



SESSION 1: ORIENTATION

Getting to Know Your Job and Your Colleagues

Rush Hour at Macy's

Story & Workshop Summary

Time: 180 minutes (including one 15-minute break)

Materials: chart paper, markers, "good idea" and "bad idea" signs, pens

Story: Rush Hour at Macy's

Core Emotions: self-doubt, confidence, relief

Theme: Every job has challenges, and it's important not to get discouraged when things go wrong.

Plot: The writer faces impatient customers, an uncooperative cash register, and self-doubt during his first day at work. But with a little help from a colleague and his own resilience, he proves he can do the job.

Youth Development Goals:

- Young people will increase their understanding of the benefits of working.
- Young people will be able to articulate the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with coworkers.
- Young people will learn how to make a good first impression at work and will understand why first impressions matter.

Note: *It is a good idea to set group guidelines at the beginning of the session. See p. 16 for tips on how to establish group guidelines.*

Tip: *This session emphasizes the importance of making a positive first impression. The facilitator should model this behavior by shaking participants' hands and greeting them with a smile when they enter the room. It will set a professional tone.*



Opening Icebreaker

Mingle, Mingle, Huddle! (15 min)

Tell participants that you are going to say, "Mingle, Mingle!" When you do, they are to walk around the room saying hello and introducing themselves to one another. When you say, "Huddle," they should form groups of three or four and discuss the question you give them for a minute or two. When time is up, say, "Mingle," and repeat this process.

Questions:

- For the first huddle: What are some reasons people work?
- For the second huddle: What do you like about your current job? Or, what kind of job would you like to have?
- For the third huddle: What are some of the challenges of your current job? Or, what do you think would be challenging about working?

After the third huddle, bring the full group back together to discuss.

Debrief:

- Are you used to going up to people and introducing yourself?
- Is it harder in "real life" situations like school or work?
- What makes it easier to meet people?

Explain that this activity helped participants get to know one another, and that they'll get to know many more people on the job, like bosses, coworkers, clients, customers, and others. Ask: "Why is it important to communicate well and make a good first impression at work?"

Activity: Feelings About Your First Day
on the Job

graffiti wall (15 min)

Write each of the following sentence starters at the top of a sheet of chart paper and post them around the room with some markers near each:

- On my first day of work, I was/will be nervous about...
- On my first day of work, I was/will be excited about...
- On my first day of work, some challenges I might face are...
- On my first day of work, I will try to remember...

Give participants a few moments to walk around the room and write their responses. Then review the charts with the large group. Affirm that excitement and apprehension are both normal feelings when beginning a job.



Read the Story and Talk About It (20 min)

Introduce the story: Tell the class that you are going to read a story about the challenges one young man faced on his first day of work—and how he survived them.

Take turns reading the story. Pause from time to time when there is a passage that you think is ripe for discussion. Ask the suggested questions, and/or ones that you think will be helpful to your group.



Rush Hour at Macy's

By Sharif Berkeley

1. Imagine you're working at a cash register in a department store, with several people waiting on line with their purchases. Suddenly there's a malfunction with the register and it won't let any transactions go through. The people on line get restless and start to complain.

You break into a nervous sweat, then you try the transaction again. It still won't go through. Now the line is even longer than before and you still haven't finished with your first customer. You hear people say, "Come on already," and, "Damn, he's slow," but of course they don't understand that it's your first day at work and the faulty computer isn't making it any better.

Could you see this as your first day on the job? This is exactly how it went for me on my first day at Macy's.

I had wanted to work at Macy's for the longest time, and when I finally got hired I thought it was going to be a wonderful

REAL JOBS

experience. But if I knew that the first day was going to be that hectic, I would have paid more attention in the 15-hour training course.

2. **My Register Breaks at Rush Hour**

My employer had placed me in electronics at first because I'm an expert in that field, but there was so much confusion between the employees and the management that I had to be placed in housewares, in the Macy's Cellar.

