



Strategies for Success at School

Participant Guide



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Lesson One: Understanding Your Strengths

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will be introduced to the group and set group rules.
2. Participants will use self-exploration to identify their own strengths.

Welcome to Strategies for Success at School! This goal of this group is to help you identify and learn strategies to succeed in school. The group will span 12 lessons, and each of them will give you practical tools you need to be your best in the learning environment that you choose. This group is intended for anyone who is thinking about returning to school or is already taking part in some type of schooling.

Let's start by getting to know each other better. This exercise is called "getting to know you".

Getting to Know You:

Please introduce yourself to the group. Tell the other participants what your name is and what you are hoping to get out of coming to this group.

Now that we know each other a bit better, let's set some ground rules for this group. It's important to have group rules so that we all feel safe in this space. After all, we will be with each other for the next 12 lessons. Brainstorm a list of rules that you would like for the group.

Now that we have gotten to know each other a bit and that we have set some ground rules for the group, let's spend the rest of today's group session getting to know more about ourselves.

It's important that we identify our strengths and capitalize on them! We can use our strengths for success in school in various ways. For example, let's say that you have a musical nature. Perhaps you can use that musical creativity to think of ways to memorize material for a test by writing a song. If we focus on our strengths and what we are good at, then we will spend less time worrying about the negatives. This will also help lead us to success!

Exercise: What are your strengths? (Handout #1)

Lesson Two: Identifying what is Important to You in a Learning Environment

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will explore and identify their values as they pertain to a learning environment.

Today's lesson is all about identifying what's important to you. Some may call these your values. A value is a principle you live by or a standard of behavior. Other words for value include: principle, standard, moral code, and ethics.

Values are a person's beliefs about what's important, or what matters most to them. They can be just about anything, such as family, hard work, success, or having a good time. Sometimes, people live their lives in a way that doesn't match up with what they believe. For example, someone who values family might become overwhelmed by work and neglect their relationships.

Let's take some time today to do a values clarification exercise. This will help each of us to identify what is important to us.

Exercise: Values Clarification (handout #2)

Lesson Three: Accessing Disability Services in a Learning Environment

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act.
2. Participants will learn about various disability services available in colleges and universities, and other learning settings and how to access those services.

Today's lesson is focused on how to access disability services in colleges, universities, and other learning settings. In order to do that, we must first review the Americans with Disabilities Act.

What is the Americans with Disabilities Act?

The ADA, or the Americans with Disabilities Act, became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of this law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life.

In 2008, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) was signed into law and became effective on January 1, 2009. The ADAAA made a number of significant changes to the definition of "disability". The changes in the definition of disability in the ADAAA apply to all titles of the ADA.

All colleges and universities provide students with various types of disability services. They may have various names, like "student disability services," "office of students with disabilities," "student accessibility center," "center for students with disabilities," etc. No matter what the name is, services exist for students with disabilities. The difference between high school and college is that the student self-identifies as a person with a disability in College. That means that it's your responsibility to seek out the services that will help you to succeed in school.

What's a disability?

According to the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, the term "disability" includes any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or a record of physical or mental impairment that substantially limited a major life activity.

What does "substantially limits" mean?

While there is no hardline legal definition of "substantially limits," the term is meant to be broadly interpreted to refer to any limitation of any major life activity, including but not limited to caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

What services are available and how does a student access them?

Disabilities offices help students to get access to programmatic and academic services. The offices also help students to receive accommodations as required by the ADA. In order to qualify for these services and accommodations, students are required to register with their school's disability office. Each school may have a slightly different requirement, but examples of registering may include filling out a form and having your healthcare professional provide some information.

We will spend a whole lesson on accommodations and what a reasonable accommodation is. But that will happen next session.

Let's focus on the pros and cons of registering with the disabilities office. This is called disclosure.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has your past experience been with disclosure?
2. Why would you think it's important to disclose your behavioral health condition to a college, university, or training program?
3. List three advantages and three disadvantages of disclosure in a learning environment.

Exercise: Completing an application for disability services at a college or university (Handout #3)

Lesson Four: Types of Accommodations

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will be introduced to various accommodations that are available in learning environments.
2. Participants will identify what accommodations, if any, they would seek in a learning environment.

In the last group session, we talked about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Part of that Act is that people who need a reasonable accommodation at work or school should be provided with them. Today's lesson is all about accommodations. We will explore what types of accommodations are available in a school setting. You will also have the opportunity to identify which accommodations, if any, you would request in a learning environment to help you succeed.

What is a reasonable accommodation?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a reasonable accommodation is “a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done that enables a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy an equal employment opportunity. For example:

- Modifications or adjustments to a job application process that enable a qualified applicant with a disability to be considered for the position such qualified applicant desires; or
- Modifications or adjustments to the work environment, or to the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed, that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position; or
- Modifications of adjustments that enable a covered entity's employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as ae enjoyed by tis other similarly situated employees without disabilities.

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.”

The same rights are expected in a learning environment. It is expected that a student with a disability receive accommodations that will help them to achieve their educational goals.

There are all kinds of accommodations that are available to people in a school setting. We will explore each of these accommodations in detail today. Try to think about which one of them you might require to help you do your best.

Note taking: This may be an accommodation you seek out if you have difficulty taking notes in class. Some schools offer a peer note-taking system. Students who are allowed this accommodation may use a tablet or duplicate paper from the office for students with disabilities and may ask another student in class to share their notes. If you don't know whom to ask, go to your professor for suggestions and guidance.

