



Transition Newsletter

Volume 16

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Tips for Making Small Talk

The ability to make small talk is an essential communication skill to use at work, and life in general. These conversations help in defining relationships between friends and coworkers. It's a natural way for people to connect and find common interests. It's also seen as an act of politeness and a first chance at making a good impression.

Here are some tips to help you master the art of making small talk using active listening skills:

- **Make eye contact**—nod your head occasionally and avoid folding your arms as this could be a signal that you aren't interested
- **Don't interrupt**—don't be thinking of your response but rather listen to what they are saying
- **Watch for nonverbal behaviors**—pay attention to the person's and your own facial expressions, tone of voice, and other behaviors that might tell you how the conversation is going
- **Show interest by asking questions**—do this to clarify what is being said and try to ask open-ended questions to encourage them to continue talking. Asking yes or no questions tend to shut down conversations quickly.
- **Avoid abruptly changing the subject**—it will appear that you were not listening or you weren't interested in what they were saying.
- **Avoid personal venting**—if you had a rough day at home or school, it needs to stay there so it doesn't cause a distraction for you at work

Another helpful tip to making small talk is understanding appropriate topics. When first meeting someone, which of the following topics are safe to discuss?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ⇒ Your favorite sports team? | ⇒ The latest news? |
| ⇒ Your health problems? | ⇒ Weekend plans? |
| ⇒ Your home town? | ⇒ How much money you make? |
| ⇒ Who you will be voting for? | ⇒ Your religious beliefs? |
| ⇒ The weather? | ⇒ Movies or tv shows? |
| ⇒ Books? | ⇒ Do they have a boy/girlfriend? |

Try to avoid asking question after question, rather ask a couple to find a common interest and use your active listening skills to lead the conversation in that direction. And keep in mind, if you have an interest that you want to talk about, doesn't mean it's theirs so chances are they won't want to hear about the same topic over and over so use the tips discussed above to try and find mutual topics of interest.

Also remember that a simple smile, brief eye-contact, and a quick "hello" to people you don't know makes you seem friendly and approachable even if you don't have time to engage in small talk!

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT



Skills to Pay the Bills is an online curriculum which focuses on teaching "soft" or workforce readiness skills to youth, including youth with disabilities. The structure of the program is comprised of modular, hands-on, engaging activities that focus on six key skill areas:

1. Communication
2. Enthusiasm and attitude
3. Teamwork
4. Networking
5. Problem solving and critical thinking
6. Professionalism

To access the videos and free curriculum, go to bit.ly/SoftSkillstoPayBills

This is informational only. DHS is neither supporting nor endorsing this website. Please determine for yourself if you wish to use it and proceed accordingly.

contact me



Name:

Phone:

Email:

Healthy Boundaries at Work

It's normal to want friends at work but that shouldn't be the only reason to want to work. It's important to understand that when you accept a job, you are there for the employer, not necessarily to make friends. We need to understand that the job comes first and any friends we may make is secondary.

Healthy boundaries at work helps you become a better employee and keep your job. Healthy boundaries also means you know AND respect the limits and rules of the worksite. Everyone has their own boundaries so conversations that may be okay to have with one coworker, might not be okay with another coworker.

If someone is telling you to stop asking them for their phone number, stop giving them hugs, asks you for more space, or anything along those lines, it's important to respect their boundaries, apologize, and do what they ask.

The same goes for you! If you don't feel comfortable with questions, behaviors, or topics that are happening with someone you work with, it's okay to not engage, tell them you aren't comfortable, and walk away. If they don't stop, it may be time to involve someone of authority to help you problem solve so you can continue your work in a healthy environment and not one that you will dread going to.

[dhs.sd.gov/](https://dhs.sd.gov/transitionresources.aspx)

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What happens if a close work friendship goes bad and you still have to work with them?

It's important to have a conversation about remaining professional even if you are no longer personal friends since you are both there to work. Keep you interactions as positive as possible. You can still smile and say hello, just be sure that conversations are professional and avoid personal topics.



Characteristics of Good Friendships

Sharing of common interests

Showing kindness and caring

Supporting each other

Mutual understanding

Commitment and loyalty

Honesty and trust

Equality

Ability to self-disclose

Ability to resolve conflicts in a mature way



tslp.org/events

Catch the Wave

A one-day conference for high school students with disabilities considering **post-secondary education.**

- 3/29/2022 in Rapid City @ School of Mines & Technology/Western Dakota College
- 3/29/2022 in Sioux Falls @ Southeast Technical College
- 4/7/2022 in Aberdeen @ Northern State University

eTrac[®]

online vocational training

Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character or personality traits, and attitudes that enable employees to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well and achieve their goals. Contact me to set up an account for you and begin working through these valuable lessons with you!

IT'S ~~NOT~~ TOO LATE!

Some Project SEARCH sites around South Dakota are still taking applications for the 2022-2023 school year!

What is Project SEARCH? It's a unique business-led transition program for students with disabilities that takes place within a host business.

Who should apply for Project SEARCH? Students who want the chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills.

How do I know if I'm eligible to apply? Students must have completed all their academic requirements for graduation from high school, be 18 to 21 years old, have support from their high school to attend, and be eligible for VR. Students must also have the goal of being competitively employed in the community after completion of the program.

Where can I find more information about Project SEARCH? Go to the statewide Project SEARCH site to see videos and links to the different sites available in South Dakota!

dhs.sd.gov/rehabservices/projectsearch.aspx

You can also reach out to the individual site coordinators listed below to get more information, ask about a site tour and/or application!

Aberdeen—Avera St. Luke's Hospital Linda White — 605.222.5680 Linda.White@k12.sd.us	Brookings—South Dakota State University JaColby Anderson — 605.688.4407 JaColby.Anderson@k12.sd.us
Teachwell Solutions—Avera McKennan Hospital Angie Mulder — 605.322.5071 Angie.Mulder@teachwell.org	Sioux Falls School District—Dow Rummel Village Heidi Hewitt — 605.359.8261 Heidi.Hewitt@k12.sd.us
Rapid City and surrounding communities—Monument Health Heather Hoeye — 605.394.5120 hhoeye@bhssc.org	



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