

MODEL TRANSITION PROGRAM Job Readiness

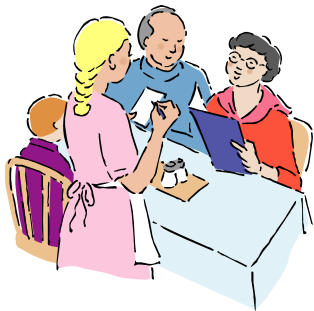
REAL LIFE STORIES



REAL LIFE STORIES

NO EXPERIENCE!

Maribel was really getting frustrated. It was the end of her senior year and she was supposed to start looking for a job. She thought that she would like to work in the restaurant business because she liked food, she liked people, and she liked the idea of working in the evening.



She presented this idea to her teacher.

“What experience do you have in the restaurant business?” her teacher asked.

“Well, I’ve eaten in a lot of them,” Maribel laughed.

The teacher didn’t laugh.

“Have you been a waitress? Helped in a kitchen? Cleaned off tables? Have you done any of these things?”

“Yes,” said Maribel, “in my own kitchen at home. I clear my own dishes after dinner and sometimes I load the dishwasher. I’ve helped my mom bake and my dad lets me cook stuff on the grill.”

“Well, that’s not really the kind of experience I’m talking about,” said her teacher. “It would really help if you had some restaurant experience.”

Maribel groaned. “I just want to have a chance to work in a restaurant to learn about it and see if I like it. But I can’t get experience without experience!”

How can Maribel get the experience she needs so that she can find out if she likes the restaurant business?

REAL LIFE STORIES

WHO WILL GUIDE?

Gary doesn't know who to listen to.

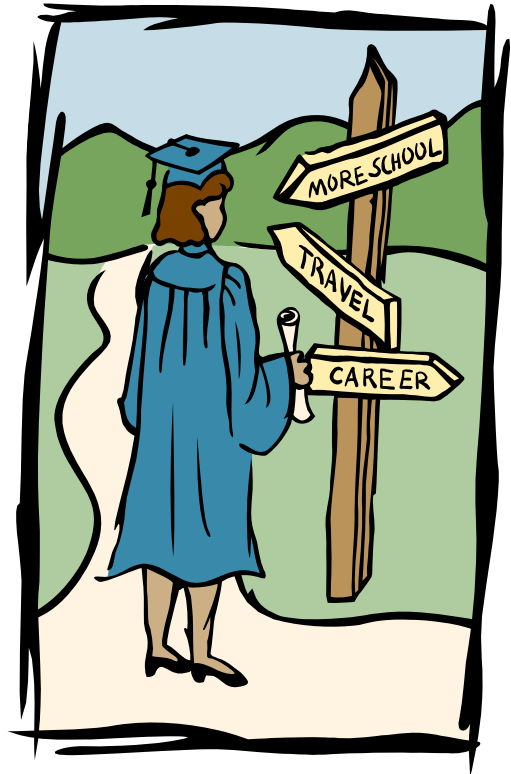
When he graduates from high school his parents want him to live at home and work part-time. They do not think that he is ready to handle full-time work. They don't think he can afford to live in an apartment with his two friends who are also going to go to work.

His guidance counselor wants him to get a job and go to the community college part-time. She keeps talking about how he should get a certificate in a skill where there are jobs, like technology or healthcare.

His friends are going to college or working full-time. They keep talking about how they are going to finally be on their own to do whatever they want. They want Gary to continue to hang out with them.

Gary knows that he may have some difficulties in getting and keeping a job. It's not as easy for him to just jump right in to something new. He's not even sure what he wants to do with the rest of his life.

Who should Gary listen to?



REAL LIFE STORIES

SPECIAL TREATMENT

Mario finally got a great job and he's really enjoying it. He is working at a dry cleaning store where he gets to wait on customers and package up the clean laundry. It doesn't sound like much fun, but Mario really wants to get experience in working in a business. Some day he would like to open his own store, even if it's not a dry cleaning store.

The manager understands that Mario has a disability that requires some adjustments to the work schedule and changes in some of the tasks. For example, Mario has trouble lifting anything heavy, so the manager makes sure that Mario never has to do that.

Mario also has difficult days when he is struggling with health problems, and the manager is very accommodating. Mario tries very hard to get to work on time and be there every day. He tries to make up any lost time if he can.



Mario knows that he's lucky that his manager is so understanding. The problem is that the manager makes a big deal out of it and keeps telling the other employees that Mario has a disability and needs "special treatment." The manager sometimes excuses Mario from doing tasks that Mario is perfectly capable of doing.