Students using this accommodation are usually allowed to record lectures and discussions. Additionally, many faculty use PowerPoint presentations and other materials online for further help.

Extra time for test taking: Some students with learning disabilities may require extra time or unlimited time for test taking. Be sure to register for this accommodation if you need it. You will likely not be taking the test with the rest of your classmates, but rather it will take place in a quiet space that is monitored by staff.

Readers for tests: Some students with learning disabilities need someone to read their tests to them. This accommodation usually takes place in a resource room or at the office for students with disabilities so as not to interfere with other students who do not require this accommodation.

Text books in other formats: The office for students with disabilities can offer textbooks in alternate formats for students-including online students-who have disabilities affecting their ability to read print or physically handle textbooks. Students must usually purchase print copies of the textbooks before receiving alternate formats. The office for students with disabilities can provide textbooks in electronic formats for most books. The student will need to use text-to-speech, screen-magnification or screen-reading software to read electronic texts. You should request alternate formats in advance (before the start of the semester) to make sure that you receive them on time. This will vary depending on the school.

Furniture and room accommodations: You may have to alert the office for students with disabilities during the registration process if you may need furniture and room accommodations. As soon as you register, check your assigned classrooms to determine if the room and furniture will accommodate your disability. For instance, if you use a wheelchair, check the height of the tables and desks. You may have to contact the office for students with disabilities to request a desk or chair.

Assistive technology: The office for students with disabilities can help with training to use specific assistive technology. Adaptive equipment and various software is available to students including speaking software, closed captioning, assistive listening devices, screen-reading software, and screen magnification software.

Hearing accommodations: Accommodations for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing are also available. This can consist of closed captioning or other types of accommodations. You should contact your school's office for students with disabilities if you require such an accommodation.

Exercise: Choosing an appropriate accommodation (Handout #4)

Lesson Five: ACCES-VR

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will be introduced to ACCES-VR and the services that are offered by ACCES-VR that will help with attaining an education goal.
2. Participants will evaluate whether or not they can benefit from services ACCES-VR has to offer.

Today's lesson is about something called ACCES-VR. ACCES-VR can help someone with an employment goal if that person needs to return to school or participate in a training program in order to reach their employment goal. Let's read about what ACCES-VR is and the services that an individual can receive if they qualify.

What is ACCES-VR?

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) starts with the presumption that all individuals with disabilities can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services and should have opportunities to work in jobs integrated within their communities. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors guide individuals through service programs they need to reach their employment goals. ACCES-VR's mission is to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living through training, education, rehabilitation, and career development.

What are the vocational rehabilitation services offered through ACCES-VR?

Eligibility for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services is not a guarantee of specific services or of ACCES-VR's financial support.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) All vocational rehabilitation services provided by ACCES-VR must be included in the individualized plan for employment (IPE) and be required to reach your employment goal. The IPE is the road map to employment.

ACCES-VR encouraged you to be as independent as you like when developing your IPE. Your vocational rehabilitation counselor is available to assist you with developing your plan and reaching your employment goal. Or, you may choose to develop your own plan and your counselor can provide guidance. Your vocational rehabilitation counselor must review and approve your IPE and apply their professional judgment and expertise, as well as applicable laws, regulations, and policies to ensure responsible use of public funds.

List of Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Assessments and evaluations
- Rehabilitative technology
- Special transportation
- Adaptive driver training
- Work readiness

- Training including tuition, related fees, required textbooks
 - Vocational
 - College
- Tutor, reader and note taker services
- Youth services
- Physical and mental restoration services
- Medical care for acute conditions arising during the program
- Modifications to homes, vehicles and worksites
- Job development and placement
- Work try out and on the job training
- Job coaching
- Occupational tools and equipment
- Goods, inventory, equipment and supplies for self-employment
- Occupational and business licenses

Financial Need: ACCES-VR does not charge for any VR services. Funding for some services is based on you or your family’s financial need. If you have income and or assets you may be asked to contribute to the cost. For example; a family of 4 with a combined annual income and assets of \$86,100 or more may be asked to contribute to the cost of attending college. Disability related expenses and cost-of-living adjustment for some down state counties may allow you to exclude additional resources before being asked to contribute.

Comparable Benefits: You will also be asked to apply for all available benefits that may help you reduce the cost of the service; for example, for college you will be asked to apply for financial aid include TAP and PELL.

How to apply for ACCES-VR

It may be useful for an individual to attend an orientation session with ACCES-VR to learn about the vocational rehabilitation process and VR services. Information provided at an ACCES-VR orientation session may help you to decide if it is the right service for you.

If you would like to attend an orientation session, find the district office closest to you by clicking on the District Office Location link at <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/apply-vocational-rehabilitation-services>. Contact the district office to schedule to attend an orientation session.

At the orientation session you can have questions answered, obtain an application and receive assistance completing your application. You can also obtain an application online.

How to Apply for VR Services

- Obtain an application for services at orientation, online or by contacting the closest District office. Applications are available in English, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Italian, Russian, and Chinese.
- Complete an Application for VR Services. You must include your name, address, date of birth, gender and disability.

- Sign your application. Only signed applications will be accepted.
- Submit your application to the District office closest to you.
- Referrals-you may be referred by your school, doctor, Social Security Administration, family, etc. A referral must include your signed consent to verify that you agree to a referral to ACCS-VR.

After you submit your application or are referred, a vocational rehabilitation counselor will meet with you to begin the VR process.

