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# MODULE 6

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## Self-Management and Soft Skills



**CESBA**

*Work Skills Manual*

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## Self-Management



The Ontario Adult Literacy Framework Curriculum (OALCF) includes managing learning among important competencies for the workplace. This can include employee training or setting learning goals. Since this competency deals with self-motivation and independence, this module will talk about ways you can

manage yourself at work. These skills are referred to as soft skills.

Hard skills are skills that we have been trained to do or are good at doing. Unlike hard skills that are more about the technical skills we show on the job, soft skills are more about how we react and think at work. Soft skills include any skill that falls under personality trait or behaviour. Showing up on time to work, and showing initiative are examples of soft skills. An example of a hard skill would be a plumber knowing how to fix broken pipes.

There are many soft skills that you will need to manage at a job. Some important soft skills in this module include:

- Showing initiative
- Dependability
- Time Management
- Punctuality
- Adaptability
- Patience
- Flexibility
- Leadership
- Continuous learning
- Integrity
- Dealing with stress
- Working within a deadline

## Lesson 1: Transferable Soft Skills

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

<b>Assess</b>	<b>Competition</b>	<b>Develop</b>	<b>Inventory</b>
<b>Self-assessment</b>	<b>Self-management</b>	<b>Soft Skills</b>	<b>Transferable</b>

Soft Skills inventory credit: TR Leger School, STEP Program, STEPS to Employment Assessment

You may be surprised to know that you already have many of the skills that are needed in the workplace. Many of the skills you use at work or at home are **transferable**. You can gain skills at school and help your community too.

These **transferable soft skills** are sometimes not thought about because they are used each day. We **develop** them without even knowing it. Sometimes, when we apply for jobs or go on interviews, we list just the work-related skills we learned on the job, but discussing our transferable skills can give us an edge over the **competition**.

Fill out the checklist below to discover more about your soft skills. When you are finished, complete the questions in Activity 2.

### Activity 1: Soft Skill Inventory

You can use the self-assessment on the following page to discover whether you have the important soft skills that are wanted by employers. It will help you understand your strengths going forward and the areas that you may need to further develop.

Developed

I feel confident that I have this skill and that I use it often. I can use it at a workplace when needed.

Somewhat Developed

I have used this skill at times in my life in a smaller way.

Undeveloped

I have not had the chance to use this skill very much and would like to work on it.

Please put checkmarks in the appropriate column to **assess** your soft skills.

### Communication and People Skills

	Developed	Somewhat Developed	Undeveloped
<b>Listening:</b> I listen to what people say and repeat it back to them. I ask questions when I do not understand. I focus on what has been said and give it my full attention.			
<b>Perception:</b> I understand why people act and respond how they do. I try to really see a situation from someone else's side			
<b>Respect:</b> I respect myself and others. I make sure I am thinking of what is best always.			
<b>Open-mindedness:</b> I am open to new ideas or ones that are different than mine. I am committed to learning new ways to do things if I need to.			
<b>Persuasion:</b> I can influence people with my ideas and suggestions. People often want to help and support me. People like trying my ideas and plans.			
<b>Speaking:</b> I try to be polite, well-spoken and make eye contact. I can address an individual or group. I speak clearly. I am comfortable talking to others.			
<b>Team Work:</b> I am loyal to my team and work well with others. I like sharing viewpoints and am happy to take on tasks that help the group.			
<b>Leadership:</b> I like to plan projects. I have taken a leadership role in my life and the results have been good.			
<b>Appropriateness:</b> I use the right language in the right place. I am polite and follow the right rules and procedures for behavior in all situations.			

## Self-Management and Competency Skills

	Developed	Somewhat Developed	Undeveloped
<b>Digital:</b> I use a computer to type and use the Internet and email.			
<b>Time Management:</b> I know how to prioritize tasks so that the important ones are completed first. I use my time well. I use calendars and lists.			
<b>Conflict Resolution:</b> I approach conflicts with an assertive personality style and use I statements to discuss issues with others.			
<b>Problem Solving:</b> I show resourcefulness to solve a problem. I use tools like a Pro and Cons list, and I think problems through before working them out.			
<b>Stress Management:</b> I keep my cool in difficult situations. I know not to let personal problems interfere with a task at hand.			
<b>Practical:</b> I can use tools or equipment if taught how to do so. I feel comfortable following instructions and policies.			
<b>Client focus:</b> I deal well with customers or clients. I try to perceive their needs and be helpful and friendly.			