The other employees have been patient, but they are starting to get a little annoyed. They have problems of their own, and don't appreciate all of the attention that Mario is getting from the manager.

Mario doesn't want to ruin a good thing, but he doesn't want to make his co-workers mad. What should Mario do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

MANAGING MEDS



When Julia graduates from high school in a couple of months she will be living in an apartment with three other women. She has already landed a job at a store that is right down the street from her apartment. She had worked there as an intern and they hired her full-time. She is thrilled, especially because she likes the people she will be working with.

Julia is very excited about this new life ahead of her, but she is concerned about some changes that are happening to her medically. Her doctors have agreed that she needs to be on a different medication that may take a few weeks to get used to.

When she starts her new job she will have been on the medication for 8 weeks, and she has no idea whether it will be effective or not. She's also worried about possible reactions to the medication.

When Julia was an intern at the store, the manager was aware that Julia was part of a supported employment program arranged by the high school. But the manager really didn't know the details of Julia's life and didn't ask. Since Julia was able to handle the job assignments, there was very little discussion about Julia's health situation.

But now Julia feels like someone should know about her medication. She will not have a job coach. She has never talked openly with any of her co-workers about her healthcare needs. She's worried that if the medication is not working or is causing her problems, someone should know what is going on.

But she really doesn't want people to treat her differently if they have this new information.

What should Julia do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

WHO TO COUNT ON?



Jessica has been filling out job applications and has already had a phone call from an employer. She is scheduled for an interview for next week after school.

One of Jessica's teachers has been helping her prepare for the interview. They have practiced a number of questions, including some difficult ones that may come up. Jessica is feeling pretty confident, but she has one concern.

If Jessica gets the job she will have to rely on her family members for the ride to work. The bus stop is a few blocks away from her house and she would have difficulty getting to work on time. Both her parents and her two older brothers work, and they have all told her that they will drive her to work. But she's not completely confident that they will follow through.

She knows that her brother Jake will have to go out of his way to pick her up. Her brother Sam is always late for everything and doesn't always go to work.

Her parents work different shifts, so sometimes one of them is sleeping in the morning and the other one is working when Jessica will have to leave for work.

The whole plan sounds pretty unreliable. Jessica is afraid that the employer will ask her in the interview about her transportation plans. She knows that employers are not allowed to ask her questions about transportation to work, but she might get asked anyway. And even if she's not asked, she's not quite sure how she is going to handle transportation to a new job.

How should Jessica handle this situation?

REAL LIFE STORIES

IS HE READY?

Alex wants to get a job when he graduates from high school. He doesn't know exactly what type of job he would like, but he knows that he doesn't want to go to any more classes. He wants to make some money of his own.

Alex had two internship experiences and they didn't work out very well. He thought that the first internship was really boring so he didn't always show up. He didn't like being told what to do, especially when he didn't like the work.

The second internship was at a clothing store and he enjoyed it, but he had trouble doing all of the tasks that were assigned to him. The manager was always giving him more work and Alex had trouble keeping up. It was frustrating so eventually Alex quit. The teacher who arranged the internship tried to work things out with Alex and the manager, but Alex didn't really want to cooperate.

Alex just wants to get out on his own and pick out a job that he likes.

Now Alex's mom is saying that she doesn't think that he is ready to go to work. She thinks that he needs another year taking classes that will prepare him in a field that he would enjoy. She has been researching local colleges where he could take one or two classes. The local community college has a Work Study program that would allow him to get 10 hours of work experience a week on campus. She thinks this is the perfect solution.

Alex does not agree, but he doesn't know how to convince his mother that he is ready to go to work full-time.

What do you think Alex should do?



REAL LIFE STORIES

FOLLOW YOUR DREAM

Sarah has watched *American Idol* since it started. She always hears the contestants saying that they are “following their dream.”

She watches *Oprah* after school and hears Oprah and her guests talking about how they had to “follow their dream.”



Sarah’s dream is to be a fashion designer in New York City. She is always sketching clothing and advising her friends on what to wear. She enjoys going to the mall and studying the clothes that are for sale. She watches *Project Runway* and other shows that are all about fashion, and spends a lot of time studying fashion magazines at the local bookstore.

Sarah is convinced that if she just sticks with her dream she will become a rich and famous fashion designer.

But she’s not really sure how to follow her dream, and her teachers and family are not very supportive. Her Art teacher is not encouraging at all. Everyone keeps telling her about the difficulties of being a success in the fashion industry. They talk about how expensive it is in New York City, how 90% of the designers fail, and how stressful a life it is.