Now that we have a better understanding of what ACCES-VR services are and how we can access them, let's decide if they might be something you are interested in pursuing.

Lesson Six: Study Strategies for Success

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will learn about several study strategies that will help them in their learning environment.
2. Participants will complete a study skills questionnaire to identify study skills they can improve on.

Today's lesson will focus on various strategies for studying. Strong study skills are important because they can help a student succeed. If you devote as much attention to your study strategies as you do the material itself, you will give yourself more opportunity to excel in your coursework.

Start Early

Time management is an important study skill, but it won't help at all if you wait too long before you even begin studying. Get at least a little studying done the day class work is assigned, even if it's simply writing up a study plan.

Take Effective Notes

Before a lecture begins, read all of the lesson's text, review the syllabus and anticipate how the lecture will be organized. While the teacher lecture, jot down notes about the main points in your own words.

Rewrite Notes

Immediately after class—or at your earliest convenience, re-read your notes and fill in the information you had to leave out during class so you could keep up with the speaker. Re-reading could keep you from forgetting more than 50% of the information you learned, according to Princeton University. You can even re-write your notes entirely so you can thoroughly develop your understanding of the ideas.

Know Your Weaknesses

Take a study skills survey, or write a list of study skills and rank yourself according to how well you demonstrate each skill. Afterward, you can give special attention to improving your weaker skills.

Use a Planner

Student life often competes with personal life. Use a planner to keep track of your studies, and to make sure your study schedule doesn't interfere with our personal obligations.

Eliminate Distractions

Find a place to study that allows you to concentrate entirely on your school work, and is free from distractions. For example, a local or school library might be better than your bedroom because at home you can be distracted by family members, the television or the internet.

Keep Sessions Manageable

Even if you plan your studies meticulously, you can still make a mistake by scheduling marathon study sessions. Schedule sessions that are no longer than an hour or two to keep from burning out. If you must study longer, take a substantial break in the middle to eat and recharge.

Set Regular Goals

While you might have an ultimate goal for a particular study schedule, such as passing the final exam, plan out smaller, regular goals to work toward. For example, instead of wanting to master all of Shakespeare's comedies by the semester's end, strive to learn one play each week.

Find Study Buddies

You don't have to bear the burden of studying all by yourself. Whenever possible, find a study buddy or study group to help you. According to Montclair State University, working with a group can keep you motivated, and having other people's perspectives to learn from can help you to develop a deeper understanding of the material.

Utilize Resources

If you are attending a college or university, use the school library system, including its online databases, or any available tutoring services. Most importantly, remember that you can always go to your teacher for help with both the material and suggestions for how to study.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which of these strategies have you used in the past? What was your experience? What worked and what didn't work so well?
2. Did any psychiatric symptoms get in the way of study strategies? What did you do to cope with them?

Exercise: Study Skills Questionnaire (Handout #5)

Lesson Seven: Communicating with Teachers and other Students

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will learn and practice communication skills relevant to interactions with teachers and other students in a learning environment.

Communication is important when in a learning environment. Can you think of some reasons why? Let's brainstorm some instances that open and honest communication between teachers, other classmates and staff at the office for students with disabilities can help you to achieve your maximum potential in a learning environment.

Talking to teachers can be scary. Sometimes it's easy to feel like we have become the brave knight going into the dragon's lair, and we are petrified of the imminent threat of incineration. But communicating well with teachers doesn't have to be like a medieval quest at all. It can be really simple and even enjoyable.

It is very useful to know how to talk to your teachers. Teachers really do care about their students and want them to succeed. Even the most intimidating teachers will likely soften to help a student. What's the secret to YOU being that student that teachers go out of their way to help? Good communication!

One of the most important thing that students can do to help communication is to have a positive attitude and a genuine desire to improve. This makes it easier and more enjoyable for both you and your teacher.

Here are some specific points to try:

Be an active participant during class. This means asking good questions, participating in discussions, and staying off electronics!

Frame questions in a non-accusatory tone. Instead of asking a question like "Why did you take points off for that?" use something along the lines of "Can you explain what I need to improve for next time?"

Never confront or correct a teacher in front of other students. Do so privately-before or after the class. Try to avoid asking in the classroom as another class may be coming in and the rushed atmosphere isn't conducive to discussion. Instead, try making an appointment to see the teacher in their office.

Other tips are simple things like trying to improve before there is an issue and writing thank you notes to the teachers who go above and beyond to help you out (like writing a letter of recommendation). When in doubt, just be respectful. Remember that teachers are human too. They don't know when you are going through a hard time, just like they sometimes go through rough patches themselves. If something your teacher said or did bothered you, let them know so that they can do what they can to fix it. Also tell them when you really liked a lesson. It gives them feedback and lets them know that works! Minding your P's and Q's is good in any situation, but when you talk to teachers, it really works in your favor.

How you communicate with other students is equally important. Here are some basic principles of interpersonal communication. Let's read through the list first. Then we will have time to practice the communication skills we read about today.

