traits would be a match for that type of environment. As far as a person-centered approach and focusing on how we can allow that job seeker to obtain meaningful employment based on their strengths and skill set, the first step would ideally be to research different employers that could be that positive match and promote those soft skills that they already have. Or that would allow for a fostering environment to continue working on those soft skills.

So another way that job seekers can focus on incorporating soft skills or recognizing their strengths that they already have within those is including those in their resume or cover letter. So again just like a job description, a resume can also have soft skills included. So your resume may have, you know, those licensures, certifications, specific professional experience but all is relevant to hard skills. You can add some soft skills in there as well. Maybe in your employment objective at the beginning of your resume connect that with how you would like to work in an environment that matches your soft skills. So really get creative with that resume approach than would be individualized. Highlighting those soft skills in a cover letter because this is your chance to speak out to an employer and explain your personality, your attributes, what makes you. And why you are a positive fit for that employment setting. Also job seekers can display their soft skills in interviews, what a great way to really show that employer your personality and your difference strengths as far as communication skills, or even, you know, ensuring that you show up to the interview on time or, you know, just ensuring you are presenting your strengths through the interview process. Can focus on shaping these soft skills for interview preparation.

Behavioral interviewing and the focus of soft skills within this, so we touched on behavioral interviewing in one of our previous slides. But how this continues to benefit for the job seeker and highlighting those soft skills is to explain to the employer when they are asking those types of behavioral questions or even your employment specialist may be supporting you on this, focusing on your strengths in those soft skills and how they can be exemplified when they are asking those specific scenarios. And this is an image for the employer to understand how you can be effective in the workplace.

And finally self-reporting and assessment we know is extremely beneficial for the job seeker when utilizing their soft skills because they can review again what their strengths are already within their soft skills and be able to identify where they may want to increase or where that may be a positive

match for an employer they may have been researching. Focusing on how the job seeker can utilize their soft skills to be more marketable and a positive asset to a future employer that they are seeking.

So let's talk a little bit about shaping those soft skills and what the different techniques may look like when working with an individual who wants to increase their soft skills and become more valuable in their job search or within their workplace that they already are employed. So a couple of techniques that we will focus on today, supportive employment or customized employment. So the technique of utilizing an employment specialist to go on to a job site with you or to even be doing interview preparation by having that employment specialist as a trainer for you to do various techniques and try out exactly what is going to promote those soft skills for you within the workplace. So various ways that supporting employment can be utilized through that resume building and cover letter development. And we are going to talk about behavioral rehearsal role play. Positive reinforcement. We all need a little praise sometimes. So we know if we want the behavior to increase, then if we pair that with positive reinforcement we can continue to see that result.

Also we are going to touch on self-monitoring and self-regulation as well as potentially utilizing behavior contract if this would help an individual with more intensive support needs.

So focusing on supported employment, this is where the vocational counselor or the employment specialist is coming in to work with the individual and needs a little bit of support. That employment specialist is really a built-in liaison for the employer and the individual that is either seeking employment or is currently employed. Also they are providing that onsite training within the workplace or they are providing the training before seeking employment. So in that interview preparation and job development and can be that moral support.

Thinking back to that positive reinforcement allowing that employment specialist to focus on supporting that individual and what soft skills they already have been able to maintain in areas where they might be able to increase. Just that encouragement and that reflective listening ear when an individual needs it. So you guys can work through what soft skills they already have. Using different types of supported employment categories like situational assessment or discovery and career exploration process allows the individual to go in to an employment setting and not only have a trial work experience, but the employment specialist is able to focus on the different soft skills that that individual may be demonstrating in the workplace. This not only gives the client a nice idea of how they interact in that environment and what soft skills they may already have, but additionally this allows the employer and employment specialist to assess what soft skills are there and whether we need some improvement. And again job development is when the individual is seeking employment. So

during this phase is really where the employment specialist is focusing on that skill set, like resume building and cover letter development to include the soft skills that are important.

And again just really having that person-centered approach and seeking employment based on the individual's strengths. So not only focusing on hard skills that can be strengths but really incorporating those soft skills that can make that individual a valuable employee to the workplace.

Looking at behavioral rehearsal as a specific technique that a supported employment specialist may be utilizing to promote ideal behavior in the workplace for one of their clients, our goal with this is really to allow the client to try out new behaviors and not feel judgment while they are trying this out. This may be a brand new skill set for them and this may kind of make them a little nervous, too, to perform the specific skill. So behavior rehearsal not only increases the opportunity to increase those behaviors and soft skills but it allows that person to feel comfortable and confident while preparing for a realistic setting. So we could look at using behavioral rehearsal in multiple ways, whether that's envisioning. So may ask the individual to envision what they would see themselves doing in that particular scenario when meeting an employer. So envision yourself really communicating effectively, having a bright smile on your face, open eye contact, and engagement. So envision yourself in that experience and what does that look like and feel like with you. You can move on to modeling approach if it is difficult for the client or if they need a little bit more support with learning that behavior.