## Personal Skills

	Developed	Somewhat developed	Undeveloped
<b>Dependability:</b> I will be there on time. I will check to make sure I have completed everything that needs to be done.			
<b>Independence:</b> I am generally good at following what needs to be done on my own. I do not feel nervous doing tasks by myself.			
<b>Initiative:</b> If need be, I can easily find something else to work on. I like to figure out ways to make situations better and then follow through with the improvements.			
<b>Flexibility:</b> I know sometimes things change and I meet those changes and accept them. I like new challenges and am comfortable with them.			
<b>Ambition:</b> I feel the need to succeed and do my best. I try to go above and beyond whenever I can.			
<b>Adaptability:</b> I learn from past mistakes and apply them to new situations. I can change how I behave, or act based on what I learn is more successful.			

## Activity 2: Soft Skills Inventory Writing Assignment

Now that you have completed your assessment, please answer the following questions in paragraph form (three sentences or more).

1. What are the skills you would most like to develop? Please include a reason why you would like to improve these skills.

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2. Which three areas did you feel you had the most developed skills in? Why do you think you did best in these categories?

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## Lesson 2: Time Management

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

**Distractions   Priority   Procrastination   Schedules   Urgent**

Time **management** is a soft skill that helps you stay on task and meet targets. Five key ways to be good at time management are as follows:

1. Sorting your day by **priority** (what should be done first)
2. Avoiding **procrastination** (putting things off)
3. Avoiding **distractions** (things that interrupt your work or focus)
4. Keeping **schedules**
5. Managing to-do lists
6. Keeping the lines of communication open



The largest part of managing your time is to list the work you need to do and to prioritize the tasks based on importance. To-Do lists are wonderful aids for writing down all you need to do. If you put your tasks on paper from most to least **urgent**, it will give you a sense of where to start. If at your job, your time management skills depend on being at a certain place at a certain time, then keeping a daily schedule along with a daily to-do list can be very helpful.

Procrastination is delaying or postponing something that should be done. There will always be tasks that people do not enjoy doing, but pushing through and getting those tasks done is important when managing your time. Keeping communication lines open with people at work and checking in to see what is needed is also a good way to manage your time. It is important to find out from others what needs to be done each day and what is deemed as a priority.



## Activity 2: Dealing with Distractions

1. Distractions can really get in the way of good time management. It is easy to be distracted. Sometimes we cause our own distractions by having something on our minds that we are thinking about throughout the day. These are called inside-brain distractions. These are the distractions that come from inside us and make it hard to focus. The other type of distractions come from outside of us. These are called outside-brain distractions. Sounds and events happening around us are some of the outside brain distractions we may face at work. Either type of distraction can be harmful to time management because it takes away from the path to our goals and makes completing tasks more difficult.

Look at the list below and make a checkmark in the correct column.

<b>Distraction</b>	<b>Inside Brain</b>	<b>Outside Brain</b>
Hunger		
Cellphones		
Alarm ringing		
People gossiping		
Worried about not getting off work in time to go out with friends		
Feeling upset about your boss telling you to do something differently		

2. Give an example of your own of:

inside-brain distraction \_\_\_\_\_

outside-brain distraction \_\_\_\_\_

### **Activity 3: Searching Online**

1. Search online for a good quotation about time management. Choose one that you think is helpful on the subject and write it on the lines below.

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2. Look for a fun cartoon about time management online. You can search comic or cartoon time management to help find this. Choose one that you like and print it out for your instructor.

## Lesson 3: Showing Initiative

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

<b>Ego</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Observant</b>
<b>Perceive</b>	<b>Resourceful</b>	<b>Shyness</b>	



Taking **initiative** means doing something without being first asked to do it. It is the ability to assess a need and start to work on it independently. At work, taking initiative means going the extra mile or going above and beyond your normal job responsibilities to make things happen. It is not easy to always show initiative. You will sometimes need to **perceive** what is needed on your own. Always look for the opportunity to take initiative. Try to remain as busy and **observant** as possible, so that you are prepared when you see that something is needed.