They point out that she has no experience in the field. In fact, she hasn’t had a job except for a job shadowing experience.

They don’t mention that Sarah has a disability that makes it hard for her to navigate busy streets and stairs. But Sarah thinks that they believe that it is her disability that is really going to get in the way of her achieving her dream. This has made her even more determined to go for it.

What should Sarah do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

ROMANCE!

Belinda and Carl have been dating for two years and want to stay together after high school. Belinda has been accepted at the community college to work towards her nursing degree. She has already taken two of the science courses required for the degree in a special program in the high school.

Carl wants to get a job right away, preferably as an audio technician at a radio or television station. He doesn't have any work experience but has worked with audio equipment all his life. The Music Director of the school always relies on Carl to help him with the audio for the school concerts.

The problem is that there are limits on the number of jobs that Carl can apply for in his town. He is probably going to have to move to where he can get his first job. This is a huge step for Carl because he has had a number of supports in school, including regular Resource Room assistance. Now that he is in his senior year he has been able to get his schoolwork completed without as much help, but it's been a struggle. His parents are very supportive of him living on his own, but they don't want him too far away.

Belinda does not want to change her plans, especially because she already has credits at the community college. She needs to live at home to save money, but eventually plans on getting an apartment with Carl.

They don't know what to do. What if Carl has to move away? Should Belinda try to find a college nearby? Is getting an apartment together a good idea?

Maybe Carl should work in his town at any job he can find, and wait until Belinda finishes her degree. Then Carl can look for a job as an audio technician in another town.

They want to be together but they have plans that might keep them apart.

What should they do?



REAL LIFE STORIES

WE CAN'T AFFORD IT, SON

For as long as he can remember, Jeremy wanted to learn how to weld. He used to watch the welders working on new construction in his neighborhood. He would hang around the auto shop where his dad worked and watched the welders fixing the cars. He always thought that it would be the coolest job.

Now that Jeremy is graduating from high school, he will be old enough to start working toward a welding certificate. There are two welding schools in his city and they both provide classes and experience for different types of welding. Jeremy wants to be certified in all types of welding so that he can work anywhere in the world.

With his teacher's encouragement, he researched both schools on the internet and called up the Admissions offices for more information. He was concerned that they may discriminate against him because of his disability, but all of the literature looked like he was going to be qualified to get into both schools. At the Mercury Welding School they made a point of saying on the phone that they were an "equal opportunity" school and would be happy to talk to him about his plans. He liked the woman he spoke to and decided Mercury would be his choice.



When he found out the cost of the program he was shocked, but it did not dim his enthusiasm. He figured he could get some sort of scholarship or work part-time to cover the costs.

After talking to Mrs. Silver, the financial aid person at Mercury, he realized that there would not be any time for working. Scholarships were small and rare. He was going to have to pay for the entire program himself. Mrs. Silver gave him piles of information on student loans.

Jeremy discussed this with his father. "We can't afford it, son. And I'm not willing to co-sign a loan because it's too risky. You are going to have to work for awhile to earn the money to go to school or take out the loans in your own name."

Jeremy is really discouraged. What should he do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

NOT ENOUGH TIME!

Barb has been volunteering and working when she has not been going to her high school classes or studying. Her parents have made it very clear that her disability will not get in the way of her being successful in life. They have worked closely with the school to arrange for experiences in job shadowing, internships, and work experiences. They are very excited about Barb's upcoming graduation and have been asking her about her plans for the future.

Barb wants to continue working because she loves the independence and the money. She is hard-working and her employers have been very supportive.



But Barb does not want a dead-end job that she will be stuck in forever. There are some jobs that she would not be able to do physically, but she is willing to try out anything else that looks interesting. Then she'll make up her mind about what she plans on doing for the future.

She's decided that the best thing would be to work part-time and go to college part-time. She gathered a catalogue from a college in town, and talked to the counselors in the college Career Center about job opportunities. Everyone was very helpful and gave her lots of good ideas about what courses to take and what jobs to pursue.

When Barb put everything in front of her and analyzed it, she realized that she probably would not have any time to sleep, eat, or study. The courses were in the mornings and evenings or on-line. The jobs were on or near the campus, but mostly during the day. How was she going to manage all of this?

Barb knew that students were balancing work and school, but how did they do it?

What should Barb do to work out her plan?