1. Listen, or give attention. Soak in the information that other students, or anyone else in the class has to offer. This can help you to learn more about the person who is speaking, and help you to find out if this is a student that you may want to become friendly with. It's also an opportunity to learn from another student about what is being taught in the class.
2. Paraphrase and summarize. This is a great way to know if you really understand what the other person is saying. You can use this one with both teachers and other students to make sure you understand what is being communicated to you.
3. Define terms. This means to define a concept. If you are unsure of what the person is saying, ask for clarification or an example. Don't be afraid to let someone know that you don't understand what they are saying. It's likely that they are not being clear and can help to explain a concept better.
4. Build rapport and trust. It can take some time to get to know someone and it's likely that you won't feel comfortable sharing everything about yourself the instant you meet someone. Take the time to listen to what other people are saying and see if you have things in common. This can help to build trust.
5. Show empathy and respect. It's important to always show other people that you have respect for them. People may not always agree on a subject. They may have very different points of view, but it's still important to earn and maintain respect for one another.
6. Remember messages are verbal, visual, and vocal. How you present yourself, your body language, your facial expressions, what you say, and yes, even the clothes you wear, send a message. Be mindful of the messages you send to others.

Group Exercise:

Remember the list we generated at the beginning of the group? Let's go back to it now and practice using some of what we learned in today's lesson.

Lesson Eight: Keeping a Connection with Behavioral Health Providers and Services

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will be exposed to practical time management skills to help them manage being an active participant in behavioral health services while attending classes.
2. Participants will identify techniques they can incorporate into their routines to help them balance behavioral health needs and the demands of a learning environment.

Work, school, family, friends, household responsibilities, and taking care of pets...these are just a handful of the responsibilities that we have to keep up with on a day to day basis. We also have to take care of our physical and behavioral health. That means, finding the time to keep doctor's appointments and to participate in activities related to our physical and behavioral well-being the way we want to. Does this seem like a daunting task? If you answer yes, then you are not alone!

Many people struggle to accomplish all of the things they wish to achieve on a daily basis. So, today's lesson will include several tips and tricks that you can use to manage your time and stay on track and on schedule.

Tip #1: Make a schedule

You can improve your time management skills by making a schedule. Start your day by writing down a list of chores...a "to-do" list. You may want to use a planner or calendar to make sure you remember all your duties for the day. You can schedule out blocks of time for each chore. If you want to be reminded, schedule alerts on your phone so you can know when it's time to start each new assignment or chore. If you plan on studying, you can schedule out one block of time or break your study sessions up into smaller periods. You may also want to use color-coded post-it notes so you can remind yourself of specific plans or tasks throughout the day.

Tip #2: Rid yourself of distractions

Distractions seems to be around every corner. Whether it's your phone, the TV or a song playing on the radio, it's easy to get caught up in fun or relaxing activities when you should be studying. Worse of all, distractions can lead to procrastination. It's hard to be strict with yourself when your attention is distracted with music videos. But you'll only succeed at school if you can focus on your studies. Here's a list of ways to avoid distractions:

- Write emails in the morning, check them at midday
- Remove clutter from your study area
- Finish short projects quickly
- Turn off your phone
- Disable your social media accounts during school or work hours

Tip #3: Complete important tasks first

While you plan out your schedule, make sure you list the most important tasks first. If you set out time to get them done then before other smaller tasks, you could reap the benefits of more

relaxation time towards the end of the day. When you focus first on projects with close deadlines, then you can put more energy into finishing them sooner. If you need more time to understand a concept from your class notes, then make sure you schedule out more time to concentrate on that subject. Even if you need a break to complete shorter tasks in between study sessions, starting off with important school projects can help set you in a studious mood throughout the day.

Tip #4: Study during your spare time

If you commute to school, a good way to pass the time is to take out your notebook and other coursework and study away. If you have spare time during the day, whip out your notes and take advantage of the free time. Carry your notes with you at all times, so that if you have any spare time you can use it to study or focus on schoolwork. It will feel great to stay productive. Plus, when you study in different places your mind starts to form associations with your course material which makes for improved memory. During your exam, you may thank yourself for putting your free time to good use.

Tip #5: Avoid the sofa and bed

Everyone enjoys sitting on the couch after a long day. If you're going to be productive, avoid sitting on the couch or in bed while working. Stick to a steadfast rule where you can only sit on the couch or lie in bed after you've completed your tasks for the evening. Instead, try to sit in a chair at a desk or table while you study. You'll stay alert and your concentration has a better chance of improving.

You can make the most of your day if you take advantage of these time management tips. Scheduling time for your studies and daily tasks can help you become more responsible and feel more accomplished. You may even feel more secure knowing that you've accomplished your most important tasks at the beginning of the day. If you follow these tips, you could even see the benefits of deeper relaxation during your free time. You will even have a more convenient schedule or spend more time with people who are important to you.

Discussion question:

1. Which one of these tips would you like to try?
2. How do you think they will help you improve as a student?
3. How do you think they will help you with managing your time?
4. What things will you be able to include in your day that you weren't able to before?

Group Exercise: Time Tracker and Does Your Use of Time Reflect Your Priorities Worksheets (Handouts #6 and 7)

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you find difficult about balancing your life's responsibilities while going to school?

2. What strategies do you use to make sure that your mental health needs are being met while you are in school? How do you know your strategies are working?

Lesson Nine: Coping with Symptoms

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will identify sources of stress, be exposed to strategies they can use to cope with behavioral health symptoms and identify ones they would like to implement into their daily routine.

Everyone is affected by stress at some point in their lives. It's just a normal part of life. We go through periods of time when we may experience more stress than others. Sometimes that increase in stress can cause an increase in behavioral health symptoms. That means that we may be less able to effectively cope with mental health symptoms or have more urges to use alcohol or other substances. So how do we effectively cope with symptoms and still manage to keep our daily commitments? What strategies can we use?

Group Activity: Brainstorm a list of symptoms you may experience when you are under stress. Then brainstorm a list of things that you DO to cope with that stress. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone has their own ways of coping.

