



# Understanding behaviours for work

Age range: 11-16

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



# Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
60 mins	<p>By the end of the activity students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the importance of behaving in the right way at work and the impacts of constructive and less constructive behaviour</li> <li>Identify how their everyday behaviour could help them develop good workplace behaviour</li> <li>Understand the importance of body language in a variety of situations and ways to make a good impression</li> <li>Identify what is meant by assertive behaviour, examples of where this is used and ways to respond assertively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding behaviours for work student worksheet</li> <li>Understanding behaviours for work presentation slides</li> </ul>

Remember that you can refer to the guiding principles for establishing a safe learning environment in the Appendix section of the LifeSkills content guide. This includes suggestions for signposting students to further support. The content guide can be downloaded [here](#).



LifeSkills is pleased to have worked with The National Autistic Society to ensure the following lesson plan can be adapted to suit the needs of autistic students.

If teaching a lesson including autistic students, here are some key considerations when undertaking the following activities:

- Give clear explanations of concepts, e.g. assertiveness, fight or flight, and solid examples of these.
- Use concrete language and consider how what you say may be interpreted literally, e.g. the phrase 'practise copying them'
- Reasonable adjustments can be made in the workplace for autistic people, so it's important to be mindful of this when discussing workplace behaviour, for example in terms of eye contact
- Be aware that autistic students can have difficulty recognising or understanding other people's emotions and expressing their own, as well as relating to situations that they haven't been in themselves – visual aids may help with this
- Present abstract concepts in a tangible way as autistic students often struggle with hypothetical thinking ('what if') scenarios – visual aids may help in this instance
- Use closed questions to avoid confusion and be explicit in your instructions



# Session overview (cont'd)

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# Activity one

## Workplace behaviour

### 1. Introduce the idea of workplace behaviour

- Start the session by asking students what they already understand about workplace behaviour:

**How would they define it?**

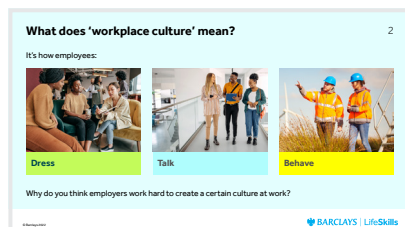
**What examples can they give of the positive and negative behaviours someone might demonstrate in a workplace?**

**Do they know what is meant by a 'workplace culture', and if not, how would they define it?**

**Why is it important to develop an understanding for how to behave appropriately in the workplace?**

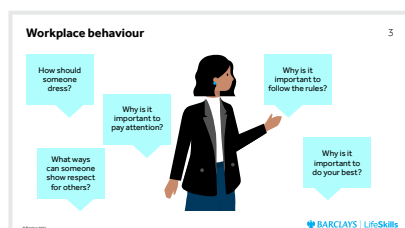
- Ask students to record their thoughts in the form of a mind map or graffiti wall. This will help gauge their starting points and enable them to demonstrate their progress later
- Explain that good workplace behaviour is very important to employers, and that this session will help them to develop a better understanding of how to identify and build the behaviours that are crucial to thriving in the workplace

### 2. Examine what 'workplace culture' means



- Show **slide 2**. Ask if anyone can explain some of the things that make up a workplace's 'culture'
- Discuss why each is important to a workplace's culture. Students can add the ideas discussed to the mind map or graffiti wall started in the earlier activity

### 3. Discuss why workplace behaviour is important



- Show **slide 3**. Ask students to get into groups with two to three people they are comfortable working with. Assign one question from the slide to each group, so at least two groups discuss each question
- Ask students to discuss why an employer might think each issue is really important, and to think of an example of someone showing the right behaviour and an example of the less constructive behaviour, e.g. less constructive behaviour: being late regularly, breaking work policy on internet usage. Good Behaviour: meeting deadlines, respecting others
- Remind students that the skills and interests they gain from everyday experiences can also help develop good workplace behaviour. This could include debating competitions, helping friends and family, playing sports or taking part in social action

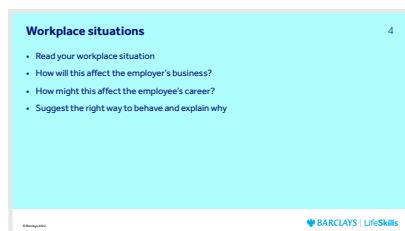
# Activity one

## Workplace behaviour (cont'd)

### 4. Explore the social action films

- To inspire students, why not show the following films which offer inspiration on ways to [Get involved in social action](#) (see the extension activity on the next page for more information on how to develop a social action programme in your school)
- Next, ask students how someone's job prospects might be affected by the way they behave: how will the constructive behaviour help them, and the less constructive behaviour harm their career?
- After a few minutes, help each group share their ideas with the rest of the class. Students can add the ideas discussed to the graffiti wall or mind map