REAL LIFE STORIES

A TIGHT ECONOMY

Mario is very anxious to get a job when he leaves high school. He especially wants to work so that he can help out his family. His father just got laid off and his mother is worried about the future of her part-time job.



In fact, it seems like a lot of the parents of his friends are getting laid off and are having a hard time finding work. There just don't seem to be that many jobs available these days.

Mario knew that everyone was talking about big changes in the economy, but he wasn't really sure what that meant. He heard the term "recession" and knew that gas prices were going up and some big stores were going out of business, but he didn't really understand how this would affect his job search. Now he is beginning to see that even the most qualified workers are losing their jobs and are having trouble finding work.

His school has Mario enrolled in a "Job Readiness" class so that he will be prepared to handle job applications and interviews. Some of the class activities are about how to be professional and successful on the job.

But how can he use these new skills if he can't even get a job? Mario feels like the classes are not worth the time because he is not optimistic about future employment.

He's decided that in the next class he's going to bring up this problem. He thinks that he needs more information about how to find the jobs that are left, and how to get hired. He doesn't think that he needs to learn how to be a good employee.

What advice would you give Mario?

REAL LIFE STORIES

NOT FAIR

Jamal is tired of the comments that are made about him when he's working at his new job.

Jamal is finishing up high school and working after school three afternoons a week. He stocks the shelves in a local grocery store and helps customers carry groceries to their cars.

He likes the job because it's not too difficult, he has a sense of accomplishment, and he enjoys being around the customers. He especially likes the paycheck that he gets every two weeks. It pays for downloading music on his iPod, movie tickets, bus fare, and other things that make his life more fun.



The customers are always nice to him and they appreciate it when he helps them out. It is the other people who work in the store who aren't very nice.

Most of his co-workers are pleasant and treat him with respect, but there are a few who are downright mean. They make sarcastic comments and imitate the way that Jamal talks. Sometimes he realizes that they are walking behind him to make fun of the way that he walks.

The other day a customer noticed that a worker at the store was teasing Jamal. She reported the worker to the manager and the worker got told to cut it out. Instead of stopping the behavior, the worker kept it up when the manager wasn't looking.

Jamal has experienced this type of treatment in school, and he always tried hard to ignore it. He made his own friends who stuck by him when things got rough. A couple of times he had to tell a teacher when he felt unsafe, but once he reached high school he pretty much handled any teasing or bullying on his own. He did not hesitate to stand up for himself.

He's not quite sure what to do in the work situation. If he stands up for himself he might look like he's causing trouble. He can't always ignore the behavior because it interferes with his ability to get his work done. If he tells the manager, the treatment may get worse.

His friends tell him that he should not put up with the way he's being treated and the workers who are mean to him should be fired. They say that the manager wouldn't want workers who can't work well with everyone at the store.

What should Jamal do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

BUT WHY NOT?

Olivia has been talking to her transition teacher about what she is going to do after high school. She has always wanted to work outdoors and wants a job that involves taking care of the environment. Olivia's family has always done a lot of camping and swimming and even though Olivia sometimes struggled with the physical demands of outdoor activities, she worked hard to overcome any obstacles.



Olivia's teacher is not so sure that outdoor work is a good idea for Olivia. The teacher worries about Olivia's ability to carry out work tasks without assistance. The teacher has also consulted with the school nurse and other teachers and she is convinced that Olivia needs to think about some other type of work.

Olivia has talked to her parents about this dilemma and they agreed to come in to the school to have a conference with the teacher. They do not want to support Olivia if the teachers and school nurse seem to be concerned about Olivia's job choice. They think that maybe the teachers may have a better understanding of the demands of an outdoors job.

Olivia thinks that she should be able to pursue any career that she wants. She has worked hard to overcome some of the difficulties related to her disability and she doesn't want anything to get in her way. She doesn't want to climb Mt. Everest (well, not now, anyway) but she does want to be able to clear trails, plant gardens, rescue wild birds, or anything that allows her to be outdoors.

She has asked if she can attend the parent conference, even though she doesn't intend to agree with the adults if they don't support her plans.

What should Olivia do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT!?

Lucas has been working in an office on Wednesday afternoons after school. He is responsible for scanning and shredding documents, filing, and Xeroxing large publications. Every time he comes in on Wednesday there is plenty to do. He is always on time and has never missed a day of work.

Lucas likes the work because he knows exactly what is expected and can organize his time. The supervisor explained everything to him on the first day, and the responsibilities have not changed. Some days are busier than others, but Lucas always leaves with everything shredded, filed, or copied. He is proud of his work and would like to increase his hours when he graduates from high school.