So the employment specialist could step in and provide some role playing or modeling the behavior. And this allows the individual to even learn it to then transfer it in to the more realistic scenarios or settings. And in this case the employment specialist can be the one promoting learning through demonstrating their skill sets and behaviors for their client. And these types of simulations and role playing again can increase confidence, self-esteem, and overall effectiveness for that individual who is seeking employment or who is working to promote their performance within a job they already have obtained.

So soft skills and contingency, we know that positive reinforcement can be extremely encouraging to increase behaviors and allow an individual to feel successful in their workplace. How can we connect that positive reinforcement and those social skills as a contingency. So recognizing how we can promote the success and the behaviors through providing those guidelines and expectations. So this may be a particular positive reinforcement schedule or this individual may have emotional regulations support that they utilize. There may even be a behavior contract. So whatever particular support this individual may need to promote those soft skills can really also help them feel more confident but also promote that follow through and the behaviors targeted for increase. So those specific

guidelines and expectations and a positive reinforcement schedule.

So how often is this individual communicating effectively with their coworkers? Say, for example, we set up a positive reinforcement schedule that if this individual two days out of the four days they work in a week they had effective communication with their coworkers and clear guidelines and expectations of what that looks like. It may be appropriate eye contact, saying hello and having appropriate greeting and closure. So really defining what those measurable behaviors are like. We talked about earlier with how employers and employment specialists can identify what the frequency of what these behaviors and soft skills occurring. Identifying those guidelines and expectations and pairing it with a positive reinforcement schedule can promote that contingency and expectation. So also not only focusing on the strengths of the individual but what are their interests and what's a high value award for them. And this may be potential earnings and social time with their coworkers and also continues that cycle of promoting those soft skills and that positive communication in the workplace. Additionally if the individual is using emotional regulation supports or whatever compensatory supports may promote the soft skills within the workplace.

So overall, how can we foster these soft skills? Well, as a vocational rehabilitation counselor and employment specialist and employer the individual's family, whoever might be involved in a support network focusing on you can provide that encouragement and positive reinforcement for those soft skills that are beneficial within that workplace.

Also identifying any support that might be necessary. So as we touched on earlier there may be more intensive support needs for more individuals and that might be where that behavior contract comes in or the different contingencies paired with positive reinforcement. It would be up to the employment specialist as that liaison and trainer to understand their client and to understand what support they may need to work through these different soft skills that they already have obtained and are trying to increase. Or the soft skills that they are trying to work on developing. We know that compensatory support can help with fostering soft skills and promoting that positive communication and inner personal skill sets in the workplace. And a great way to also connect with compensatory supports with that is utilizing what we call natural supports. So individuals that are in the workplace that are already existing employees they are naturally in the environment, finding those individuals to connect them with the individual that has become employed recently and asking them if they would be open to join some modeling of those soft skills and participating in the different techniques that the support employment specialist is utilizing.

And then just really recognizing that at times there may need to be adjusting to training. Again this individual does not have or possess those soft skills upon entering the workplace, knowing the type of support that

your client may need to make those adjustments and if novelty does occur after they have learned these skills how can you all work together to not only maintain the skills they have gained but then working in those novel situations to identify the best approach at that time. So continue increasing those soft skills and the overall effectiveness for that individual within the workplace.

So that concludes our presentation today on soft skills training and how we can promote long-term success for employability of individuals with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and have a wonderful day.

>> Hello, everyone. My name is Beth. I work at the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute. I am here to help out and field the Q and A session with April. All right. And do we have -- just one moment here while we get things figured out.

I don't believe we have audio or video for you yet.

>> You are good, Beth. April, why don't you say hello and we can see that we have you for audio as well.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Hi everyone. This is April Lynch from Virginia Commonwealth University or rehabilitation research and training center.

>> Perfect. We have quite a few questions for you today. So I'm just going to jump right in to this and then at the end I will have a few housekeeping tips. I am having a few tech issues today. If anything wonky with my feed I apologize in advance.

First question for you comes from Mark. Can you discuss how soft skills performance and development can be impacted during times of heightened racial tensions and injustice? Are there strategies to assist individuals in managing emotional disturbance related to heightened experience for mental health and effective job performance without devaluing community or individual realities?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Yeah. I think the best thing right now to is to be aware of what's going on in our community and being prepared to have those transparency conversations with our clients and our consumers. And I think that social skills are going to play a vital part in that during what is going on in our community and nation right now. So having those conversations with our clients about what those social skills look like in certain environments and settings and what are appropriate topics to be having in the workplace and also, you know, just taking those environments in to account as well and, you know, understanding who they can have safe conversations with in the workplace and knowing that as counselors we will be there to be empathetic and hold that safe place of transparency to talk about any potential trauma that may be going on with that client or just initial reactions. We are all feeling lots of emotions right now and we want to be honest about that. And if we don't have these conversations, then, you know, some maladaptive reactions could occur. And we want to allow

our clients to again be able to express themselves but knowing when is the appropriate time to do that. And explore what those social reactions may be to specific topics. So I think that's a very valuable conversation to have with each of your clients if they are comfortable with that and present that information to you, too.