That put a damper on my enthusiasm because I knew nothing about pots, pans, and all that house stuff. To top it off, I was stationed right next to the clearance sale area, where people were running around grabbing up things like they were possessed by

shopping demons. It was like being thrown into a lion's cage after being marinated in A.1. steak sauce.

It was a little past 5 o'clock, and I was unfortunately caught up in the shopping rush hour. I thought that I had remembered all the instructions in the train-

ing course, but little did I know that when you get nervous you forget things.

My first customer approached. She had several items in her hands from the clearance area. She dropped her load and I began to scan her items. The first two items came up on the screen. I was halfway done. But the next three items had no price on them. I scanned the UPC symbol, and all three came up as one cent each. This couldn't be right; nothing in Macy's sells for one cent. I asked the other cashiers how much the items really were and they didn't know.

I looked back at my register to see that, by this time, two more people were waiting on line. I called my manager and he said

It was like being thrown into a lion's cage after being marinated in A.1. steak sauce.

Q. What do you think Sharif was expecting his first day to be like?

Q. What could he have done to be better prepared? Is it the number of hours you spend in training that prepares you for a job or is it something else?

Welcome to the World of Work

that the items were 97 cents each. When I came back there were five people waiting on my line. I thought that everything was all right because now I could move on to the next customer with no problem, but I thought too soon.

3. **Starting to Panic**

My first customer had given me a check and—just my luck—my check reader wasn't working. By this time the customers waiting on line were getting irritable and discussing my performance among themselves.

I started to panic. I knew that if the check reader wasn't working I had to enter the sets of numbers on the check manually, but I forgot how! I tried but I entered the numbers in the wrong sequence three times. I was sweating and I felt like the people waiting in line were grim reapers ready to kill me on the spot if I didn't hurry up.

Finally another cashier took pity on me and came over to assist me. The people had been standing in line so long that the manager decided to give them coffee mugs just to calm them down. The cashier standing beside me told them that it was my first day and that I was nervous.

To my amazement, the customers all had a change of face. A lot of them understood the position that I was in and some even said to my manager, "If it's his first day, someone should have been helping him out the whole time."

A few of them came up to me and told me not to feel bad because they could relate to how it felt being my first day. Then and there my wounds of disappointment were covered by a big band-aid of confidence. I didn't think that people still had that much compassion.

During the rest of the day I gradually got the hang of things, thanks to my coworkers, who are still there for me whenever I need help or a price check.

Q. Why did his coworker choose to help him? Have you ever helped out when a coworker was struggling? (Or, do you think you would?)

Q. Why is it important to have good relationships with your coworkers? What can you do to ensure that you and your coworkers will get along?

REAL JOBS

4. Racking Up Sales

That first day was one I would never forget: the feeling of all eyes on me, people cracking the whip telling me to hurry up, the beads of sweat on my forehead, and the nerve-wracking anxiety. It all made me wish that I had paid attention in the training session.

The nervousness I felt could be compared to being up on stage in front of a crowd for the first time. It's a situation that not many people can handle, but eventually you get used to it.

It's been a long while since my first day and now I've got the hang of everything and I go through customers like water. Not a day goes by without me having over \$1,000 in sales. Some of the same customers I saw on my first day come back to shop, say hi, and see that I've gotten better. I even have customers who like to come on my line because I treat them better than some of the other cashiers do.

5. Don't Doubt Yourself

The first day on any job can be hectic, whether it's dealing with customers or a job where your boss is constantly looking over your shoulder.

My advice is to be persistent and don't doubt yourself. Even though some people may look down on you because you're new, don't give them any excuse to believe what they think of you. Do your job to the best of your ability.

My job is very rewarding, although the first day was rough. But that's what it took to get better and faster at what I do, and with the help of my coworkers, friendly customers, and a fat check on Fridays, I guess it's all worthwhile.

Sharif was 15 when he wrote this story. He later graduated from high school, attended Lehman College, and worked in computer sales.



