Module: Building a Foundation for Self Exploration

This module covers the core aspects that influence and make up who one is, including understanding how personal traits influence interactions and decisions.

About CanWork BC

CanWork BC aims to make it easier for youth with disabilities ages to 15 to 30 years old to find and keep employment. There are a series of tools and resources for youth, employers, service providers, educators, and caregivers.

CanAssist at the University of Victoria, with the support of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, wrote the Provincial Employment Strategy for Youth with Disabilities (ESYD). This strategy informed the tools and resources.

The Youth Tool

The CanWork BC youth tool is available as an interactive online platform at portal.canworkbc.ca and through PDF workbooks such as this one. There are five dimensions of content available.

For the full PDF workbook content and accompanying facilitator guides, as well as other CanWork BC tools and resources, go to canworkbc.ca.

Introduction

This module has three sections to help you build your understanding of self exploration. You'll explore:

- Discovering the importance of self-awareness and beginning to explore who you are.
- Recognizing how your traits affect daily experiences, with an understanding that they can be strengths or weaknesses depending on the situation.
- Understanding how your traits impact workplace decisions, experiences, and interactions, and finding environments that support your strengths.

Each section will take around 15-30 minutes to complete, and you're welcome to take breaks in between.

Each section has activities that connect self exploration to your own life to make sure this is useful for you. Be prepared to think about and record your answers in whatever way works best. That could be writing your answers in this workbook or using a different format that works for you like voice recording or typing in a notes app.

At the end of the module, you'll have the chance to put what you've learned into practice with reflection questions. Let's get started!

Section 1: Building an Understanding of Self

Knowing yourself is a key step in shaping your personal and professional growth. Self-awareness helps you understand your strengths, values, and areas for improvement, making it easier to confidently navigate life's choices.

In this section, we'll cover:

- How self exploration helps you understand different aspects of yourself.
- Ways to begin self exploration and learn more about who you are.

By the end, you will have a better understanding of yourself, empowering you to make informed decisions and move forward with clarity.

Engage and Explore

Getting to Know Yourself

Understanding yourself is an exciting journey! Taking small steps toward learning more about yourself can help you make better choices, grow in confidence, and improve your relationships.

When you're unsure of yourself, it can be hard to know what you truly want, and you might end up just following others or going with the flow.

Let's now explore the key aspects that shape who you are and influence your decisions. This will guide you in making choices that align with your true self.

1. Personality

Personality is the mix of behaviors, feelings, and traits that make you who you are. It affects how you handle tasks and interact with others. Knowing your personality helps you pick jobs that fit your natural style of working, communicating, and

solving problems. This makes it easier for you to do well in those roles.

2. **Strengths and weaknesses**

    These are the things you're good at and the areas where you might struggle. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses helps you find jobs that match your strengths and improve areas where you need work. It also shows you where you can grow and develop.

3. **Interests and passions**

    These are the things you love doing and care about most. Knowing your interests helps you see possible career paths and keeps you motivated and engaged in your work.

4. **Values and beliefs**

    Values and beliefs are the ideas and principles that guide your decisions and reflect what's important to you. Knowing your values helps you make career choices that match your ethics and morals so you can find fulfillment and meaning in your work.

5. **Identity**

    Your identity is how you see yourself in relation to the world, including your qualities, traits, and connections to others. Your identity influences how you interact with people, make choices, and plan your career. It helps you form real connections and find jobs that align with who you are.

6. **Community**

   Community refers to groups or places where you feel a sense of belonging. Knowing your community helps shape your work experiences and supports your professional relationships and networks.

7. **Impact and contribution**

   This is about the difference you make in your communities based on who you are. Understanding how you can help others gives you a sense of purpose and fulfillment in your work.

Ways to Start Understanding Yourself

Self-awareness is a journey, not something you achieve all at once. It's an ongoing process. Here are some tips to help you start building your self-awareness:

- **Regular reflection**
  Set aside time each week or month to think about your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Ask yourself, "What went well this week? What could I do better?

- **Mindfulness**
  Mindfulness is about focusing on what's happening right now without judging it. It helps you notice your thoughts and feelings so you can understand how to react calmly in different situations.

- **Try new things**
  Step out of your comfort zone to discover new things about yourself. Try new activities, take on different roles, or meet new people to see how you handle unfamiliar situations.

- **Ask for feedback**
  Sometimes, other people notice things about you that you may not see. Ask friends, family, or coworkers for feedback on your strengths and things you can improve.

