

2. The Importance of Work

Purpose of the Brochure:

Brochure 2 is designed to introduce some of the advantages that working might provide, and to review some of the evidence that work is a realistic possibility for many persons with psychiatric disabilities. It provides encouragement and tips for getting started making decisions about work.

Group Objectives:

- explore advantages of working
- develop a sense of the possibility of working
- identify sources of support
- take some "first steps" together

Suggested Activities:

- Review the advantages of working listed on page 2. Brainstorm about other advantages or benefits one might get from working.
- Present some information about people with psychiatric disabilities who have been able to work and succeed. Include information about both famous and ordinary people and types of jobs.
- Invite a few consumers who are employed to talk to your group about why and how they decided to work or return to work, what they get out of it, and how they knew it was possible.
- Review the "How to Get Started" strategies on page 5. Point out that members of this group are already at an advantage because of having the group as a source of support / information. Give a "homework" assignment to do one thing from the list on page 5 between this group meeting and the next one.
- Provide information about local employment resources. Invite participants to share any information programs, agencies and counselors that have helped them with employment.
- Help each participant identify specific people with whom they could discuss their ideas aspirations about work. These could be family members, peers, counselors, clergy, etc, and should be chosen for their willingness to support the participant in making his/her own choices about work. In addition, group members might choose to rely on one another for such support.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What advantages of working are most important to you? Why?
- Do you think it's possible for you to work? Why/why not? What would make it possible?
- Do you know anyone with a psychiatric disability who works? What kind of work do they do? What are their hours? Did they get the job themselves or have help from an agency / program? Does the employer provide any accommodations for the person based on their disability? (The point of this is to reveal both the possibility of working and the diversity of jobs, arrangements, etc.)
- Do you feel discouraged or hopeful about working? Why? Where / from whom do you get messages about whether or not you could or should work?