Group Exercise: Coping Skills Worksheet: Learn About Your Stress and Healthy Ways of Coping with Stress (Handout #8 and 9)

Lesson Ten: Managing Physical Wellness

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will learn about the importance of managing physical health while participating in learning activities.
2. Participants will discuss their own levels of wellness and identify areas for possible change.

Our last session focused on identifying what stressors we have and how we can cope with that stress so that we can avoid an increase in mental health symptoms. Today's lesson will continue that conversation, but this time we will focus on physical wellness.

What is wellness? According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMSHA, wellness is being in good physical and mental health. Because mental health and physical health are linked, problems in one area can impact the other. At the same time, improving your physical health can also benefit your mental health, and vice versa. It is important to make health choices for both your physical and mental well-being. Remember that wellness is not the absence of illness or stress. You can still strive for wellness even if you are experiencing these challenges in your life.

According to SAMSHA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness, physical wellness means recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep.

How Should You Care for Your Emotional and Physical Well-being?

It's hard to do, but slowing down and simplifying routines can go a long way to strengthening your mental and physical health.

- Eat right. A healthy, regular diet is good for the body and mind.
- Go to bed on time. Losing sleep is hard on your heart, may increase weight, and definitely cranks up the crankiness meter.
- If you fall down, get back up. Resilience in the face of adversity is a gift that will keep on giving both mentally and physically.
- Go out and play. Strike a balance between work and play. Yes, work is a good thing: it pays the bills. However, taking time out for relaxation and socializing is good for your emotional health and your physical health.
- Exercise. Studies show that exercise improves your mood and has comprehensive benefits for your physical health.
- See the right doctor, regularly. Going to the right doctor can make all the difference in your overall health, especially if you have a complicated condition that requires a specialist. But if your emotions are suffering, be open to seeing a mental health professional too.

Total health depends on a healthy mind and body. Take time to nurture both.

Group Exercise: Personal Self-Care and Wellness (Handout #9)

Lesson Eleven: Utilizing Support Systems

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will learn how to utilize natural supports to improve their success in a learning environment.
2. Participants will identify which supports they would like to incorporate into their lives to help them to be successful at school.

Your social support system is a network of people you trust and look to for guidance. Our immediate support networks often include our family and friends, but students can also look to their classmates, professors and advisors for additional help.

School is the perfect time to develop meaningful relationships with new people and to strengthen the relationships you already have. You'll face both big and small challenges throughout your academic career and beyond so it's important to have people to lean on in times of need.

In addition to assistance in making friends and identifying new mentors, your support system can help you:

- **Handle difficult situations**-When obstacles inevitably arise, we sometimes need a little help keeping our goals in perspective. The people in your support network will be there for you when you need to talk after a long day, or when you're feeling overwhelmed with work, school, or your other obligations. Supportive friends, family, professors and colleagues will celebrate your successes and help you learn from your failures, providing the encouragement that you need to meet each challenge with determination and a positive attitude.
- **Find needed resources**-Your professors and advisors can be invaluable resources to you throughout your school career and after you graduate. With expertise in their respective fields, the faculty at your school can offer you sage career and academic advice. They can also help you develop your professional network, and may even be willing to write a recommendation letter for you in the future. Take advantage of your professors' office hours and talk to them about your dreams, goals and challenges. They will help you figure out which steps you need to take to be successful, both academically and professionally.
- **Get motivated**-Forming relationships with your classmates and your peers will help you stay engaged in your coursework and motivate you to succeed. If you are ever overwhelmed or struggling in school, the classmates in your support network will be willing to help you and offer their guidance, insight and strategies for success. You'll benefit from working closely with others in your program and might even forge long-lasting friendships.

You might already have a network of friends and family that you rely on at home, but there are a few steps you can take to develop your support system at school:

- **Join a club or campus organization.** Clubs, athletics and volunteer organizations are great ways to meet people who have similar interests and goals as you. Becoming more involved on campus will also help you establish several different social support networks.
- **Start a study group for your class.** Study groups hold you accountable to your academic work and are also an easy way to get to know the other students in your classes.
- **Refer a friend.** In addition to making new friends at school, you can also support your current friends by referring them to a counselor or instructor at your school who can help them identify their career goals and find the program that meets their personal and professional needs.

Cultivating and maintaining a social support system will benefit you throughout each of your life's endeavors. Support networks do more than offer a sense of community and belonging—they can also help you to achieve academic and professional success!

Group Exercise: My Support System and My Social Support System (Handouts #11 and 12)

Lesson Twelve: Celebrating Success

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will review material covered in the last 11 sessions and identify something meaningful they have learned in the group.
2. Participants will share their experience in the group and offer suggestions for improvement in the next cycle.

Congratulations! Today is the last lesson in our Strategies for Success at School curriculum! We hope that you have found this material helpful as you navigate your own learning environment or you consider going back to school to pursue your dreams.

Today's lesson will provide you with a brief overview of all the last 11 lessons. Let's now take some time to review what we have learned so far.