- **Keep a journal**
  Write down your thoughts and feelings often to understand yourself better.

Now that you've taken your first step in understanding yourself, it's time to reflect on what you've learned and how it can shape your growth. Click to the next page to apply what you have learned into your life!

Make it Personal

Take One Step Toward Knowing Yourself

Now that you've learned about the first steps to knowing yourself, let's take action! This activity is all about exploring your strengths, weaknesses, and how you think and feel.

Instructions:

- **Look at the suggested actions in the table below.** Decide which one you would like to try.

- **Complete the action.** Take your time, this is about starting the process, so there's no rush.

- **Reflect on what you learned using the questions below.** You can write your answers in the text boxes, or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

1. Suggested actions:

Keeping a journal
Start a journal to reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Write whenever you feel inspired, without worrying about a set schedule. As you reflect, consider how you feel today, what went well, what you could have done better, and what you've learned from your experiences.
Mindfulness
Take a few minutes in a quiet place to practice mindfulness. Focus on the present moment. Notice your thoughts, feelings,

and physical sensations without judging them. This will help you become more aware of your emotions and reactions.
Try something new
Choose something new to try, whether it's a new activity you've never done, taking on a new responsibility, or meeting new people through a group or event. Pay attention to your feelings during the experience and observe how you handle the situation.
Ask for feedback
Ask a trusted person, such as a friend, family, or coworker, for feedback on something you're doing well and one thing you could improve. Be open to their thoughts and see how it can help you grow.

2. Reflective questions:

What did you learn about yourself?

[blank response box]

How did you feel during the task?

[blank response box]

Did you find anything challenging or surprising?

[blank response box]

How will this experience help you grow?

Section 2: Exploring the Role of Personal Qualities

Knowing your personal qualities is a key part of understanding how you interact with the world around you. Personal qualities are the characteristics and traits that shape who you are, such as being patient, creative, or confident. These qualities are important in your daily life, shaping how you handle situations and make decisions.

In this section, we'll cover:

- How your personal qualities can change depending on different situations.

- How self-awareness helps you recognize when a quality can be a strength or a weakness.

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of how your personal qualities shape your actions and decisions. This will help you use them more effectively in personal and professional situations.

Engage and Explore

What Are Personal Qualities?

Personal qualities are the traits or characteristics that shape you and your behaviour. They reflect your natural tendencies, values, and actions, like being organized, outgoing, empathetic, or

resilient. Unlike skills, which can be learned, personal qualities are often part of your core self.

However, personal qualities are dynamic and they can change depending on the situation. What works well in one context might not work as well in another. Being aware of this helps you use your qualities more effectively.

Using Personal Qualities in Everyday Life

You use your personal qualities every day in different situations, like solving problems, interacting with others, and making decisions. These qualities guide your actions and how you approach different situations. Here's how some qualities might show up in your life:

Organized	If you're organized, you might make detailed plans or keep a to-do list to stay on track.
Creative	If you're creative, you might think of unique solutions when faced with a challenge or come up with new ideas to improve things.
Empathetic	If you're empathetic, you might listen carefully to others and offer support when they're going through a tough time.

While these qualities help you in many situations, their

effectiveness depends on the context. A quality that works well in one scenario might not be as helpful in another.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Different Situations

Personal qualities can be strengths or weaknesses, depending on the situation. What's important is being aware of how your qualities affect your actions and knowing when to adjust them. Here are some examples:

- **Detail-oriented**
  Paying attention to details is helpful in tasks that need accuracy. But in busy situations, focusing too much on details can slow you down.

- **Confidence**
  Confidence is good when leading a team or sharing ideas. But if you're too confident, it might come off as dominating and ignore others' thoughts.

- **Flexibility**
  Being flexible helps when things change, and you need to adapt. But if you're too flexible, it can be hard to say "no" or set boundaries, which can lead to burnout.

Tips for Using Your Personal Qualities

To make the most of your personal qualities, try these steps:

- **Observe your actions**

Pay attention to how you use your qualities in different situations. Do they help you, or are they holding you back? This self-reflection can give you valuable insights.

- **Ask for feedback**
Sometimes, it's hard to see our own qualities clearly. Asking friends, family, or coworkers for feedback can help you understand how others see you and how your qualities affect your interactions.

- **Be adaptable**
Your qualities can change. You can learn to adjust how you use them depending on the situation. Being adaptable will help you face challenges more easily.

By becoming more aware of how you use your personal qualities, you can take advantage of your strengths and adjust when necessary. Now that you have a better understanding, check out the next activity to put what you've learned into practice!