### Tips on Showing Initiative

The more you work on taking initiative, the more easily you will be able to find ways to be more resourceful and act when needed. Being **resourceful** means learning where to find answers or information. Being resourceful is a key part of taking initiative. Be willing to start small. Any action you try on your own is a step in the right direction.

You can always ask for **feedback** on your choices. Discussion with your boss or co-workers about the decisions and choices you made throughout the day can help you understand where to take initiative next time. Practice speaking up and discussing your day. You can try it one-on-one with a staff member and work toward finding out the ideas and opinions of more people as you move forward.

Become comfortable having confidence in your decisions. It is important when you have made a choice to focus on it and work toward that outcome when taking initiative.

Always take advice from others who know more. It is important to not let your **ego** (pride) get in the way of growth at work. It is okay to take pointers from other, more experienced staff members. Knowing how a staff member you respect reacts to your decisions will help when making independent decisions in the future. Becoming a good team player can lead to your being a more independent employee.

When possible, step into a needed role when someone is absent or tied up with other responsibilities. Taking on extra responsibilities is another wonderful way to show initiative at work.

Many people experience **shyness**. If you feel this way, you are not alone. It is good to understand your personality and what type of person you are. If you know that you are shy and find it hard to speak up or volunteer for projects that involve communicating with other people, then you can work on that part of yourself. Being social could be a part of your job. It gets easier over time. Being shy can be good for you at work because when you do decide to speak up, you will be able to focus on what needs to be said and not talk too much. Shy people are very to the point, no nonsense speakers, which can be good, so be sure to focus on that positive if you are a shy person.

### **Activity 1: Understanding Initiative**

1. Look the word initiative up on an online thesaurus. What are two synonyms for this word?

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2. Go to [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) and write the definition of initiative on the lines below.

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3. Open your browser, type in <http://sentence.yourdictionary.com/>, find a sentence using the word initiative, and write it on the lines below.

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4. What advice on showing initiative do you find most helpful? Choose one that you think could help you take initiative at work and explain why you chose it as the one you like the best.

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5. Share a time in your life when you chose to show initiative. Where was this and what did you do?

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## Lesson 4: Flexibility and Adaptability

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

<b>Adaptability</b>	<b>Adjust</b>	<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Modifications</b>
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Sometimes, things do not go the way they are supposed to. An important soft skill in any workplace situation is being able to adapt to sudden changes or unexpected occurrences. **Flexibility** is the ability to accept changes or **modifications**. **Adaptability** is the ability to accept new conditions, tasks, or situations.



Changes can happen in a workplace without much notice. Schedules can change, staff may vary, and tasks can be different from day-to-day. Adaptable and flexible employees are highly valued by their employers. Therefore, an employee must be able to come up to speed quickly and **adjust** to the new circumstances. Being open to new experiences can be helpful for this soft skill. Sometimes, it is easy to get wrapped up in the stress that comes along with workplace change and work against it instead of with it. Deciding to try new things at work and keeping that mindset will help you be a great employee.

### Activity 1: Exploring Flexibility and Adaptability

1. When reading the above lesson on flexibility and adaptability, what aspects of this soft skill do you think you might find challenging? Please explain your answer.

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2. Carlos is working as a labourer for a construction company. The boss's son is in today covering for Carlos's boss, who is off because of illness. The boss's son asks the workers to measure the floor first and pre-cut pieces for it instead of measuring and laying flooring as they go. He needs to use the large saw for a project on the other side of the building.

Carlos becomes frustrated and argues about the new directions. He thinks it will be a lot harder to do and easier to make mistakes. When the boss's son tells him that he will have to do it the new way for today, he walks away to cool off. He comes back thirty minutes later while the other workers are cutting the floor boards. The boss' son tells him to get back to work. He mentions that the workers on the other side of the building will have to be paid to work late because Carlos left.

- a) What should Carlos have done differently in this situation?

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- b) What do you think the boss' son will do?