>> Thanks I think that's a really good point to bring up right now. So I mean it is very -- there is a lot going on in the world right now. So it is a good thing for us to touch on today. The next comes from Heather, what can we do to teach self-awareness?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I would say it is probably different case by case. Each individual is going to have a different level of self-awareness or where exactly they want to become more aware or if we feel like we need to be working on a certain type of awareness particular to that setting and environment they are working in or they are trying to obtain employment in. So as far as different techniques that I might use for self-awareness would be emotional regulation tools, I think a classic example of that is a five-point scale, numbering from one to five, what those difference types of emotional levels may be for that particular client or consumer. And really getting their buy in to that as well. So you can give them particular examples of when they may be feeling like that. So they can notice and have that self-awareness of when they are reacting a certain way or demonstrating certain skills and then, you know, if that client also benefits from having that video maybe they would be open to video a session of you all talking about their level of awareness and using different techniques.

Also with our previous question of just what's going on in the community and kind of having that self-awareness of, you know, what's going on in our minds and bodies at the same time, mind, body, soul that all connects. So how can we check in with ourselves and do a body scan. So talking with your clients about what that feels like for them and when they are noticing if they have certain tension in their bodies or if they aren't feeling super excited where they are feeling that. Try to describe what's going on with them. The more descriptive you can get and, you know, explore that with your clients, then the more you can help them really make that connection of their self-awareness and where they want to increase it or where it actually is based on for them.

>> Perfect. Thank you. The next question is -- actually I'm glad this one came up because this is something that in my own work has come up as well. Ellen asked you hear the term professional skills being utilized in place of soft skills. I feel like I have heard a lot of different terms being used when using soft skills.

>> APRIL LYNCH: When I hear professional skills it is often kind of that connection of both the hard and soft skills. And how that plays out in overall professionalism which we know that professionalism can be represented as a soft skill but how professional you are in those hard skills

and can all connect in to professional skill set, but I saw where other people were saying in the chat box transferrable skills which is something that we often use when talking with employers and our clients and consumers. So yeah, I think that professional skills can be a good representation of the hard and the soft skills. And we can talk about how the hard or the soft could be transferrable in to other environments. So I think it is kind of a case by case situation, too, what connects most for that client and that employer or whoever the support team is talking at that time about. Shaping those soft skills and overall the transferability.

>> The next two questions are actually related to one another. We have two folks in the Q and A asking about rating scales for soft skills or kind of a self-report or assessment questionnaire. Asking if a scale you would recommend or be able to share.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Yeah, I would say I'm pretty creative when it comes to these assessments. And often I will just kind of go on a Google scholar search and compare how I think it will fit best with that client and case. I don't have a specific assessment or questionnaire to share today. But I would say talking with your client recognizing where, you know, they are -- where they are currently, where they want to go, and how you can tailor and customize assessment or questions around that particular individual. So I hope that makes sense.

>> Yes, and I mean each person that you work with is different. So it makes sense that there isn't going to be necessarily a one size fits all scale. Next one is from Peg, what should be done when a client is so reserved that they won't communicate.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Oh, yes. Sometimes we get the quiet ones and sometimes when they are quiet we may not know everything to their story. There may be some things that have happened before that have shaped that quietness and that reserve nature. And also it could be a positive to be a reserved individual. Talking with that person about their strengths, this brings up a particular case for me. I remember working with the individual years ago and she would not vocally communicate. She could vocally communicate but very reserved, quiet, very nervous individual. And we would communicate through a notebook. So her and I had a communication notebook and she was in the middle of an internship experience. She hadn't obtained employment yet but was working towards that. And we were working on noticing her soft skills and her hard skills and all of those great strengths. And we used like I said a notebook to communicate I would say for a few months. We were doing just writing in a notebook. And even if we are in person we were communicating with that notebook. And it was a sense of building rapport and establishing connection and over that time period that work in itself became a safe place for her. And gradually she started to use her voice. And it was a beautiful one. And I was so proud of her for finally opening up.

So I would say in those situations maybe thinking outside of the box with ways that you could communicate with your client. I even had a client with mental health concerns. And he couldn't fully express what he was trying to get across vocally. So I said draw for me and I gave him a piece of paper and a pen and seeing this beautiful illustration of what was occurring in his mind gave quite the representation of things that we can work with at that point. So again just thinking outside the box of ways that you could communicate with your client if maybe that vocal conversation isn't a most comfortable situation for them to begin with.

>> Yeah, I think that's a great point and love that you brought up, you know, potentially drawing something, if you are working with a client who maybe has lower skills when it comes to writing that might be a good option for people to drawing as opposed to writing.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Exactly.