1. Understanding your strengths: In this first lesson, we went through some exercises to help us to identify what our strengths are.
2. Identifying what is important to you in a learning environment. This lesson focused on what you find critical for your own success and happiness in a learning environment. For some people, having small classes and a lot of individual attention is important. What else is important to you?
3. Accessing disability services in a learning environment. This 3rd lesson helped us to identify what resources are available in schools that are specifically for people with disabilities. We also went through a practice exercise on how to access those services or resources.
4. Types of accommodations was the focus of our 4th lesson in this curriculum. Can you name some accommodations that people may need for success in school?
5. The 5th lesson focused on ACCES-VR services. ACCES-VR's mission is to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living through training, education, rehabilitation, and career development. Does anyone want to talk about their current or past experience with ACCES-VR? How can ACCES-VR help you with your future educational goals?
6. The next lesson focused on study strategies. Some of the take-aways from this lesson were to start early, re-write notes to reinforce what you've already learned, eliminate distractions, find a study buddy, and use resources like tutoring.
7. The 7th lesson we completed focused on communication. We discussed tips and strategies for communicating with both teachers and classmates. Some of those tips included listening or giving someone attention, paraphrasing or summarizing to check for understanding, build rapport and trust (this takes some time), show respect, and be mindful or verbal and non-verbal communication like body language and tone of voice.
8. The next lesson focused on keeping a connection with your behavioral health providers while you are in school. It may seem difficult at times, but it's important to continue the connection with your mental health and/or substance use providers. Not only do they

want to hear about your successes in school, but they also want to help you to manage any stress that can arise while you are working towards finishing your coursework.

9. That brings us to our 9th lesson on coping with symptoms. In this lesson we talked about various ways that we cope with stress. Can you share something with the group about how you know when you're stressed out and how you cope?
10. Managing your physical wellness is also important for success at school. Eating a healthy diet and getting enough sleep are just a couple of things you can do to keep yourself feeling well. You can also go for regular check-ups with specialists if you have a chronic medical condition like asthma, diabetes, or high blood pressure. Not only can your specialist help you stay well, but he or she can also help support you while you are in school.
11. Speaking of support...our last session focused on utilizing support networks. We discussed why it is important to have supports while you are enrolled in a school program. We also discussed who your supports are by completing some handouts. Finally, we identified how we want our support system to grow in the future.

Handout #1: Strengths Exploration

Those who know their strengths and use them frequently tend to have more success in several areas. They feel happier, have better self-esteem, and are more likely to accomplish their goals.

To use your strengths effectively, it's important to have a clear ideas of what they are, and how they can be used. Some of your greatest strengths might be easy to recognize, while others go unnoticed because they feel ordinary to you (even if they aren't).

In this worksheet you will identify your strengths and ways in which you are already using them. Additionally, you will explore *new* ways to use your strengths to your advantage.

Circle your strengths from the choices below, or add your own tat the bottom.

Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness

Strengths Exploration

Profession (past or present work, school or other professional endeavors)

List the strengths you possess that help you in your profession.

Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help in your profession.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in your professional life.

1.

2.

Personal Fulfillment (hobbies, interests, and pleasurable activities)

List the strengths you possess that help you achieve personal fulfillment.

Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help you with personal fulfillment.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths for personal fulfillment.

1.

2.

Handout #2: Values Clarification

Your values are the beliefs that define what is most important to you. They guide each of your choices in life. For example, someone who values family might try to spend extra time at home, while someone who values success in their career may do just the opposite. Understanding your values will help you recognize areas of your life need more attention and what to prioritize in the future.

Select the 10 most important items from the following list. Rank them from 1-10 with “1” being the most important item.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth | <input type="checkbox"/> Humor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Morals | <input type="checkbox"/> Reason |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Success | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> Achievement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Power | <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Free Time | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Peace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Variety | <input type="checkbox"/> Stability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calmness | <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Popularity | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Handout #3: Completing a Sample Application for Disability Services

Section I: Student Information

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Today's date: _____

SS# (last four digits only): XXX-XX-_____

Gender (optional) ___ Female ___ Male ___ Other: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Primary Phone #: _____

Email Address: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

(Name)

(Phone number)

Section II: Education Information

Major: _____

Student Status at County Community College:

___ Entering as a Freshman (First time in college)

___ Entering as a transfer student (Previously attended another college)

___ Currently attending CCC

___ Non-degree student

Section III: Disability Related Information

1. Indicate your disability type. Check all that apply.

___ Learning disability

___ ADD/ADHD

___ Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger's

___ Communication/Speech

___ Motor (Neurodevelopmental)

- Blind
- Low Vision/Visual Impairment (other than the use of corrective lenses)
- Deaf
- Hard-of-Hearing
- Mental Health (Psychiatric/Psychological)
- Basic Chronic Medical Condition (one medical condition)
- Complex Chronic Medical Condition (multiple medical conditions)
- Mobility (What mobility devices, if any, do you use? _____)
- Orthopedic
- Alcohol/Substance Abuse Recovery
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Temporary Disability: _____
- Other (Please describe below):

Please answer these questions regarding how your disability impacts how you function in college.

2. Check all that apply:
 - I tire easily when I walk distances.
 - I have a personal care attendant (CCC doesn't provide personal care attendants.)
 - I need to read lips of instructors.
 - I rely on sign-language interpreting services.
 - I have difficulty reading the board in the classroom.
 - Other: _____

3. Medication may sometime impact your functioning in certain areas. If you are currently taking any disability-related medication that you wish to disclose, please list the medications:

4. Check the tasks that you CAN do and those with which you have difficulty because of your disability:

	Can do easily	Difficult
Paying attention in class		
Being motivated		
Taking notes		
Memorizing		
Managing time		
Organization		
Reading comprehension		
Spelling		
Putting thoughts into writing		
Proofreading		
Doing math calculations		
Doing math word problems		
Following direction		
Other		

5. List the accommodations that you are requesting from County Community College**:

****An answer is required. Please contact the disability office if you need help with this question.**

6. If you are a transfer student from another college, please list both the college(s) you attended and the accommodations that you received:

Section IV: Agency Information

Do you receive services from any of the following agencies?