He talked to his supervisor and asked if he would be able to work full-time starting July. The supervisor was pleased that Lucas was interested in staying at the company and said that he would investigate the possibility of increasing his work time.

When the supervisor met with Lucas last week, he explained that there wasn't enough of the same work to justify five days a week. However, he had a list of additional tasks that Lucas could do in a full-time job.

Lucas looked at the list and realized that because of his disability he would have trouble doing some of the new work. For example, the supervisor wanted Lucas to clean out and organize the two supply rooms. Lucas wasn't sure if he had the physical strength necessary to move boxes around. Plus he was beginning to feel overwhelmed with the long list of tasks. He started to feel that the supervisor had unreasonable expectations.

Lucas really wants to continue working there, but he's concerned about what he will have to do to earn his pay.

What should Lucas do?



REAL LIFE STORIES

LOW EXPECTATIONS

Melissa was so excited because she finally had a chance to do an internship. She is very talented on the computer and loves to create websites and do graphic designs for her friends. The employer has been very understanding about accommodations that Melissa needs to be able to work at the computer, so Melissa is all ready to go.



She is supposed to report every afternoon and work for three hours. At first she was given a basic data-entry assignment that she finished pretty quickly. When the supervisor saw that Melissa was done in two hours, she didn't have any other work for her to do so she gave her a tour of the building.

On the second day, Melissa had more data entry and some corrections to make on a draft of a website. Again, it didn't take Melissa long because she had good writing skills and could spot errors pretty quickly. When she told the supervisor she was finished, Melissa also asked if her supervisor was interested in her ideas about how to improve the layout of the website. The supervisor said, "Oh no, honey, we have two experts here who can take care of that."

After two weeks Melissa began to realize that the office had not really planned for her workload and didn't really know about Melissa's skills. Every time she made a suggestion she was told that she didn't need to worry about the work. If she actually went ahead and did something creative she got loads of compliments, but then she never heard anything about it again.

Melissa really wants to show what she can do and wants to learn from the internship. She talked to the Internship Coordinator at the school and was told that she needed to have a serious talk with her supervisor.

Melissa doesn't really know what to say to the supervisor without sounding like a complainer. She's afraid that they might decide they don't need her as an intern after all.

What should Melissa do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

REGULAR WORK

Joel has been taking job readiness classes and the first thing the class did was talk about their goals.

Joel has always had a goal. He wants to be a construction foreman and work on bridges and roads. His uncle had that job and just retired. He got to work outdoors and he made pretty good money. The best part was that he was always saying to Joel things like:

“We are driving over a bridge that I built!”

“This road is safe because I helped to fix it.”

Joel wanted to be able to say things like that, too.

But Joel’s uncle has also warned Joel that it took many years to earn the kind of money he earned. He usually couldn’t work in the winter so he either collected unemployment or moved temporarily to another part of the country. He was often tired and sore when he got home from work. He never got hurt on the job even though it could sometimes be pretty dangerous, and he had seen too many workers sidelined with injuries.



Joel’s uncle was trying to tell Joel the realities of the job. He told him that the work was irregular and these days you needed extra training to work your way up in the business. If you got a degree as a civil engineer you could still work on the job without all of the physical demands and stress of seasonal work. But it took five years to get an engineering degree. Joel had always required extra assistance from the school in getting his academic work done. He was not interested in pursuing further education and just wanted to get started working.

Joel doesn’t really care about the warnings of his uncle. He has always had the goal of doing this job and doesn’t want to change his plans.

What should Joel do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

ARE YOU SURE?



When Sophia was talking to her older sister about what she wanted to do when she graduated from high school, her sister recommended that she do something in healthcare.

She told Sophia that there were all kinds of jobs in hospitals, nursing homes, and doctor's offices. She could work directly with patients or she could help out in other ways.

Sophia didn't really know what she wanted to do, but she liked the idea of being able to find a job pretty easily. She looked in the local paper and on-line and saw that there were plenty of jobs for nurse's aides, nurses, and other health care workers.

The Transition Coordinator at her school suggested to Sophia that she talk to someone at the Community College about what types of certifications they offered. Sophia made an appointment and took the bus over to the college.

She immediately loved being on the college campus. She felt older and comfortable there. After meeting with an Admissions Counselor she decided that she was going to complete one year of training as a phlebotomist, or someone who draws blood from patients. She would work with doctors and nurses but she wouldn't have the same level of responsibility. She liked that idea.