>> Next question comes from Star. How are measuring soft skills in a virtual environment or behavioral rehearsal?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Good question. We are in quite the virtual world right now. So we have to be flexible and adjust and even if these techniques are working out in employment settings how do we transfer those in to a remote approach. So I would say again that that's really just adjusting to the client case by case. How that may look for them, how that might be helpful. I meet typically weekly with clients if it is on our schedule for that week and we may be doing role playing or behavioral rehearsal over a Zoom call or Microsoft Teams or Skype or whatever platform they are using. Some of my clients don't want to do the video. Sometimes we will just do audio approach and we will work up to having them on the video camera and us doing our behavioral rehearsal. I like to keep a task analysis. And it should be for hard skills but you can write those for soft skills as well. And, you know, that may look like today I was having this interaction with my client and he was performing his communication as -- let's me and him came up with a rating skill of one in ten on miscommunication device with doing a greeting and a closing phone conversation. And we may be trialing that out over using Zoom or one of our platforms. And how would they rate his communication skills baseline when we first started doing the role playing and behavioral rehearsal and how would they rate it to where he is that day.

So I'm good in that specific example. I was recently working with a client on preparing for phone calls that we may be doing in his internship and he is using a communication device to become more confident with having everything fully expressed and having the other party understand. So we have been doing a lot of that virtually and again just, you know, tracking what that behavior is, and talking with the client to get their self-report as well on how they feel with their performance.

>> Thanks. The next question I can answer. Terry is asking about

CRC credit but doesn't need but more of a certificate of completion. So I think this is a good time. I am going to quickly jump in and kind of run down what that process looks for CRC or for verification of attendance. So for CRC project E3's archive and today's of Webcast that you watched and then Webcast additional resources, click on the evaluation survey. And then once you complete that you will get one CRC credit. And you will receive that credit within a couple of minutes. We have a new automated system. Make sure to check your Spam or junk mailboxes because they can sometimes end up there by accident. We do not provide certificates of completion, but the CRC does serve as a verification of attendance in case you need that. I know a lot of people that now working in a virtual setting a lot of us, so a lot of supervisors are asking for things like that. If you have any questions at all about CRC's verification of attendance feel free to e-mail us. You will also receive an e-mail tomorrow with these instructions. You will get an e-mail tomorrow as well. I want to throw that out there since that question came up in the Q and A and we will jump on to the next one.

This next one comes from Patrick. Considering role play and interviewing coaching, what do we do with public presentations and advertisements like the Schick razor played commercial, where a young man is interviewing for a position. The applicant rushes in to the rest room with a Schick razor that matches the look. How does this example impact the applicant's view on process and behaviors to follow such as soft skills exercised?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Okay. I just want to -- I want to pull it up in the chat box so I can see the question just to make sure.

>> Yes.

>> APRIL LYNCH: What was the individual's name?

>> Patrick. It should be the second question down.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Sorry y'all. I am a visual learner as well sometimes. So I wanted to make sure I am hearing it all correctly. Yeah, that is definitely interesting. So basically going off of a commercial what's kind of present, what you should look like and come across in an interview or a specific employer location, I think that in those situations it is really like I had mentioned in the webinar employment specialists or VR counselors being that liaison at that time and being that communication piece for your client and the employer. Really understanding what those expectations are and ensuring that that environment that you are going to be interviewing for is going to be, you know, an appropriate fit as far as your skills as well as how you present yourself and how you feel as an individual. An example of this I have a client who is just a little bit more of a casual guy and he loves mismatching his clothes and wears all different patterns and colors. He is an artist. And some people may see him out in the community and think he looks out there. And I don't know if he would really be a very professional guy, but he is extremely professional and meets all of his deadlines. And

the environment that we sought for him is a creative environment and a little bit more casual as far as what they are wearing each day. And they can wear what they please and being more of that creative environment where you can represent yourself and express yourself in your clothing.

I think it is a case by case situation again and helping that client represent who they are and that connects with the environment that you are seeking. So if you have a client that wants to be the clean cut, you know, look that way that the commercial is presenting them and that's the type of environment they want to be in and the way they want to present themselves then that's great. But I think that it really is knowing your client and knowing the environment that they are interviewing for.

>> Uh-huh. Next question comes from Luke. Soft skills are subjective. How can one reinforce a client's soft skills besides giving examples?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I think examples are a great way to do it and that helping that consumer/client understand those specific examples of when they are using those soft skills. So they may not recognize that, you know, when they are using their alarm system or certain apps on their phone that's them time managing each day. And, you know, I think that's just really again talking with them about specific examples where those skills might be presenting themselves and providing that reinforcement and then at that point helping them design specific supports to help them continue maintaining those skills and then also increasing any that they would like to.

>> The next question is from Jennifer. Asking about assessments again. Asking if there is any printable soft skills assessment that could be used when starting to work with a new client.

>> APRIL LYNCH: The first thing that comes to mind for me for printable options, so I guess I will just do a little plug for a website I like to use a lot. It is called therapistaid.com and they have a lot of great visuals and aids on there. I will go to the strengths section and use those different worksheets to explore not only values of that client but then those soft skills that they may already have. So doing a strengths exploration activity and again you could design this on your own, just typing up the different words and having the client take that paper and circling everything that applies to them and maybe writing out their top three skills that they know they use each week. So yeah, therapistaid.com is a great website I use for different worksheets. And I will get ideas from and maybe design my own and print those free options that are on there.

