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Fall 2020

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Led nationally by the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, NDEAM celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities and educates about the value of a diverse workforce inclusive of their skills and talents. This year marks not only the 75th observance of NDEAM, but also the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Both milestones are being commemorated with a range of events and activities centered on the theme "Increasing Access and Opportunity."



What Can Your Center Do To Celebrate NDEAM?

- ▶ **31 Days of NDEAM:** Check out ODEP’s suggestions for daily ways to celebrate: [31 Days of NDEAM](#). Even in distance learning settings, ideas can be posted in virtual classrooms/platforms, web pages, social media, etc.
- ▶ **Hold a discussion:** NDEAM presents an opportune time to discuss the topic of disability employment with students; one easy way to do so is to use the [What Can YOU Do Campaign](#) ideas and materials.
- ▶ **Create a display:** NDEAM is a great time to freshen up bulletin boards (even online boards). Start by putting up this year's NDEAM [poster](#), which will be available in both English and Spanish. Include materials with positive images featuring people with disabilities in various community and employment settings.
- ▶ **Organize an online/virtual event:** Another option is to hold a disability-related event. Such an event might feature local disability service organizations and/or people with disabilities in various professions willing to talk about their jobs, interests, and experiences and activities for students such as a poster contest or disability awareness activities.



Iroquois Job Corps Center’s 2019 NDEAM Poster Contest

Self-Regulation for Students with Disabilities

What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation can be defined in various ways. In the most basic sense, it involves controlling one's thoughts, behavior, and emotions in the pursuit of long-term goals. More specifically, emotional self-regulation refers to the ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses. In other words, to think before acting. It also reflects the ability to cheer yourself up after disappointments and to act in a way consistent with your deepest held values. Learning how to self-regulate is an important skill that one learns both for emotional maturity and later social connection. Maturity reflects the ability to face emotional, social, and cognitive threats in the environment with patience and thoughtfulness.



Importance of Self-Regulation

Self-regulation involves taking a pause between a feeling and an action—taking the time to think things through, make a plan, wait patiently. Students with disabilities (e.g., Learning Disabilities, Asperger’s Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Depression, Anxiety, etc.) often struggle with these behaviors. It is easy to see how a lack of self-regulation will cause problems in all aspects of life. A student with poor self-regulation skills may lack self-confidence and self-esteem and have trouble handling stress and frustration. This might be expressed in terms of anger or anxiety, and in more severe cases or left unchecked could lead to issues such as mental health disorders and risky behaviors such as substance abuse.

Self-regulation is about attaining goals – any kind of goal -- by controlling one’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the here and now. For our students, attaining and maintaining employment are the longer-term goals. The training provided at Job Corps is designed to equip students not just with specific job-related skills but with the broader set of skills needed to be successful in the workplace. This broader set of employability skills includes self-regulation. Self-regulation allows students to bounce back from failure and stay calm under pressure. Developing self-regulation skills will improve students’ resilience and ability to face difficult circumstances in life.

Helping Students Put Self-Regulation into Practice

- Help students understand they may feel like life has dealt them a bad hand, it is not the hand they are dealt, but how they react to it that matters most (i.e., everyone has a choice in how to react to situations).
- Teach students about the importance of routines (i.e., learning what to expect makes it easier to feel comfortable).
- Provide models and/or qualities of self-regulators.

Self-Regulation for Students with Disabilities (cont'd)

Qualities of Self-Regulators

The benefits of self-regulation for our students are numerous. In general, the people who are adept at self-regulating tend to possess the following abilities:

- Acting in accordance with their values
- Calming themselves when upset
- Maintaining open communication
- Persisting through difficult times
- Putting forth their best effort
- Remaining flexible and adapting to situations
- Seeing the good in others
- Staying clear about their intentions
- Taking control of situations when necessary
- Viewing challenges as opportunities



Functional Limitations and Accommodations Related to Self-Regulation

The following table outlines some common functional limitations and possible accommodations to support students with self-regulation challenges.