### 5. Think about examples of workplace scenarios



- Give out the **Workplace behaviour scenarios student worksheet** and assign one of the situations on the sheet to each group, so at least two groups can discuss each situation
- Show **slide 4**. Ask students to identify how this behaviour will affect the employer and the employee, and to think of a better way to behave in this situation
- Invite each group to share their ideas and briefly discuss each situation as a whole group, and encourage them to record their ideas on the student sheet

### 6. Students find ways to remember the right way to behave

- Ask students to think of a set of rules or points to remember, that could guide and support someone to behave the right way at work. Groups can make notes on the **Workplace behaviour scenarios student worksheet**

## Extension

Taking part in social action is a great way to gain experiences that will develop good behaviours for the workplace, as well as a range of skills and personality traits that are highly prized by employers. To get students started, why not take a look at the [Social action toolkit](#)

## Activity summary

- Emphasise that positive behaviour is a big factor that employers look for in young recruits, so remembering some key rules to make the right impression is really important
- Remind students that they can also look at certain experiences in their social lives as examples for how to transfer this behaviour to the workplace
- Ask each group to share one idea and then review the suggestions on **slide 5**
- To demonstrate the progress they have made in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding, encourage students to revisit the mind map or graffiti wall created at the start of this activity. They can record and show what they've learnt by creating a checklist, report or presentation to the rest of the class

# Activity two

## Communication and body language

### 1. Introduce the concept and importance of body language

- National Autistic Society guidance:** When discussing the work environment, explain the notion of 'unwritten social rules' as often autistic students will not be aware of these (both in relation to themselves and others). Reading and understanding body language, including eye contact, expressions and tone of voice can be challenging for some autistic people

**Get students thinking about why they think body language is important – in what situations at home, work and school do they think good or bad body language can have an impact?**

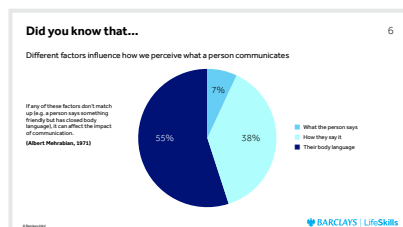
**What examples can they give of appropriate and inappropriate body language?**

**Why might it be particularly important to consider their body language in a work scenario?**

- Ask students to record their thoughts in the form of a mind map or graffiti wall. This will help gauge their starting points and enable them to demonstrate their progress later
- Explain that it's important to consider body language in most situations like a job interview or presentation, as it can have a huge difference on how someone comes across. Illustrate this by showing the [How to show confident body language film](#)

**Also note:** This activity may be inaccessible for autistic students so you may want to consider avoiding it. Autistic people can struggle to read body language and facial expressions. If going ahead with the activity, make sure that you provide very clear explanations of what body language means – break it down into step-by-step explanations. An autistic person may struggle to tell the difference between these different facial expressions. The content on **slide 6** may also risk having a negative emotional effect on students who with self-confidence issues or disabilities, therefore you may wish to avoid showing this slide if continuing the activity with these more vulnerable young people.

### 2. Look at why a mismatch in our communication is uncomfortable



- Show **slide 6** and explain that this shows how important tone of voice and body language are
- The content on **slide 6** may also risk having a negative emotional effect on students with self-confidence issues or disabilities, therefore you may wish to avoid showing this slide if continuing the activity with these more vulnerable young people
- Albert Mehrabian, a professor of psychology, found that when someone communicates to us about their feelings, our impressions depend on the words they use (7%), their tone of voice (38%) and their body language (55%). If any of these factors don't match the others, it can affect the impact of the communication<sup>1</sup>

# Activity two

## Communication and body language (cont'd)

### 3. Role-play how we use body language

- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Role play – Autistic people tend to particularly fear and dislike role play as it can cause a lot of anxiety for many – people feel awkward and judged. And if body language is difficult to understand and identify, then role play will be even more challenging. If doing this activity, then check with potential participants first and avoid placing pressure on autistic students to take part
- Ask students to get into pairs with someone they feel comfortable working with. If you have a more confident group, ask students to role-play different situations to demonstrate some appropriate or inappropriate body language
- If you are working with students who feel uncomfortable acting out these situations, instead get them to come up with character case studies, in their pairs or individually, which reflect different scenarios and how someone might display good or bad body language. Students can present their ideas as a leaflet, report, presentation or storyboard
- If students are struggling for ideas, you could assign them situations such as:
  - Entering an interview
  - Sitting during an interview
  - Listening to some important instructions
  - Asserting yourself when you're not happy about something

### Extension

To apply learnings to a variety of interview scenarios, why not use the [Virtual interview practice](#) tool, which gets students watching model answers to a range of interview questions. They can even record their own answers, if they have access to a webcam and feel comfortable doing this, to practise and perfect their technique.