>> We did have someone else ask about assessment as well. Thank you for providing those websites and resources for people.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Of course.

>> The next question comes from Carolyn. Could you give me other examples of natural supports besides an existing employee in the workplace?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I think in the webinar I focused more on the natural supports on the individuals on site. Our goal with having natural supports on a work site is with the goal of having employment specialists have that physical presence and have an individual be that safe person to go to. But, you know, employment specialists can be a natural support as well. Just based on how often they are on that site with the individual, and then once they feed in. But then securing those natural supports on the site. I would say outside of the work site it may be a family member, a close friend, just a safe place, safe person to be able to connect with and talk about their day and any scenarios that might be occurring at work. At times I will have clients share some information with a family member about something that might have happened at work or a close friend and having that conversation with that person that allows them to feel comfortable to either talk with me or reaching to their employer as well for as needed assistance. I think it is just really taking a look at the support network of that individual and how you can connect it to their workplace but then also all environments in their life.

>> Okay. And we have another question from Patrick. What type of industry is increasing in soft skills demand? Information technology perhaps?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I think that probably is a state by state basis. For me the way that I look for specific soft skills that might be encompassed in a company, I often will seek missions of businesses or companies to just kind of read through what their company mission is. Often that will tell you what kind of individuals they want on their team. And they will even in the mission often state different words that might represent a soft skill that your client may have. Or even, you know, like I mentioned in the webinar going through different job descriptions, and, you know, finding those job description that highlight any of those soft skills. Again your client may have or you might be working on together. But I think that's probably a state by state basis, what would be seeking soft skill, but I would say all employers seek that these days because we know that social skills are extremely vital in the workplace and especially with what's going on in our community and our nation right now. I would say soft skills are probably in high demand in all workplaces because we have to be flexible and adaptable especially with this virtual world right now. And I do feel like soft skills can be the thing that sets apart and takes you above and beyond even considering the hard skills that are extra part that can set you apart as a candidate, too.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Absolutely.

>> Dana asks how schools and VR work together to build soft skills?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I live that. I would say this preemployment transition services, this is a category that local vocational rehabilitation state agencies can be using this service code and accessing local employment

organizations to provide those transition services. So what we did at RTC is we connected with our local DARS, Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services. And we provided -- last summer we got to connect with a local hotel. And they provided a month-long internship experience. They each had a job coach paired with them. So I would say school systems making connections with your local state agency that provides those VR services and see how you all could get that started in your school if you aren't already doing it because early intervention with work skill, especially soft skills could take that person to the next level of becoming employable.

>> And this flows well in to our next question. When working with PRIAT students what are some types to obtaining soft skills?

>> APRIL LYNCH: It is getting to know the individual. Working with high school students may be different than working with some of our clients that are older. So really recognizing where they are at. What -- maybe doing some strength exploration with them as well. That might be connecting with teachers before coming out in to internship or job site experience. We had a classroom setting where we have job coaches and VR counselors and just a different collaborative team coming in to the classroom setting and providing different instruction about soft skills and hard skills and overall just those transferrable skills from the school setting in to different workplace environments. So getting creative with that and seeing how you can bring in some of those employment organization representatives or VR representatives to connect with your teachers and start that early intervention for transition age students.

>> Thanks. And April, I just wanted to check in really quick since we are getting close to 12 o'clock here, are you available to answer a few more questions? We do have quite a few more in the Q and A box. And if there are any that we run out of the time and don't get to today, we will follow up with you and send them along via e-mail so that you are able to take a look at them and answer them. And we will post them with the archive webinar. Everyone in the audience if we don't get to your question but we will answer it. We will do it via e-mail and posting it on the website. Do you have time for a few more questions.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Yes. I am available. Thank you all for asking these questions.

>> Appreciate everyone chiming in. The next question comes from Shannon. What is the definition of compensatory supports? She needs clarification on the definition of compensatory supports.

>> APRIL LYNCH: So compensatory support is putting something in to place when there may not be representation of that already. So, for example, if a client has difficulty with time management skills, that compensatory support may be an alarm system, a checklist. So what is that tangible support that is being made and implemented to help that individual follow through on either task completion or understanding a

specific scenario that may involve those soft skills.

>> Great. The next question is asking as counselors a lot of times we are pushed to get successful closures. How and when do you place priority on facilitating professional skills training with a client or customer in the VR process?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Yeah. That's -- that's a great point. We do get a lot of cases and we want to make sure that we are balancing quality services to all of our clients. And how do we as counselors time manage ourselves to make sure we fit in all of that. I think it is recognizing the support level of each client when -- how often you need to have standing appointments with that individual. Some of my clients I have standing appointments with and some I do not. As far as working to shape those skills on a timeline, that can be difficult. Because I think everyone has a different timeline. So just working with that individual on where they are at and if we feel like barriers continue to come up, this approach may need to be adjusted. And, you know, how can we then potentially take a customized approach if the specific support employment approach may not be working. I hope I am understanding the question correctly, but balancing out the different support levels of your clients and ensuring that you are managing as best as you can to fit in what is a priority at that time.