Explore the Ideas

Discussion: What's My Motivation?
(10 min)

Ask the Group:

- Besides the money, what do you think made the job worthwhile for Sharif?
- How would it feel to work at a job where money is your only motivation?
- What other factors would make a job feel worthwhile to you?

Activity 1: What's in It for Me?
worksheet, pair share, discussion (20 min)

Ask participants to work with a partner to complete the worksheet on p. 3, "What's in It for Me?" [Leader's Guide p. 34]. They will go through the story and list the benefits to *the author* of having his job. Then, they will circle the benefits on the list that also apply to *them*.

Finally, they will create a list of benefits they hope to get from *their job*, such as learning to work with people from different backgrounds, or improving their punctuality. Give the pairs about 10 minutes to work on this.

When time is up, ask the pairs to share with the large group. First, discuss the benefits to Sharif. Then ask participants to share the benefits they expect to gain from their own work experience. If they aren't mentioned, be sure to elicit benefits like:

- experience to put on a resume
- making friends
- building skills like typing, filing, copying, or working with groups
- developing patience (especially for those working with children or in customer service)
- building relationships with coworkers and employers who may help them in the future (networking)
- learning about themselves (what they like

and don't like, what they're good at).

Break (15 min)

Activity 2: First Impressions
discussion, worksheet, role play (40 min)

Write the following quote from philosopher William James on a flip chart:

"It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome." –William James

Ask participants what they think the quote means.

Elicit that in order to have the most successful work experience possible, it's important to start with a good attitude and to set goals to help us learn new things and acquire new skills. If you start your job believing that it will be terrible, you'll probably prove yourself right.

Ask: "Why is it important to make a good first impression? What happens if you get off on the wrong foot?"

Break participants into groups of four and distribute blank paper or sheets of chart paper. Tell the groups that they have five minutes to think of the "Top Five" mistakes they think people make that give a *bad* first impression.

When time is up, ask them to turn over the page and give them five more minutes to write at least five ways to make a *good* first impression.

Then tell the groups their task is to role play all five items on each list. Give the groups about 10 minutes to prepare. They should create a scene set in a workplace where two new employees are

starting their first day of work. One group member should portray all of the “dos” and another group member should portray all of the “don’ts.” Other group members can play the boss, coworkers, etc.

Give each group a chance to present. After each presentation ask the audience to identify the dos and don’ts that were shown.

Tip: If you are running short on time or you have a very large group, you can just have a couple of groups present and then move on.

After each group has presented, review and discuss “Tips for Making a Positive First Impression” on p. 4 in the workbook [Leader’s Guide p. 35]. Ask the teens if they agree with the tips. Which ones do they think are most important? Hardest to do? Why?

Activity 3: Good Idea, Bad Idea social barometer, discussion (20 min)

Explain that every job has benefits as well as challenges. Ask participants for examples of what went wrong for Sharif in the story and how he handled it.

Next, ask everyone to stand in the center of the room. On one side of the room, post a sign that says “good idea” and on the other side a sign that says “bad idea.”

Tell students that you’re going to read some scenarios. Ask them to react to the scenarios by standing on the side of the room that corresponds to whether they think the action was a good idea or a bad idea. Or they can stay in the middle of the room if they are neutral or unsure.

After each scenario, ask participants to explain their position. Ask the people on the “bad idea” side to suggest alternatives for how the characters in the scenario could have responded.

Note: There are no absolute right or wrong answers to these questions. The teens’ reasons for their answers are far more important than the position they take. Try to foster a full and open discussion in which teens really wrestle with these difficult decisions.

Tip: You could have a teen read each of the scenarios instead. This would enable you to participate with the teens in the activity, and play “devil’s advocate” in the event that all of the teens end up standing on the same side of the room.

SCENARIO 1: It’s the first day of Brenda’s new job. For some reason, her alarm clock doesn’t go off, so she wakes up late and has to rush to get ready. She had planned to iron her shirt before leaving for work, but it would make her late if she took the time to do it now. She throws on her wrinkled shirt and runs out the door so that she’ll make it to work on time.