Functional Limitation

Difficulty with Response to Frustration; Anxiety; Irritability



Accommodations

- Allow for frequent breaks (e.g., movement)
- Modify/restructure schedule and/or work environment
- Provide access to a supportive adult/mentor/peer buddy
- Allow the use of headphones and/or apps for the use of calming and redirecting
- Establish written long-term and short-term goals
- Provide a quiet work area for completion of independent work, assignments, tasks
- Break assignments, tasks, projects down into smaller sections/parts

Functional Limitation

Difficulty Maintaining Concentration/Focus



Accommodations

- Reduce distractions in the work area
- Break down assignments/tasks into smaller parts/sections
- Provide frequent feedback on progress
- Allow for use of white noise, environmental sound machines, or noise cancelling headphones
- Allow the student to play soothing music or sounds using a headset
- Increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- Plan for uninterrupted work time
- Allow for frequent breaks

Self-Regulation for Students with Disabilities (cont'd)

Functional Limitation

Difficulty with Change, Transitions, Unpredictability



Accommodations

- Maintain open channels of communication between the student and the instructors to ensure an effective transition
- Provide weekly or monthly meetings with the student to discuss classroom, workplace, or other issues and production levels—avoid surprising students with negative feedback
- Use timers/reminders to prepare students for upcoming transitions
- Practice key transitions with the student (e.g., moving from one assignment/task/class to another; changes in rules/expectations...)
- Provide a mentor/buddy and/or prompt to help with key transition times

Functional Limitation

Lack of Social Skills; Seeks Attention Inappropriately



Accommodations

- Teach replacement behaviors and reinforce with praise, privileges, tangibles
- Provide specific, positive feedback when student demonstrates appropriate social skill behaviors
- Provide peer mentors or role models
- Provide video examples of appropriate social skills and behaviors (e.g., YouTube)
- Teach acceptable social behaviors in different contexts (academics, career technical, recreation, residential, online learning settings)
- Allow the student to access supportive adult (e.g., counselor, mentor, Center Mental Health Consultant, another instructor...) when behavior is escalating

Spotlight on Assistive Technology: Self-Regulation

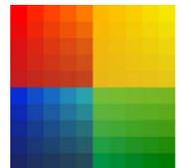
Happify

The [Happify app](#) is designed to help people overcome stress and negative thoughts, and build resilience. The app helps users to identify patterns, become conscious of their thoughts and feelings, and begins to steer their mind and behaviors towards happiness. The app offers exercises, activities, and games that help train the user's mind and get them practicing patterns that generate positive feelings.



Mood Meter

The [Mood Meter app](#) helps people build their “emotional intelligence” skills. By using prompts, reminders, and reports, the app helps the user learn what is causing feelings over time, use strategies, to regulate feelings, and learn how their feelings are affecting decisions, relationships, and performance.



Disability Resources

Accommodations and Resources for Supporting Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities in Distance Learning

Students with mental health disabilities and/or students with disabilities who have behavioral functional limitations are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations necessary to participate in the Job Corps Program—even in Distance Learning activities. A resource, [Accommodations and Resources for Supporting Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities](#), is available on the Job Corps Disability Website. This resource includes several examples of accommodations and strategies to support students with emotional/behavioral needs in online/virtual/distance learning settings.

Understood.Org Self-Regulation Resources

Understood has a dedicated link, [Trouble with Self-Regulation: What You Need to Know](#), that provides a definition of self-regulation, how it works, its relation to sensory processing issues, its relation to ADHD/executive functioning issues, and resources to help students with self-regulation challenges.

Job Corps Disability Website Self-Regulation Resources

The Job Corps Disability Website contains specific [self-regulation resources](#) from a 2020 webinar entitled “Improving Employability Outcomes by Enhancing Self-Regulation for Students with Disabilities.” Those resources include a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, handouts, strategies, Job Corps-specific activities, and links to several other self-regulation resources.

Upcoming Webinars

- DC Orientation: Part 3
- AFR Hot Topics #2
- EBD with Distance Learning
- To register: Go to [WebEx](#)

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