>> Yes. And that's a good point to bring up as well. If anybody feels like we misunderstood your question or I read it wrong, feel free to pop in the Q and A and clarify. I make mistakes. Feel free to pop back in there with another question or a clarifying question. We appreciate that.

So I know, April, you have mentioned already some resources that you personally use. The next question is asking for other suggestions for resource books, links, websites for teaching soft skills.

>> APRIL LYNCH: At the end of the Q and A I can plug in RTC's main website and with our business connections resource page. We have been doing a lot of awesome investment on different Webcasts that are specific to some of these topics that can be shaping soft skills and preparing clients for either virtual world experience or preparing for once we start to adjust back in to job development services. So no specifics that I could state off the top of my head right now, but I am happy to make some connections with our website and as those resources come up you are able to access.

>> That would be great if you plug that in when we wrap up the Q and A. So if anything comes up just let us know.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Sure.

>> Our next question comes from Kathleen asking working with Autism Spectrum Disorder clients can be difficult with regards to employment. Is it able to do when you are able to tap in to their deep interests?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Great question. I would definitely say it can be difficult at times to notice those strengths especially if you are asking an

individual just tell me your strengths right away. So they may have never been asked that question. Or they maybe not fully, you know, make that connection of certain interests that they have are their strengths. If everyone was connected at that time but the creative artist he is extremely interested in painting and photography and all of those types of skills. And he is very reserved and very quiet. It was difficult to get to knowing exactly what his strengths were right away but ways that I was able to uncover them was by doing meetings in his home. So he was actually a very reserved individual, too and not wanting to be out in the public for meetings. And he would say coming in to a stuffy conference room was uncomfortable for them.

Going in to the home setting, when I enter the home setting I would see lots of paintings and artworks and things they had to present. And then also as described in the working -- in the webinar a working interview. So maybe with employers that feel like a fostering environment that is a safe environment that you can take this individual to try out some skills and demonstrate those strengths that way. But it may be, too, just starting with those earlier stages of doing some strength exploration through, you know, having a sheet of paper with the different types of, you know, just writing out different strengths. And maybe once up do a little bit of information gathering about their interest and leisure activities that are -- that might help build some rapport and that individual might give you more information. I don't know that all VR agencies have access to community support services, but that's a category that we use sometimes at RTC where if we want to learn a little bit more about this client in the community and how they interact with people, we will use that service code and it is pretty cool. You might take a trip to the mall and, you know, watch them interact with someone in a store or go in to a Starbucks or buy a coffee and see how they interact in the coffee shop. Sometimes it doesn't have to be immediately having an interview or what we think would be a typical employment service activity. It might be a little bit more creative and just building that rapport and learning about that individual I think that takes time.

>> Yes, definitely. This next question comes from Patrick. Saying it is my third and last question. Just so you know you are welcome to ask as many questions as you would like.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Thanks.

>> But the question is soft skills development a trickle down cascaded result from how leadership prepares and implements policy, disciplinary, penalizing management mechanisms?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Interesting perspective. I think that we, all managers and employers want all of their employees to be able to put their best foot forward and show their strengths and show how they really are a valuable asset to that team and that business. So there may be some

connections with their policies. And I even think of like certain companies that have, you know, employee resource initiatives and how they may connect specific employee resource groups with individuals that have certain soft skills or, you know, if it is a diversity type of Employee Resource Group and they ask the individuals who are caregivers of somebody with a disability or being a part of that group or share their strengths within that to ultimately help improve those policies and protocols to be fair and promote the strengths of everyone.

>> Uh-huh. The next question comes from Byron asking if you have ever used me, ME! Transition curriculum for soft skills? And then they also shared the share acronym setup straight, have a good attitude and activate your brain and relax and high contact.

>> APRIL LYNCH: I am familiar with hearing this but thank you again for sharing. I don't know if I could speak to it all right now but I have definitely heard of that.

>> Yes, and I -- Byron, if you want to plug in a website link or something like that if you have more resources you want to share feel free.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Yes, that's awesome. Resources are great.

>> They are. And definitely it is not limited to just what we share from VCU or SVRI. And if other attendees have resources feel free to plug them in to the chat. It is a great space to share with other people working in the field and show what's working well or if you have a question for a certain kind of resource feel free to plug that in, too. Our next question comes from Jane. Please address dealing with clients who lack or refuse insights/constructive criticism.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Yeah, that could be a tough one.

>> Yep.

>> APRIL LYNCH: I think that that's all about approach. And noticing where that client is at that time. If you are getting a little bit of resistance or if you are in a situation, take a step back. How did you present the information. What questions did you ask. There may be a response occurring there from the client that has something to do with a completely different association. And it may not even relate what that current conversation is. They may be shutting down because it is reminding them of a similar situation. Trauma is real. So it may be something that we don't think is going to upset or have the client shut down, but I think just being mindful of approach and if that question isn't helping a connection continue, then how can you take a step back and adjust that approach. So I think that's again a case by case situation, but excepting feedback and correction is definitely a soft skill that can be measured in using a Rubric and again using those rating scales to help a client connect, you know, that quantity with it and that scale.