SCENARIO 2: It’s Jon’s first day on the job and he really likes his coworkers so far. After they all take their lunch break together, one coworker pulls Jon aside and starts gossiping about the rest of the group. Later, Jon decides to pull his other coworkers aside to warn them about the gossiper.

SCENARIO 3: Carlos arrives for his first day at work at a retail store. He is ringing up a customer when she starts complaining about the price of an item. She complains that he is trying to charge her too much and demands that he give her a huge discount. His supervisor is on a lunch break and won’t be back for an hour, so he has to make a decision about what to do on his own. He remembers his supervisor saying, “The customer is always right,” so Carlos decides to give her the discount even though it means the store will lose some money.

Activity 4: Me Shield

worksheet, pair share (20 min)

Ask participants to fill out the Me Shield worksheet on p. 5 [Leader's Guide p. 36]. After a few minutes, ask everyone to find a partner and share what they wrote. Allow volunteers to share responses to each question with the larger group. (If you like, you can explain that a shield or coat of arms is a traditional way to show your values and beliefs.)

Closing Activity (5 min)

Ask each participant to complete this sentence: **"My biggest goal for my work experience is..."**

Tips for Making a Positive First Impression

Your supervisor and your colleagues will make assumptions about you based on their first impression, so think carefully about the impression you make and how it will help you achieve your goals on the job. Here are some things that contribute to a good first impression.

Be On Time!

If you are late to work even once during your first week or two, you could show up on time every day for the next year and people will still think you are the kind of person who is late. Make it a habit to arrive early, especially for the first couple weeks on the job.

Ask Questions & Take Initiative

What's the one thing that supervisors hate most? It's employees who don't ask questions or take initiative. If you aren't sure about something, don't wait until your supervisor has to explain it to you. Ask! And whenever you don't have anything to do, volunteer to do something helpful. For example, if there's an event planned in the cafeteria, volunteer to set up the chairs and tables.

Have a Positive Attitude

They call it "work" for a reason. You often have to do things that may be unpleasant, feel "beneath you," or are just tedious. Remember, you're going to be there anyway. It's easier on you—and everyone else—to do an unpleasant task with a good attitude than a bad one.

Use Positive Body Language

Especially at first, you will be judged as much by your body language as by what you say. The most important words in body language are "eye contact" and "posture." People who are successful look other people in the eye when talking to them. They also sit and stand straight instead of slouching, so they look alert and ready to go. Both of these skills can take practice, but the better you get at them, the better the reaction you'll get from others and the more successful you'll become.

Dress Appropriately

Know the dress code at your job and follow it (even if it's not written down). If you're at a summer camp, you may be allowed to wear shorts and a t-shirt. If you're working in an office, you may have to wear a collared shirt and slacks—or maybe even a coat and a tie. While there are variations within the dress code (unless you're required to wear a uniform), they can be quite narrow. You may think there's nothing wrong with wearing a tank top or a t-shirt to work, but if not one of your supervisors wears one, don't do it.

In addition, regardless of the job, make sure you're well-groomed: comb your hair, make sure your nails are clean, don't overdo it on cologne or perfume, and keep your jewelry modest.

Learn Names

Here's a secret to success: Learn the name of everyone you work with and use it when you talk with them. If you talk to a very successful person, they will often tell you that a key to their success was developing a method to remember people's names. You would be surprised how many of them go home at night and write down the name of everyone they met, along with one memorable thing about the person that helps them remember the name.

If that seems goofy to you, just know that someone else is doing it, and someday you may be competing with that person for a job. You won't even know their name, but they'll know yours.

Me Shield

The shield is divided into four quadrants by a vertical line and a horizontal line. Each quadrant contains a prompt and three horizontal lines for writing.

3 responsibilities I will have in my job:	Skills I have that will help me succeed at my job:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Skills I want to develop:	3 resources available to help me succeed at my job:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____