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3. Sheila works at a market outside the grocery store selling flowers and plants. There is a terrible rain storm and she is unable to run her stand. The boss tells Sheila to go into the store because they need help sweeping and washing counters. Sheila does not think this is her job and dislikes cleaning. What should she do?

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4. Share a time in your life where you were flexible and adaptable. Describe what happened and how you dealt with it.

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## Lesson 5: Decision Making

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

<b>Angles</b>	<b>Decisions</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Masquerade</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
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Sometimes at work you will need to make **decisions**. You will want to make decisions that are good for your workplace and yourself. It may not always be easy to think about all possible outcomes to a decision you need to make. Some people find it hard to make decisions. This module will show you some **strategies** for decision making and how to use them.

### Pros and Cons

One popular way to make decisions is by creating a **Pros** and **Cons** list. This list is used to show the positive and negative consequences of your decision. You can make a separate list for each available choice. This is a good way to think through a decision and will help you consider everything involved in your choice.

Abdul is trying to decide whether he should lease a car or buy a used car. He has sat down to make two pros and cons lists to help him decide. You can see his lists on the next page:

### Buying a Used Car

Pros	Cons
No monthly payments	Will not be able to buy used car for six months
Extra money for gas and car repairs	Must take bus for six more months, through the winter
Can go on vacation next year	Older car might need more repairs
Will not need a loan	Does not help me improve my credit rating
Will not have monthly payments	
Will not have to work more or live on a budget	

### Leasing a car

Pros	Cons
Car will be newer, less repairs	Two payments of \$127.00 a month
Will have a reliable vehicle for work	Will need to budget more or pick up extra hours at work
Will not need all the money at once to buy car	Less money for entertainment and eating out
Can get it right away	Must eat at home more
Will not have to wait at the bus stop in the cold	No vacation for the next couple of years
New cars have more features	

## **Activity 1: Making a Pros and Cons List**

Read Sarah's story below and afterwards, help her by listing the pros and cons for her situation.

Sarah is working at a local deli. The manager is going away for a month and has asked Sarah to be acting manager while she is away. Sarah has asked for the day to think about her decision.

Sarah has a four-year-old son. Her mother watches him during her day shifts but cannot watch him at night. It costs Sarah ten dollars an hour for a sitter on night shifts. The night shifts are six hours long. Right now, Sarah works Monday to Thursday days. Her acting manager shifts would be Monday and Tuesday nights and Wednesday, Thursday and Friday days. Sarah makes \$15.00 an hour and the boss has offered her \$3.00 more an hour to manage the deli. Sarah is saving for a car. She does not like taking the subway at night.

Sarah hopes to someday be a manager and likes adding new experiences to her resumé. Right now, Sarah runs the cash at the deli. The acting manager makes schedules, takes catering orders, supervises staff, preps food, and does bank deposits. Sarah has never managed the deli before, but her manager is willing to give her one week of training.

On the next page, please make a short pros and cons list for Sarah to help her decide whether or not to take the job.

Pros	Cons

## The Masquerade



The **masquerade** is a style of decision making where you make decisions by imagining how it will affect someone else involved in the decision, such as a friend, employer, co-worker, or family member. It is based on the word *masquerade*, which means to pretend to be someone you are not. What would they say or think about the decision? This helps you to look at your decision from all possible **angles**.

For example: Clara was hired six months ago at the factory and wants to ask for weekends off. Her son plays hockey and her significant other takes him to all his games. She is not sure if she should ask for this or not.

So, she thinks...

How would her boss react to this request?

What would her co-workers think?

What would be best for the company?

What would her family want her to do?

What would another hockey mom do?

She answers these questions and it helps her make her decision.

She knows her boss wants her working on weekends because she schedules her to work them.

She knows some of her co-workers have been there longer and are still working weekends, so they may think it is not fair if an employee hired after them asks for weekends off.

Her family would want her to do what is best for her. They are happy that she loves her job. Her son would love having her at his games, but he plays because he loves it and not because he needs an audience.

Another hockey mom might think she should be there but some of the other mothers do not attend every game.

She makes the choice to stay at the factory on weekends until she has been there longer. Looking at all sides has helped her make this decision.