So, you know, at this week I rated at a 5 and this is what this means. And working with your client to understand what that behavior looks like in

them and in others as well. So I think a case by case situation, but first and foremost to use recognizing this approach may not be working and that's okay. How can you move forward and get that client's buy in to help -- to help you guys best work together. So just being transparent and honest with your client about that, too. I'm here to help you. I want to help support you. What is the best way to support.

>> Yeah, that could be very helpful and reminding them it is a partnership.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Exactly. There is an alliance there.

>> Uh-huh. Next question comes from Troy asking how can I receive training for virtual training per soft skills for my potential customers? This is amazing.

>> APRIL LYNCH: So having soft skills training for the client's particularly?

>> I think the question is there training for how to do soft skills training virtually. I believe that's the question. And Troy, please clarify if I'm completely off base.

>> APRIL LYNCH: I am not sure if I can get a specific training off the top of my head. But I definitely think that again this is a case by case individualized situation and noticing maybe taking a list of all those different soft skills from the webinar slides and going through that with your client and seeing what they feel like they do identify with, do they feel like they are a professional individual and give me an example of how you can be professional. And I do feel comfortable doing time management, what does that look like. How do you feel your work ethic is and give an example of when you have exemplified positive work ethic. So talking through those examples have a visual and coming up with a list or using those different soft skills that were talked about in the webinar earlier and just exploring that with your client.

>> The next question comes from Evelyn asking things become interesting when we assist clients with earning degrees. And they have acquired the hard skills and when they present in the employment environment they look at soft skills. Any suggestions?

>> APRIL LYNCH: This brings a particular client to mind. He was an accountant and has a great career path and knows his hard skills skill set. But some of the soft skills aren't there. And this was something that would come up a lot. In team meetings, he may not be responding the most courteous but he has a little bit more of a dry humor. We had to think of some creative ways of how they could work on those soft skills, not only we were doing behavioral rehearsal and doing transparent open communication with his teammates about what this could look like and how they all could improve their communication, but one interesting way that we thought outside of the box he joined a group for a game that he really liked to play and he was able to interact with other peers about interest that he really

enjoyed but he was in a novel environment. And they would meet weekly at a restaurant and that was a novel environment for him at first. So, you know, practicing those soft skills within a different environment but there was a motivating factor about an interest that he truly loved. So that enthusiasm would present itself. So working on it in different environments. And not being afraid to talk with the client and support team of what that would look like in your life.

>> That's a great suggestion. The next question comes from Cheryl, describing an instance with a client that she works with. I have a client that interviews well. How once she is hired she becomes very combative and displays anger issues. We have always had a job coach with her but the job coach cannot head off these behavioral meltdowns. And she is currently on her second placement. How can I approach the employer with these problems? I know this is a specific situation. But I do feel like this comes up a lot. The interview is such a small snippet of a time in a grand scheme of working relationship. Sometimes people are a lot different once hired and comfortable in their environment. Can you speak to these disparities and how to work through that?

>> APRIL LYNCH: Absolutely. Yeah. I think that there is lots of situations where an individual can knock an interview out of the park but some specific details that we want to include the employer and coworkers on. We may not get the opportunity to talk to the whole team right way. So how can we then be proactive once we gain that placement. So I would say disability awareness training is extremely important in this case. So talking with the employer about how you would like to do a training for this staff and the training could include disability etiquettes and myths and benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. And then you can even have some slides. So let's say you are doing a powerpoint presentation and you can also have some slides that are specific to your client and explaining about their strengths, their barriers and how you can work through those barriers. So then it would only then promote the strengths. So I'm thinking of a particular example of an individual when he worked in a hotel and we did disability awareness training for the staff and with it being a hotel there would be different individuals and different departments. We wanted to train everyone. We would have everyone come together for a luncheon and I would do a presentation on the individual and where we were at. And so that was the initial training but because, you know, the coaches with the client for the life of employment continuing to provide that training as needed. And with that particular client we used an emotional regulation zones support. And this individual identified with colors to represent her emotions. And kind of like the five point scale of what we were saying earlier but with her we took a little bit further and we explained okay, when this individual is in the green zone you will see her walking down the hall bouncing with her hands moving side to side. And when she is in the yellow

zone she is getting quiet and dropping eye contact. And that might mean she is feeling confused about a situation. And we would have proactive or reactive strategies in place.

Each representation of that color and what that represents for that person emotionally and how you can respond to that situation whether that bringing in the job coach, this is a type of topic you can talk about the person to calm them down. Just dependent on that environment. We had those visuals all in her work station and then we had it on the employee staff board. So they could access that in and look at updates about my client and how to best work with her.

>> Thanks, April. Goes back a little bit, Luke jumped back on to clarify. Saying thanks but my question was other than examples -- hold on one second. So thanks but my question was other than examples, this is difficult for those with physical differences to confirm/reaffirm to those without a disability. Usually these soft skills besides adaptability are just missed. Give me one second. Let me see if I can pull up Luke's original question.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Okay. Great.