Make it Personal

Your Traits in Action

Now that we've explored the idea of personal qualities and how they can be strengths or weaknesses depending on the context, let's dive into reflecting on your own traits!

Instructions:

- **Read each situation below**. Think about how you would react in the example.

- **Circle up to three personal qualities** that best describe you or write your own.

- **Fill in the table with the three traits for each situation**. By knowing which traits you use most, you can better recognize when they help you and when they might need adjusting.

Tip: If you're finding it difficult, feel free to ask family or friends for their perspective on how they see you in these scenarios.

Team-working: When working on a team with others, you would describe yourself as... (circle up to three or write your own)

For example, you are working on a group project at school to create a presentation. How do you describe your approach to working and problem-solving with others?

Thankful	Supportive	Firm	Patient
Helpful	Forgiving	Driven	Kind

Trusting	Competitive	Confrontational	Direct
Considerate	Confident	Outspoken	Determined

Task management: When managing your personal plans and tasks, you would describe yourself as… (circle up to three or write your own)

For example, you have several homework assignments and a part-time job. How do you describe your approach to making sure everything gets done?

Organized	Hardworking	Hardworking	Forgetful
Goal-oriented	Disciplined	Disciplined	Easygoing
Reliable	Detail-oriented	Detail-oriented	Flexible
Efficient	Responsible	Responsible	Adaptable

Emotional responses: When responding to your own or another person's emotions, you would describe yourself as... (circle up to three or write your own)

For example, your friend is upset after a fight with someone else and wants to talk about it. How would you describe your approach to listening to their feelings about it?

Empathetic	Understanding	Protective	Nurturing
Compassionate	Caring	Warm	Calm
Sympathetic	Encouraging	Affectionate	Self-controlled
Supportive	Sensitive	Generous	Avoidant

Meeting new people: When meeting new people, you would describe yourself as... (circle up to three or write your own)

For example, you're at a new school or job and don't know anyone. How do you describe your approach to making new friends?

Outgoing	Shy	Polite	Charming

Friendly	Reserved	Approachable	Charismatic
Sociable	Quiet	Warm	Confident
Talkative	Cautious	Inviting	Nervous

Responding to conflict: When handling conflicts, you would describe yourself as... (circle up to three or write your own)

For example, you're disagreeing with a classmate or colleague over how to complete a project. How would you describe your approach to resolving it?

Calm	Open-minded	Passive	Respectful
Patient	Flexible	Confident	Forgiving
Diplomatic	Stubborn	Understanding	Collaborative
Tactful	Aggressive	Fair	Resilient

Fill in the table with the traits you circled or wrote for each situation:

Situation	Trait	Trait	Trait
Team-working			
Task management			
Emotional responses			
Meeting new people			
Responding to conflict			

Now that you've completed the activity, you have a better idea of how your personal qualities show up in different situations. Pay attention to when your traits help you and when they might need to

be changed. The more you understand how your qualities work, the better you can use them in the right way and adjust when needed.

Section 3: Applying Self-Understanding to Employment

Understanding yourself is an important part of figuring out how to succeed in the workplace. Your personal qualities affect how you interact with others and make decisions at work. This section will help you connect what you know about yourself to your job journey.

In this section, we'll cover:

- How your personal traits impact your work experiences and relationships.
- How knowing your strengths and weaknesses can guide your decisions at work.
- Why it's important to look for work environments where your qualities are valued and supported.

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of how to use your personal qualities to make smarter decisions and find the right workplace for you.

Engage and Explore

How Personal Traits Influence Work

Your traits play a big role in how you experience work. Here are some examples of how different qualities can affect workplace situations:

Communication style	If you enjoy talking to others or are a good listener, you might thrive in team-based or customer-focused roles. For example, a patient listener could succeed in customer service or support roles.
Problem-solving	If you're creative or enjoy solving problems, you may do well in roles that require thinking of new solutions. For example, an innovative person could succeed in marketing, design, or strategic planning.
Emotional response	Your emotional traits can affect how you handle stress or challenges at work. For example, someone who stays calm and resilient in tough situations may perform well in high-pressure jobs like emergency services or fast-food restaurants.

How Self-Awareness Affects Decision-Making

Your personality traits influence how you make decisions at work. Depending on your traits, you may have different decision-making styles. Here are a few examples:

- **Detail-oriented thinkers**
  If you like to consider all the details before making a choice, you may take more time. This is helpful for jobs that need careful planning. For example, a detail-oriented person may do well in finance or research, where careful decisions are needed.