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)

Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped (CBVH)

____ Veterans Administration (VA)

Section V: Policy on confidentiality

General Rule:

County Community College Accessibility Services is required by law to maintain student confidentiality. All recipients for accommodations and all supporting information are considered confidential.

The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) regulates how Accessibility Services discloses the documentation and records that the office maintains. Under this federal act, the student must provide written consent before Accessibility Services can release any disability documentation or records.

An Exemption to the Rule

Under FERPA, Accessibility Services is permitted to release information to any school official who has a “legitimate educational interest.”

What does this mean?

Professors or other school officials, such as tutors, may request information about the impact of a student’s disability on their ability to learn. CCC will only share information with other school officials on a “need-to-know” basis. The office will carefully consider the student’s desire for privacy before disclosing any information.

FERPA also allows students to inspect and review their files maintained by CCC. Students have the right to challenge any information contained in the files that is incorrect or misleading and to request an amendment to this misinformation.

Section VI: Signature

I have completed the Application for Accommodations as thoroughly and accurately as possible. I have read and understand the CCC Student Accessibility Office policy and confidentiality.

Student Signature

Date

Handout #4: Choosing an Accommodation

Instructions: Now that you have read about various accommodations that are available in a learning environment and had a chance to talk about them with the group, go back through each of them and place a check mark next to the ones that you think you will need in order to be most successful in a learning environment. Write a short note about how it will help you next to the one(s) you marked.

Accommodation	Do I need this?	How will it help me?
Note taking		
Extra time for test taking		
Readers for tests		
Text books in other formats		
Furniture and room accommodations		
Assistive technology		
Hearing accommodations		

Handout #5 Study Skills Questionnaire

To gain a better understanding of yourself as a learner, it is helpful to identify the study skills you use. You can determine if your study skills need a boost or if they are fine just the way there are now. This informal inventory is a short and quick tool for assessing your study skills. This is not a test, so please ask for assistance when/where you feel you need it. Answer each question as honestly as you can. There are 30 questions.

Directions:

1. Read each statement and think about it.
2. Place an X in the column that best describes your current level as it relates to the study statement.

Example:

Reading text books	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I browse headings, pictures, chapter questions, and summaries before I read a chapter.			

If this statement happens to be true some of the time for you, then place an X as shown in the appropriate column (which is “sometimes”).

At the end of the questionnaire, you will have a chance to self-score the results. Give it a try!

Remember...Applying what you learn from this questionnaire is the real key.

Reading text books	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I browse headings, pictures, chapter questions, and summaries before I read a chapter.			
I make questions from a chapter before, during, and after reading it.			
I try to get the meaning of new words as I see them for the first time.			
I look for familiar concepts as well as ideas that spark my interest as I read.			
I look for the main ideas as I read.			

Taking notes	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I take notes as I read my text books.			
I take notes during class lectures.			
I rewrite or type up my notes.			
I compare my notes with a classmate.			
I try to organize main ideas and details into a meaningful method.			

Studying	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I study where it is quiet and has few distractions.			
I study for a length of time then take a short break before returning to studying.			
I have all of my supplies handy when I study, such as pens, paper, calculator, etc.			
I set study goals, such as the number of problems I will do or pages I will read.			
I study at least two hours for every hour I am in class each week.			

Memorizing	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I try to study during my personal peak time of energy to increase my concentration level.			
I quiz myself over material that could appear on future exams and quizzes.			
I say difficult concepts out loud in order to understand them better.			
I change my notes into my own words, for better understanding.			
I try to create associations between new material I am trying to learn and information I already know.			

Preparing for tests	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I study with a classmate or group.			
When I don't understand something, I get help from tutors, classmates, and my instructors.			
I do all homework assignments and turn them in on time.			
I can easily identify what I have learned and what I have not yet learned before I take a test.			
I anticipate what possible questions may be asked on my tests and make sure I know the answers.			

Managing your time	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I use a calendar book to write down upcoming academic and personal activities.			
I use a "to do" list to keep track of completing my academic and personal activities.			
I start studying for quizzes and tests at least several days before I take them.			
I start papers and projects as soon as they are assigned.			
I have enough time for school and fun.			

Scoring: Rarely=0 Sometimes=5 Often=10

Put your score for each question on the appropriate blank and add your total score for each area.

Reading a text book:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ Total _____

Taking notes:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ Total _____

Studying:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ Total _____

Memorizing:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ Total _____

Preparing for tests:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ Total _____

Managing your time:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ Total _____

A total score of 31-50: This study skills seem solid for you.

A total score of 0-30: This study skills area may need some improvement.

Handout #6: Time Tracker

Use this chart to keep track of how many minutes/hours you spend each day doing the following things. What do you notice? Are you spending your time in a way that will allow you to reach your goals? Are there areas that you'd like to change?

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Sleep								
Personal Care (grooming)								
Meals								
Travel to and from school								
Errands								
Lectures or Class								
Studying/reading								
Work								
Friends/socializing								
Hobbies								
Physical fitness								
Other								
Other								
Other								
TOTAL								

Handout #7: Does Your Use of Time Reflect Your Life's Priorities?