>> Thank you, everyone, for bearing with me. Luke, I remember your question but not well enough to repeat it. And also thank you for jumping back on to clarify. Soft skills are subjective. How can one reinforce someone's soft skills without besides giving examples? So he is saying that it's difficult for those with physical differences to confirm/reaffirm to those without a disability. Usually these soft skills besides adaptability are just missed.

>> APRIL LYNCH: So how exactly to really get that point across and to share those strengths and soft skills?

>> Uh-huh. Without just using examples.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Uh-huh. Well, I do think examples are great because employers love concrete examples of where that individual is expressing themselves and often that could come up in an interview experience, but I think this might go back to the self-reporting. Like you said it is subjective. So get that information from the client and having them explore that in strengths exploration activity or you designing your own scale and just seeing how they respond to it. So whatever technique might be most beneficial for that particular client, how they might respond but yeah, if you -- if you don't want to lead with just specific examples, maybe it is just starting with defining what these soft skills are and then having that subjective approach of doing a self-report questionnaire with the client.

>> Luke, thank you for jumping back in and steering us back on the right path. The next question comes from Patricia asking does that website have Rubrics. I am assuming they are referring to -- I don't remember the website. Therapist Aid. Does that website also have Rubrics?

>> APRIL LYNCH: That website is more for I would say client activities. As far as Rubrics I think that would be a little bit more of something you would design personally for that particular employment setting. When we were designing Rubrics for specific projects it was taking in to account what type of skills we were hoping for those interns to increase during that time and then be able to transfer in to future employment settings. So -- those particular Rubrics are I referred to earlier were used for an internship experience, but just thinking of my own employee evaluation and when my boss sits down with me and goes through a Rubric of this is what exceptional rates, is acceptable rates. So maybe looking out there to what resources already exist and giving those as particular examples to your client to prepare them for, you know, Rubrics they may experience in future jobs.

>> Thank you for clarifying that. I think we will do one more question just because we have a few quick housekeeping things to attend to before we end the session today. So again for those of you who we did not get to your question, I want to thank you for chiming in and putting your question in to the Q and A box. There has been some truly wonderful questions today. And it has been great to hear from you. We will be sending this whole list of questions on to April so she can take a look at them and get back to you with responses and those will be posted with the archived webinar.

The last question that we are going to take today we are going to -- how do you teach soft skills to those visual or hearing impairments or those who are deaf or blind?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I would say in my experience with that it has been working with those individuals on establishing their strengths. So what do they feel like they bring to the table. And then exploring those strengths within different environments that may be a good fit for them. I am thinking of an individual who was interning for a property management company. And she was just a very enthusiastic individual. Loved to communicate with others and loved to become educated. And I think that just that lifelong learning and that strength that she presented we were able to work with that within the property management company on connecting with the customers and helping them increase their productivity. By the people that were closing their homes she could reach out to them and give them communication. So I think just recognizing what these strengths are and focusing on those.

>> Perfect. Thank you. And thank you for answering all the questions. I think this has been really helpful and great for everyone. Do you have anything (cutting out) that you would like to plug before we end?

>> APRIL LYNCH: I am going to in the chat box put the link to business connections COVID-19 resources. We have been putting up a lot of great videos. All of our team of coaches have been adjusting to these

virtual world as well and helping their clients adjust to it. So I hope that some of our resources could be helpful to all of you in serving your clients during this challenging time. But we can get through it. We can stay connected. And please check out the link that I am putting in to the box -- hang on. Let me send it to the whole team. Yeah. Check out our resources at business connections and our main site at vcurtc.org.

>> When you do put it in the chat, remember to check that you want it to go to all the attendees and panelists.

>> APRIL LYNCH: I saw I did an individual there at first.

>> I have totally been forcing you to talk for 45 minutes.

>> APRIL LYNCH: No worries. Happy to be here.

>> If people are looking for more resources working through COVID-19 project E3 has best practices and best tips on our website.

Then I want to give everyone a quick update on our upcoming schedule. We will be off next week for the Independence holiday. No webinar next week. A lot of people are probably taking some time off finishing things off before the holiday. And then after that on the 9th we will resume webinars on typical Thursday 11 a.m. central broadcast. We will be doing rebroadcasts at that time working with Sandy I believe is the first one. And she will kind of be talking about working remotely. And then we will be rebroadcasting some of our trauma informed care broadcast. Feel free to check them out. Visit any of our old webinars that we previously aired. Go to the website and there is an archived page within that.

So again I want to thank you, April, for joining us. This was wonderful. And thank you to the whole group that chimed in with questions and was here to listen and share resources. We really appreciate it. And I hope that everyone stays healthy and stays safe.

>> APRIL LYNCH: Thank you so much for having me. Best wishes to everyone.

>> Thanks, everyone.

>> Bye-bye.

>> We will leave the site open for another few minutes. Those of you maybe want to scroll back to chat to catch things that you may not have been able to catch. We will keep the Zoom meeting open for a few minutes.