### Activity summary

- Review each tip and ask students to think of other ways to use the right body language, both to make the right impression and to feel confident in themselves
- To demonstrate the progress they have made in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding, encourage students to revisit the mind map or graffiti wall created at the start of this activity. They can record and show what they've learnt creating a checklist, report or presentation to the rest of the class



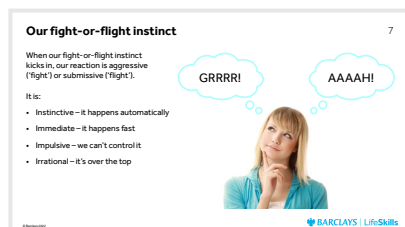
# Activity three

## Assertiveness

### 1. Discuss the situations in which people react strongly

- **National Autistic Society guidance:** This activity may not be appropriate for an autistic person and an alternative would be to look at passive communication, aggressive communication and assertive behaviour. Explain each one and then ask the student to think of a time when they didn't feel their opinions or needs were taken into consideration. Ask them to think about what happened, what they did, what behaviour they demonstrated and if they communicated passively/aggressively. This activity should be used for private reflection or discussed 1:1 with an appropriate adult.
- Explain that this session is going to help students explore some good ways to respond in difficult situations
- Ask students to think of some situations or events when people might react strongly, for example, if someone is accused of cheating in a test or unfairly picks an argument, or if someone pushes into a queue or takes something which you know doesn't belong to them
- Ask students to record their thoughts as a mind map or graffiti wall. This will help gauge their starting points and enable them to demonstrate their progress later
- Ask them not to name names or describe the reaction, but just describe the situation. Help students identify that the person felt challenged or threatened
- Note that the content of this activity may be a sensitive area of discussion for students who find the topic of managing aggressive behaviour and assertiveness particularly emotionally challenging. Make sure you speak to pastoral leads or colleagues to establish any potentially vulnerable students before starting this activity

### 2. Introduce the idea of 'fight or flight'



- Show **slide 7**. Explain that our brains have evolved over millions of years, but there are still some things that happen in our brains that we no longer have much need for
- Long ago, our needs were very basic but we faced real dangers and had to fight for food and safety, or escape quickly. This is why we have the fight-or-flight response. It's controlled by instinct – we react before we can take control of our response

### 3. Discuss what assertiveness is

- Show **slide 8**. Establish that, in the modern world, we rarely face 'real' dangers that require fight or flight. We need a better way to respond, using the parts of our brains that have evolved more recently
- Show **slide 9** and discuss what each statement might mean E.g:
  - Respecting people's rights and your own: might involve not working late repeatedly and discussing with your manager ways to ensure this doesn't keep happening
  - Expressing yourself honestly – might mean speaking up for something you believe in
  - Achieving a win/win outcome – ensuring the solution to a problem is acceptable to all parties
  - Controlling your feelings and actions – not expressing anger at a situation which you feel disgruntled with, but finding a constructive way to complain. This might be in a shop or on the telephone or in the workplace. Ask if anyone can give an example of being assertive (you could refer back to their ideas from step 1) E.g. Having to speak up when you see someone being unfairly treated
  - Having self-worth – this can mean believing in yourself, knowing your strengths and having confidence in your ability to complete a task well or impress an employer



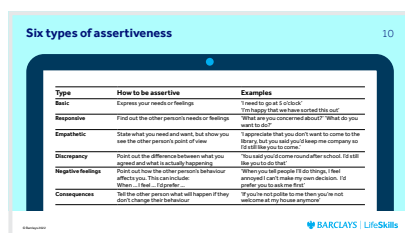
# Activity three

## Assertiveness (cont'd)

### 4. Reflect on when people could be more assertive

- Give out the **What are good ways to be assertive? student worksheet**. Ask students to think of a scenario where someone could be more assertive
- Students may want to create a 'character' so as to distance the activity from their personal experiences, though other students may want to speak from their own perspective. In this instance, it's important to make sure the examples that students give respect class boundaries established in the ground rules
- Examples could include being too submissive (that is, backing down or not standing up to someone – 'flight'), or overreacting and becoming aggressive (that is, going on the attack – 'fight') E.g. A parent asks for help with chores, but they already have plans with friends. Instead of discussing that they already have plans and offering to help later, they either get angry, causing an argument, or cancel plans with their friends and do the chores begrudgingly
- Students should describe this on the sheet. Ask if anyone would like to share an example