What are the areas that are most important to you in your life? (E.g. grades; friends; family...) PICK YOUR TOP 3-5 PRIORITIES AND RANK THEM BELOW	Now, RANK THEM IN ORDER OF THE TIME YOU SPEND ON THEM (so, whatever normally takes the most time in your schedule is #1, etc.)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Other?	

Are there discrepancies between the two columns? Are there priorities you've identified that you simply never have time to fit into your schedule? What can you do about this? How can you better align your use of time to reflect your priorities?

Note: Sometimes important priorities do need to be neglected in the short term, to achieve other important goals - e.g., at end of term/ exam time, you may not have much time for socializing or favorite hobbies for a few weeks. But if you feel your use of time never reflects your own priorities then you need to ask yourself why and do something about it.

Handout #8: Coping Skills Worksheet: Learn about Your Stress

Directions: Fill in the following worksheet to help you discover what situations trigger your stress response, how you respond to stress, and how much stress the event causes you. Then rate your stress level with 10 being an extremely high amount of stress and 1 being the lowest amount of stress. The first line contains an example.

When I do/perform/am in _____ situation	I feel these physical symptoms of stress	I feel these emotional effects of stress	Rate your stress level
Am running late for class because I have trouble waking up early	Heart races, headache	Worried, panic	8

Handout #9: Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress

In the previous worksheet, you learned what life events and situations cause you the most stress. Now that you know what stresses you out, you can find new ways of dealing with your stress.

Instructions: In the 1st column titled “What is the situation that causes me stress?” fill in the result fill in the result from the “When I do/perform/am in the _____ situation” field from the previous worksheet. Start with the entries where the stress level is the highest and work your way down to the lower numbers. The first entry is an example of coping strategies and ways to adjust your thinking and manage your stress.

What is the situation that causes me stress?	What can I control in this situation? What is it that I cannot control?	How do I cope with this situation now?	How can I cope with this situation to reduce or eliminate my stress?
Being late for class because I have trouble waking up on time.	What time I schedule my classes. I have trouble falling asleep so I wake up later in the morning.	Set an extra alarm to help me wake up earlier.	I can try to schedule classes later in the day when I am more alert. I can talk to my doctor about my trouble sleeping.

Handout #10: Personal Self-Care and Wellness

Directions: List actions for each category that you want to do more of/change. If it helps you to not get too overwhelmed, just pick one or two for each category. Write in the box how and when you will do these items.



Handout #11: My Support System

Directions: Use this worksheet to record who is currently in your life that you can count on and use as a support while you are going through school. Then make a list of people that you would like to add to your support system.

<u>TODAY</u>	<u>IN THE FUTURE</u>
<p>Family Members I am close to right now.</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>	<p>Family Members I would like to be close with in the future.</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>
<p>Friends I am in touch with right now.</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>	<p>Friends I would like to be in touch with in the future (include possibilities like “girlfriend” or “sober friends”).</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>
<p>Professionals in my life now (counselor, therapist, psychiatrist, lawyer, professor)</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>	<p>Professionals I would like to have in the future (counselor, therapist, psychiatrist, lawyer, professor)</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>
<p>Other Support I have in my life right now</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>	<p>Other Support I would like to have in the future</p> <p>1. 2. 3.</p>

Handout #12: My Social Support System

My Family Members	
Name	Phone Number
My Friends	
Name	Phone Number
My Direct Service Providers	
Name	Phone Number
My Doctors and Nurses	
Name	Phone Number
My Other Supports (like co-workers, teachers, others)	
Name	Phone Number

Resources

ACCES-VR <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/>

Americans with Disabilities Act <https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>

Coping Skills Worksheet: Learn About Your Stress <https://stress.lovetoknow.com/stress-management-techniques/coping-skills-worksheets-adults>

Coping Skills Worksheet: Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress
<https://stress.lovetoknow.com/stress-management-techniques/coping-skills-worksheets-adults>

Does Your Use of Time Reflect Your Life's Priorities?
<http://lss.info.yorku.ca/files/2013/08/Does-Your-Use-Of-Time-Reflect-Your-Priorities.pdf>

Eight Dimensions of Wellness <https://cpr.bu.edu/living-well/eight-dimensions-of-wellness/>

Glossary of ADA terms <https://adata.org/glossary-terms#R>

Guide to Communicating Well with Teachers <https://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/a-guide-to-communicating-well-with-your-teachers>

Mind/Body Connection <https://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/connecting-dots.aspx>

My Social Support System <http://www.ddssafety.net/sites/default/files/attachments/10-07-20/TOOLSocialSupportSystem.pdf>

My Support System <https://www.willbaum.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/My-Support-System- Today-and-In-the-Future .pdf>

Personal Self-Care and Wellness Worksheet https://www.irenegreene.com/wp-content/uploads/6.5.17_personal-selfcare-and-wellness-for-the-socially-conscious-worksheet.pdf

Strengths Exploration <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/strengths-exploration.pdf>

Student Disability Services Application <http://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/access-ability/Documents/KCCApplicationforAccommodation%20041318.pdf>

Study Skills Questionnaire <http://www.ewubd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Assessment-of-Study-Skills.pdf>

Time Management Skills for Students <https://www.harrisschool.edu/improve-your-time-management-skills-for-students/#.XECnTflKg2y>

Time Tracker <http://lss.info.yorku.ca/files/2013/08/Time-tracking.pdf>

Types of Accommodations <https://www.laguardia.edu/osd/>

Values Clarification <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/values-clarification.pdf>

Why Your Social Support System Is Important for Your Success
<https://www.herzing.edu/blog/why-your-support-system-important-your-success>