### **Activity 2: The Masquerade Approach**

Pierre has been offered a carpentry job in a town five hours away. The pay is much better and he would get his own work vehicle and company cellphone. He owns a house in the town he works in now. His daughter stays with him every second weekend. She goes to the local school and has many friends there. He lives next door to his elderly parents. He helps them a lot with household tasks. He gets along well with his co-workers and his boss thinks he does a great job. He plays baseball with some old high school friends twice a week.

Pierre thinks ...

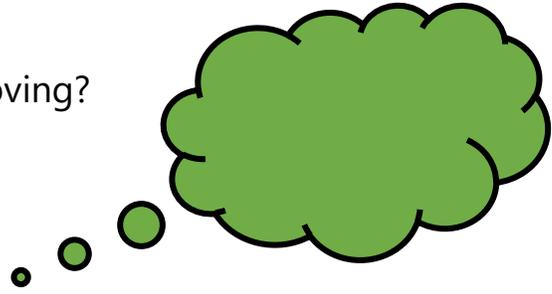
What would my family think of my moving?

What would my co-workers think?

What would my boss think?

What would my friends think?

What would the person offering me the job think?



What do you think Pierre's decision might be based on using the masquerade approach to decision making?

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## Lesson 6: Dealing with Stress

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

**Balance      Overwhelming      Pressures      Stressors      Unpredictable**



Sometimes the events of the day are just stacked against us. When you are at a job, you will have days where things do not work out the way you had intended. There may be challenging situations. In these cases, your day can be very

dependent on others: customers, co-workers, or supervisors. **Balancing** an **unpredictable** work day with everything you are managing in your personal time can be difficult. You will have good days and not so good days at work. Dealing with stress in a positive way can help these days be less difficult. Things that make us feel stressed are called **stressors**. A way to help with your stressors is to try to leave stressors from home at home and stressors from work at work. Very often, people tend to list both together when thinking about how their day has been. This can be too **overwhelming**. You should try not to take home stress to your work and try not to take work stress back home. They sometimes refer to this as leaving your problems at the door. Learning how to divide these and leave them where they are can help make the day less overwhelming.

### Finding Ways to Deal with Stress

There are many ways that people deal with stress. The fact of the matter is that you have work responsibilities and you will need to find a way to keep working in stressful times. Some ways of dealing with stress are healthy, such as working out, talking about problems, spending time outdoors, and listening to music. Some ways of dealing with stress are not as healthy, such as drinking alcohol, smoking, or eating unhealthy foods. Finding something that helps you deal with daily **pressures** and that is also healthy for you will

help you be more successful. Be aware of how you manage your stress. If you are spending a good deal of time angry or have shut down because of the stress in your life, decide to make changes and try different approaches.

### Activity 1: Healthy Ways to Deal with Stress

Look at the photos below. Circle the pictures that you feel deal with stress in a good way.



### Activity 2: Stressors

Stressors are certain things that happen that cause you stress. Can you think of some stressors that always make you feel anxious or stressed? If so, please make a list of your common stressors on the lines below.

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### **Activity 3: Dealing with Stress Video**

Enjoy this fun look at living with stress by motivational speaker Loretta Laroche. Laroche uses humour when speaking about stress.

You can find it by typing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8II0yR5qPRQ> into your address bar or searching for Loretta LaRoche: Emmy-Winning Humorist, Stress Management Expert on YouTube.

What message do you think Loretta Laroche is trying to tell her audience in this video? Explain your answer.

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## Lesson 7: Resourcefulness

### Key vocabulary in this lesson

**Circle of Support**

**Resourceful**

**Sudden**

**Valuable**

**Unexpected**

A **resourceful** person can find fast, **valuable** ways to deal with problems or **sudden** events. This is not always a natural soft skill. It is a skill that you need to learn and practice over time. It is a helpful skill to have when you are starting a new job. For example, finding transportation to be able to cover a call-in shift can require resourcefulness. Going into a new workplace, meeting new staff and facing the **unexpected** problems of the day involves being resourceful. Resourcefulness does not necessarily mean handling a situation alone. It means being able to know how to find information or how to access the right people at work or in your personal life to help you when facing challenges.