The program not only taught her how to draw blood effectively, but she would also learn about anatomy, communication with patients, and record-keeping. She thought that she would like the job and wanted to be able to get to work as soon as she was certified.

Sophia had always needed academic assistance to get through school, but the Admissions counselor reassured her that the same assistance would be provided in college. Sophia was so enthusiastic about the training program that she didn't worry about whether the college-level work would be too hard for her.

When Sophia came home from her college visit, she was excited to tell her parents about her decision. They were pleased for her, but her mother asked, "How do you know that you will like the job? You always hated going to the hospital! What if you go to school for a year and study really hard and you discover that you don't like being a phlebotomist?"

What should Sophia do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

OOPS!

Marcel had a job on the weekends cutting lawns and trimming bushes for a local landscaper. He found the work to be very satisfying, even if the conditions were not always the best. He made good spending money and was learning a lot about landscaping.

Marcel knew that he needed to find a job after high school that would help out his family. He was going to be able to live at home, but his parents were asking him to contribute to the rent and food bill. Marcel was happy to do it, but wanted to make sure that he had a little money left over for himself.



He was hoping that the landscaper would take him on full-time in the summer, and then maybe let him work in the greenhouse over the winter months. He was trying hard to make a good impression, especially because he knew that another worker was leaving and Marcel could take his place.

Last Saturday Marcel was left alone in the backyard of a beautiful home while the landscaper went to meet with another client. Marcel was used to this and the landscaper trusted him. Marcel got his instructions and started to work tearing out a row of bushes that were planted along a walkway. Every once in awhile he would run the torn bushes through the shredder.

He was almost done when the owner of the house came out and started screaming at him. Marcel had ripped out the wrong bushes. And most of them were shredded.

Marcel was sure that the landscaper had pointed to the bushes that he had ripped out of the ground and shred. But he didn't want to blame his boss. He also didn't want to lose his job because of this terrible mistake. Replacing and replanting the bushes was going to cost a fortune.

Marcel could see his future in pieces, just like the bushes he had shredded.

What should Marcel do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

NOT AGAIN

Chantelle didn't make a lot of friends at school. Her best friend from middle school moved away and her close friend in high school was always with her boyfriend. Chantelle was able to hang out with some of the kids from her classes, but she mostly spent time by herself. She had trouble expressing herself sometimes, and the other students didn't have the patience to wait for her to speak up. Besides, she thought that a lot of the things the high school students cared about were pretty lame. She was ready to graduate and start living her adult life.

She was often lonely, and filled her time with reading, television, and playing games on the computer.



Her teacher knew that Chantelle was feeling alone, and reassured her that when she went to work after high school she would make a lot of new friends. The teacher explained that in the workplace Chantelle would be surrounded by grownups and it would be easier to meet new people.

A few of her co-workers would behave just like kids in high school, but mostly she would be part of a team of people who are working toward a common goal. Her teacher thought that Chantelle

would enjoy employment a lot more than high school.

The teacher suggested that Chantelle investigate jobs where she would have the chance to be around a lot of people. She should look at careers that require teamwork and cooperation. Chantelle doesn't know where to begin.

What should Chantelle do?

REAL LIFE STORIES

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Akili just returned from another job shadowing experience. Her teacher had arranged for her class to visit a number of different workplaces and follow the employees around for a couple of hours. The purpose was to find out more about the job and decide if it looked appealing.

Akili was not impressed so far. She felt that the jobs that she observed were boring and pointless. Who wanted to shuffle papers all day, or sit at a computer? Why would anyone want to spend time on the telephone talking to strangers, or even waiting on customers who were often rude?



Akili was friendly and energetic, but it seemed like these workers were slow-moving and methodical. They didn't seem all that interested in their work. Even the tour of the restaurant showed lots of busy people who were working hard but not necessarily enjoying themselves. Were all workplaces like this?

Akili thought that work should be easy-going, relaxed, and fun. There should be a lot of activity and moving around, and a lot of laughter.

When she told her teacher about her observations, the teacher decided that Akili needed more opportunities to talk to the workers when they weren't so busy. She brought some of the employees to the class and had them talk about their jobs. Akili was surprised at how enthusiastic they were about their jobs, even though they looked so serious when they were working. They explained that their job was to get the work done and be professional. They could laugh and enjoy their co-workers, but not at the expense of doing their jobs.

When she asked them if they liked their jobs, some of them said they worked hard because they loved it, and others said they worked hard because they needed the paycheck and didn't really care if they loved it.

Akili really wants a job that matches her personality. She wants to love her work.

What should Akili do?