- **Quick decision-makers**
  If you prefer making fast decisions, you might enjoy jobs that need quick thinking, like emergency services or fast-paced industries. For example, a person who makes quick decisions could thrive in project management or event planning, where speed is important.

How Personal Traits Affect Interactions

Your traits also impact how you get along with others at work. Knowing your style can help you build better relationships with your coworkers. Here are two examples:

Team players	Independent workers
If you're naturally caring and like working with others, you might do well in jobs focused on teamwork and helping people. For example, someone who enjoys working with others might be a great fit in roles like customer service or social work, where empathy and good communication are important.	If you like working alone and focusing on tasks by yourself, you might be better suited to jobs where you can work more independently. For example, a person who enjoys working alone might thrive in jobs like writing, research, or software development, where you don't need constant interaction with others.

Finding Jobs Based on Your Personal Traits

Finding jobs that align with your strengths is important, but you can also explore roles that push you to grow. Here's how to look for both:

- **Understand the company culture**
  Research whether a company's values and work culture fit your personality. If you prefer teamwork, look for companies that focus on team collaboration and a supportive environment.

- **Roles that fit your strengths**
  Look for jobs that make the most of your abilities. For example, if you're detail-oriented, administration or project management roles could be a good match. Or if you enjoy problem-solving, jobs like IT support or troubleshooting could be a good fit.

- **Roles that help you grow**
  Taking on new challenges can help you learn and build confidence. For example, if you're good at problem-solving but want to improve communication, a customer support or team-based job can help you practice speaking up.

Helpful tips:

- **Ask for feedback:** Getting regular feedback helps you understand how your traits affect your work and how to improve. Ask your boss or coworkers for tips on using your strengths better.

- **Keep growing:** Your traits and skills may change, so keep reflecting on how to improve.

- **Be authentic:** Being yourself at work helps you connect with coworkers and create a positive environment where you can succeed.

By applying your self-awareness at work, you can make better decisions, build stronger relationships with coworkers, and find a job that lets your personal qualities shine.

Make it Personal

Personal Traits Reflection Journal

Take a moment to reflect on your personal traits and how they influence your work. Understanding your strengths and areas for growth can help you make more informed decisions about your career path.

Instructions:

- **Read through each example below.** Use the prompts to guide your thinking.

- **Write your response, action and reflection.** You can write your responses below, in a notes app, or another digital format that works for you to refer to later.

Strengths

Think about your traits that help you succeed in your work. These could be skills, behaviors, or personal qualities that have helped you perform well. Reflect on times when you have been proud of your work or received positive feedback.

Prompt: *What are your strengths? Are you a good listener? Do you enjoy talking to others, solving problems, or staying calm in stressful situations?*

Your response:

Action to take: *How could you use this trait in your current or future work? For example, if you're good at problem-solving, you could take on more challenging projects that require creative solutions.*

Your action:

Areas to Grow

Everyone has areas where they can improve. Recognizing where you want to grow can help you focus on developing those traits. Think about traits you feel less confident about or challenges you've faced.

Prompt: *Are there traits you feel less confident about, such as speaking up in meetings, adapting to change, or managing time effectively?*

Your response:

Action to take: *How can you improve these areas in your current or future work? For example, set a goal to practice speaking up in group settings to improve communication.*

Your action:

How Your Traits Impact Your Career Goals

Now, think about how your strengths and areas for growth might influence the type of job you want and the work environment that suits you best.

Example reflection:

Strengths: *"If I am good at communication and teamwork, I can do well in customer service roles where I connect with others."*

Areas to grow: *"If I want to improve my emotional resilience, I might choose a role where I can practice handling stress, like customer support."*

Your Reflection:

Strengths:

Areas to grow:

Reflect and Connect

Great work! We've covered a lot in this module including:

- Understanding the factors that shape who you are and how to start exploring them.
- Identifying how your personal qualities impact your job experiences and interactions.
- Applying self-understanding to choose careers that align with your values and skills.

Take a moment to think about the questions below and how they relate to your experiences. Think of this as a reflective journal for yourself, which you can refer to later.

Happy reflecting!

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Are there situations where your strengths could become weaknesses?

Which trait are you most confident in, and how does it affect your work decisions?

What trait would you like to focus on developing further? And how can it help your career?

Keep Going

There is so much more to learn! Access the full CanWork BC content and learn more about the program at **canworkbc.ca.**

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