Soft Skills at Work

Standing up for Yourself

What are Soft Skills?

Research shows that soft skills are often better predictors of success in the workplace than technical skills. Soft skills are also called interpersonal or people skills. These skills help people to work effectively with others. Soft skills also ensure a collaborative, productive and healthy work environment. Employers look for these soft skills:

teamwork	problem solving
motivation	communication
flexibility	punctuality

The discussion and activities that follow help students understand a specific soft skill and its importance in the workplace. As well, students consider the soft skill in their daily lives and how to apply it.

Contents

(A) Discussion

1.   Describe how and why Nan becomes more confident.

2.   Read about Lil and Kal.
        Discuss the questions.

        Lil has been working too much overtime.
        The money helps.
        But Lil is tired all the time.
        She wants to spend more time with her kids.
        Lil is afraid to say no to overtime.

        Jim has been working too much overtime.
        It is heavy work.
        Jim is often out of breath.
        But Jim needs a job.
        Jim is 60 years old.

    Both Jim and Lil want to work less overtime.

        (a) Why do you think they accept so much overtime?

        (b) What should Lil say to her boss?

        (c) What should Jim say to his boss?

3.   Describe a time you stood up for yourself.

What made you decide to stand up for yourself?

Was it hard for you to stand up for yourself?

Explain why or why not.

How did you feel after standing up for yourself? Why?

How did standing up for yourself affect others.

4.   Describe a time you wanted to stand up for yourself, but didn't.

How did you feel?

Why didn't you stand up for yourself?

What did you learn from that experience?

5.   What words describe people who stand up for themselves?

(B) Application

1.   **Make a Plan**

(a)   Think of a time when you would like to stand up for yourself.

It can be at work, at home, in a situation with a friend,
or someone in the community.

I would like to stand up for myself _____

_____.

(b)   What might make it hard for you to stand up for yourself
in this situation?

_____.

_____.

(c)   Who could help you stand up for yourself? How could they help?

_____ could help me by _____

_____.

(d)   What do you need to do before you stand up for yourself
in this situation?

I need to _____

_____.

2.   Reflection

Why do you want to stand up for yourself in this situation?

How will things be better after you stand up for yourself?

Sometimes things do not go as we planned.

    Think about all the ways your plan might affect you and others.

    Do you need to make changes to your plan?

(C) Reading & Writing

1.   Read the story below
Find three words that do not make sense.
Cross each out. Write a word that makes sense.
The first one is an example.

>   *works*
>   Nan ~~bowls~~ at a motel.
>
>   She cleans.
>
>   She uses a lot of cleaners.
>
>   The cleaners are strong.
>
>   Nan wears gloves.
>
>   But the gloves are good.
>
>   They rip and tear.
>
>   The cleaners go through the holes.
>
>   Nan has a rash.
>
>   Is she the only one with a rash?
>
>   Nan talks to Sue.
>
>   Sue has a stomach ache, too.
>
>   Nan shows Roy her rash.
>
>   Roy does not have a rash.
>
>   But his eyes see all the time.
>
>   The staff talk to their boss.
>
>   The boss buys better gloves.
>
>   The boss buys safe cleaners.
>
>   Nan does not feel alone anymore.

2. **Complete the sentences.**

(a) The gloves give Nan a rash.

The gloves are *thin*.

The gloves are _____ .

The gloves are _____ .

The gloves are _____ .

(b) Nan uses strong cleaners.

She uses cleaners to wash *mirrors*.

She uses cleaners to wash _____ .

She uses cleaners to wash _____ .

She uses cleaners to wash _____ .

(c) Standing up for yourself is not always easy.

You need to be *motivated*.

You need to be _____ .

You need to be _____ .

You need to be _____ .

Read your sentences again.

Which words do you want to remember?

Add these words to your word bank.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Step 1: Start a Discussion

Possible prompt: What did you learn about standing up for yourself?

Step 2: Record the Students' Words

Print the students' responses on the board, using their exact words. Print clearly. Say each word as you print it.

Step 3: Read the Text

Read the student-generated text out loud to the students, pointing to each word as you read. Then read each sentence, inviting the class to read along with you. Finally, read each sentence out loud, inviting the student who contributed the sentence to read along with you. Always point to each word as you read.

The purpose of using the **Language Experience Approach** is to help students establish the link between spoken and written words and to develop reading skills through using their own words.

Note: Educators and ESL students may not be comfortable working with text that contains non-standard English forms. A flexible approach is recommended. The extent to which you choose to make corrections unobtrusively while recording should reflect the needs and concerns of the students.

Step 4: Use the Student-generated Text

(a) Sight Words

Have students choose three words they would like to remember. Have them add the words to their personal dictionary or word bank.

(b) Cloze

Cover highly predictable words (one per response) with paper and tape. Read the text back to the students. Stop when you reach a covered word and ask students to predict a word that makes sense and sounds right. Check their predictions by uncovering the word.

(c) Review Phonics and Word Families

Have students find, circle, and copy words that start with a specific letter or word family.

(d) Copying

Have students copy the language experience text. Copying the text provides practice in both printing and in learning the letter-sound relationships.

(e) Frame Sentences

Choose one sentence from the language experience text. Print the sentence on the board. Underline one word and ask the students to substitute the word with their own words. Print the sentence frame again to record each student's response.

Example:

Soft skills are _important_.

Soft skills are _____.

Soft skills are _____.

Soft skills are _____.