### 5. Explore how to be assertive



Type	How to be assertive	Examples
Basic	Express your needs or feelings	'I need to get a 5 o'clock' 'I thought that we have booked this out'
Responsive	Find out the other person's needs or feelings	'What are you concerned about?' 'What do you want to do?'
Empathetic	State what you need and want, but show you care for the other person's point of view	'I appreciate that you don't want to come to the cinema but you said you'd keep me company so I'd still like you to come.'
Discrepancy	Point out the difference between what you agreed and what is actually happening	'You said you'd come round after school. I'd like you to do that.'
Negative feelings	Point out how the other person's behaviour affects you. This can include: When... I feel... I dislike...	'When you tell people I'd do things, I feel annoyed I can't make my own decision. I'd prefer you to just tell me first.'
Consequences	Tell the other person what will happen if they don't change their behaviour	'If you're not polite to me then you're not welcome at my house anymore'

- Show **slide 10**. Explain that there are lots of ways to be assertive. Choose one of the examples identified by students or suggest a situation, such as when a friend has agreed to come over to work on a project together, but they then decide to go to the cinema instead
- Discuss with students how they could respond to the situation assertively. For the example suggested above, they could use the following responses:
  - 'I need your help to complete the project.' [basic assertiveness]
  - 'Don't you want to get this project finished?' [responsive]
  - 'I realise that going to the cinema is more fun, but you did agree to help me with the project last week.' [empathetic]
  - 'You said you'd come round after school. I'd still like you to do that.' [discrepancy]
  - 'When you go back on something that we've planned, it makes me feel frustrated. I'd prefer it if you could stick to our plan and go to the cinema another night.' [negative feelings]
  - 'If you can't keep to our plans, I'll find someone else to work with on the project.' [consequences]

### 6. Find an assertive way of dealing with their fight-or-flight situation

- Ask participants to think about how someone could have used assertiveness in the situation they've described on the **What are good ways to be assertive? student worksheet** and describe this on their sheet
- They could do this on their own or, if they feel comfortable, ask a partner to help them come up with ideas
- Ask if anyone would like to share an example
- If anyone is struggling for examples you could re-use examples from point 1

# Activity three

## Assertiveness (cont'd)

### Extension

- Asking students to speak in turn (you could get them to stand in a line), see if everyone can give one example of being assertive or reacting submissively or aggressively. This could be a statement, a gesture or pose. How many different ideas can they come up with?
- Ask students to suggest situations where they would like to practice being assertive. Remind students to be mindful of ground rules when selecting examples. Help them describe the situation and then using that student or another volunteer, have a go at role-playing it with them

**Note:** If teaching autistic students, we would recommend avoiding this extension activity as they may struggle to “pretend” to act in a way that differs from how they feel. Equally, if you are working with other students who may find this activity personally challenging, we’d suggest avoid this activity. Make sure you speak to the head of year or pastoral lead before going ahead with any of these activities.

### Activity summary

- Show **slide 11**. Remind students that when we are assertive, we can manage our emotions so we can react in a more measured way
- Explain that assertiveness is like a muscle: the more we use it, the stronger it becomes. However, we also need to be careful not to overpower other people with our assertiveness
- To demonstrate the progress they have made in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding, encourage students to revisit the mind map or graffiti wall created at the start of this activity. They can record and show what they’ve learnt creating a checklist, report or presentation to the rest of the class



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# Understanding behaviours for work

## Workplace behaviour scenarios

Read one situation and, in your group, discuss how your behaviour will affect you and your employer, then discuss a better way to behave.

### Situation 1

It's a quiet day in your department and you have nothing to do for an hour. You're hanging around chatting with another young employee. A supervisor from another department sees you and asks you both to come and help her team complete an urgent job. Your friend tells the supervisor it's not your problem and turns his back to her.

### Situation 2

You're sorting customer orders into piles ready for the packing team to wrap and despatch. It's the end of a long day and you're tired. You notice that you've put one too many items in one pile and you've forgotten something for another. It's nearly time to go and you decide you can't be bothered sorting out your mistakes.

### Situation 3

Your supervisor is giving a safety demonstration on how to use some new machinery. It's your birthday and you're in a really good mood. You keep getting texts and tweets from your mates. You've set your phone to vibrate so the supervisor won't hear, but you can't resist checking what everyone's saying to you. You're missing out on some vital advice.

### Situation 4

Your new job comes with a staff uniform and you've had a training session on why dress is important for customers and for hygiene. You think of yourself as a bit of an individual though, so you've decided to wear it your way and add some of your normal jewellery.

### Situation 5

You work in an office and there's a rule that employees can only use personal social media profiles during lunch or outside normal working hours. You've got a large spreadsheet to update by lunchtime but you've spent the morning keeping in touch with friends instead.

**What personal rules would help you behave in the right way at work?**

# Understanding behaviours for work

## What are good ways to be assertive?

Identify potential situations where someone might need to be assertive, e.g. being overcharged when they buy something, purchasing an item doesn't work when they get home, being given food in a restaurant that is not what was ordered. How could you respond assertively to one of these situations?

Identify steps to take/phrases to use/sentence openers to help you be assertive in this situation

What particular skills/techniques could be used so that you stay calm and are able to reach an agreement via a win-win situation?