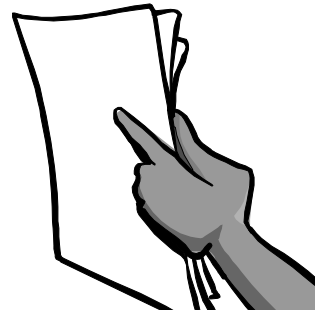


# EMPLOYMENT REFERENCES

## GOALS:

- To become aware of how others perceive us.
- To examine how references vary depending on the individual giving the reference.
- To gather feedback to help set goals for self-improvement.

**Note:** This lesson would be best offered after group members know each other and have had a lesson on ***Giving and Receiving Feedback***.



## RATIONALE:

Most employers will know you are nervous and on your best behaviour in an interview. They will want to contact others who know you in a normal day-to-day setting to get a more rounded picture of who you are. Reference checks can be the deciding factor in getting a job. Although employers do not usually value references from friends and peers, we need to discover how others view us so we can be better prepared when giving references. We can learn what kind of reference others will give us by asking for feedback in a constructive and helpful manner.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Flipchart, markers, tape, Job Cards: 3"x 5" cards or pieces of paper with the name of a job on each, (these could be unusual, non-traditional jobs to add a sense of fun to the exercise), two or three copies of the questionnaire ***Would You Be My Reference?*** for each participant.

## METHOD:

### Warm Up: What Is My Job?

Tape a Job Card onto participants' backs without them knowing what it says. Tell them to mingle and ask questions (one per person) that require a yes or no answer until they guess what their job is. Continue until all have guessed correctly.

### **Exercise 1: You Are The Employer**

Suggest to the group to imagine that they need some work done at home, like roofing, fixing an appliance or baby-sitting their child or pet. Reinforce the idea that they will be paying the wages and are responsible for hiring the right person to get the job done correctly, accurately and safely. Ask the group what would be important to them in hiring the right person. Flipchart their answers.

#### **Questions to Consider:**

- How would you know if the applicant meets your requirements?
- What would you do to ensure that they have the abilities they claim?
- What kind of information would you want from a reference?

### **Exercise 2: Would You Be My Reference?**

Instruct group members to select two or three people from the group that they think would offer them a good reference. Direct participants to interview those people using the Reference Questionnaire. Reinforce the concept that feedback is most helpful if the comments are specific and relate to behaviour, and not personality.

#### **Questions to Consider:**

- Did you get different responses from different people?
- What might influence a person's opinion of you?
- What might you do to improve the quality of the references given by others?

### **Exercise 3: Whom Should I Ask?**

Brainstorm with the whole group and flipchart a listing of people to approach and ask if they will be your reference. Include in the discussion the following questions:

- How many references should we have?
- What might be a good way to present reference information to employers?

#### **CREDIT:**

Adapted from a lesson submitted by Dawn Julien and Jerry Raaf, Abbotsford, British Columbia

# REFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

- How would you describe my way of getting along with
  - peers?
  - teachers and/or trainers?
  - others outside the group?
- How would you describe my attitude towards work?
- What are my strengths? What would you say are my strongest skills and abilities?
- What are my weaknesses? What skills and abilities do I need to improve?
- As a member of this group what have I contributed?
- Do you see me as being punctual, reliable, and dependable? What are some examples?
- How would you describe my ability to handle problem situations with
  - people
  - computers/technology
  - information or data
- Would you recommend me to someone, knowing your reputation is tied to my performance?
- What could I do to improve my work-related skills and behaviours?
- What could I do to improve the way I present myself in an interview or work related situation?

Carefully evaluate the information you have gathered. Assess this information in as objective manner as possible, recognizing that others may see you in a way that is different from your own perspective. Think about how you can use this information to help you present yourself in a more positive and confident manner.

## Questions to Consider:

- What does this feedback say about me?
- In what ways can I strengthen my skills, attitudes and abilities?

**Sort out what you think is helpful and put the rest aside.**