### Activity 1: Finding Information Online



Please open your web browser and read the article located at this web address that talks about ways to be resourceful.

<https://www.wikihow.com/Be-Resourceful>

How could this information be helpful in the workplace? Write at least a paragraph describing your thoughts.

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## Activity 2: Circle of Support

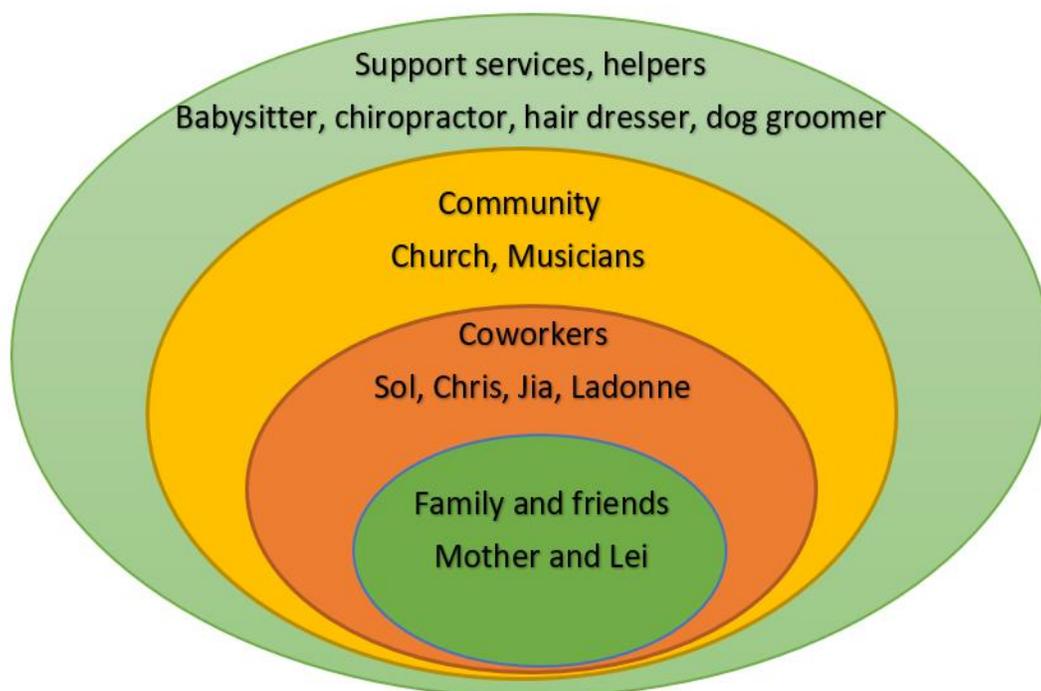
Part of being resourceful is understanding your circle of support.

A **circle of support** is the people in your life that you can ask for help or advice when you are faced with a challenge. The circle starts at the people closest to you and then moves outward to include people in your workplace and community.

Sarah has a four-year-old child that her mother babysits during the day. When Sarah goes out in the evening, she calls Penny, a teen in her apartment building, to babysit her child. She has a best friend named Lei that she has coffee with after work.

Sarah works at a deli with her three co-workers Sol, Chris, and Jia and her manager Ladonna. She attends church on Sundays and volunteers for their food program. She also plays guitar and gets together with local musicians once a week to play music. She has a hair dresser, a dog groomer and goes to a chiropractor for a neck issue.

Here is Sarah's circle of support:



Using Sarah's circle as a guide, fill in your own circle of support.



## Module Review Activity: Matching Definitions

Please draw a line matching the soft skill with its definition below.



Transferable skill	Finding fast, valuable ways to deal with problems or sudden events
Initiative	A soft skill that helps you stay on task and meet targets
Dealing with Stress	The ability to accept new conditions, tasks or situations
Time Management	Being able to adapt to sudden changes or unexpected occurrences
Flexibility	A skill you have learned at home, school or in the community that would be helpful at work
Decision Making	The act of doing something without being first asked to do it
Adaptability	Using pros and cons lists and the masquerade approach to make choices
Resourcefulness	Finding healthy ways to cope with pressure and daily stressors

### Milestone Stop

