

Module: Connecting Wellness to Employment

This module covers maintaining wellbeing throughout the employment journey, including strategies for fostering work-life balance, managing work related stress, and building resilience.

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.

Additional Resources

Throughout this workbook, we'll be discussing wellness supports, however, if you're feeling significantly down, overwhelmed, or in need of immediate support, please remember to reach out for help.

Available resources include:

- **Kids Help Phone:** The leading phone and online professional counselling service for young people in Canada not just for kids. It's free, anonymous, and confidential.
 - o Call for immediate support: 1-800-668-6868
 - o Chat online: kidshelpphone.ca
- **Crisis Support:** Immediate support for people feeling suicidal or concerned about someone who might be suicidal.
 - o Call: 1-800-784-2433.
 - Text or call: 9-8-8.
 - o Visit: <u>suicideprevention.ca/need-help/</u>
 - For maps of crisis support in your area visit:
 <u>crisislines.bc.ca/mapcrisis-lines</u>
- Mental Health Resources: Find additional mental health resources and support through these organizations.
 - helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca/wellbeing/healthyliving/mindfulness
 - healthlinkbc.ca/mental-health-substance-use/mentalhealth/mental-health-supports-and-resources
 - Canadian Mental Health Association <u>cmha.ca/</u>
 - Mental Health Commission of Canada -<u>mentalhealthcommission.ca/</u>

Introduction

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

- Finding a healthy work-life balance that supports both your career and personal life.
- Effective strategies for navigating work stress so you can maintain focus and well-being.
- Techniques to enhance job satisfaction and stay motivated in your role.

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 wellness 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: Maintaining Work-Life Balance

Balance is a key part of wellness. Whether you're looking for work, already working, or not employed yet, balancing aspects of employment with other areas of your life is important to your overall well-being.

We're going to start exploring wellness and work by focussing on work-life balance. Work-life balance means making time for your career and personal life in a way that helps you feel healthy, energized, and focused. It allows you to stay productive at work while also taking care of yourself and enjoying your personal time.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Understanding the importance of work-life balance.
- Develop strategies for work-life balance in your life.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of what work-life balance looks like for you and how to maintain it no matter where you are in your employment journey.

Engage and Explore

What is Work-Life Balance?

Work-life balance refers to how you manage your time and energy between your employment journey, whether that be professional

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learning, job searching, or working, and the other important areas of your life, such as health, relationships, hobbies, and rest. Having a good balance supports you to do well in your employment journey but also take time to recharge and focus on things that matter to you outside of work.

Here are some examples of what work-life balance can look like:

- A student searching for a job might balance their time between applications, study, and personal time for hobbies or self-care.
- Someone already employed may create a balance by setting boundaries between work hours and personal time, like not checking work emails after hours.
- A person not currently employed might focus on activities that help with personal growth and wellness while preparing for future opportunities.

As you can see, work-life balance is important because it helps reduce stress and keeps you motivated. Without good balance we may not have enough time to do things we enjoy or rest, or we may become stressed, anxious, or 'burnt out' in our employment journey.

Remember

'Burnt out' is where you have little to no motivation and feel tired and stressed to the point of exhaustion. It's important to balance work with rest and things you enjoy, like hobbies or spending time with friends and family.

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Your Work-life balance

Work-life balance is the ability to manage your personal life and employment or job-related responsibilities in a way that allows you to feel fulfilled and not overwhelmed.

Consider the following areas below and use the questions to reflect on how well you balance them with your work, job search, or employment commitments. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Work, job search, or employment learning

Question: What does a good balance look like for you? Do you feel like you're spending enough time on this area?

 Example: I work part-time, and my hours change, so some weeks I feel like I spend a good amount of time on work, and other weeks I feel like I spend too much, and it takes over my life.

Physical health

Question: What does a good balance look like for you? Do you feel like you're spending enough time on this area?

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 Example: I try to exercise three times a week, but sometimes I feel too tired from work and don't do it. I could work on better balance here.
Mental health
Question: What does a good balance look like for you? Do you feel like you're spending enough time on this area?
• Example: I really like my job, and that supports my mental health. I feel like I have a good work-life balance this way!

Social or family time

Question: What does a good balance look like for you? Do you feel like you're spending enough time on this area?

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• Example: I've been stressed about work lately, and when I spend time with friends or family, I've often been thinking about work at the same time. I could work on having a better balance here.
Hobbies or free time
Question: What does a good balance look like for you? Do you feel like you're spending enough time on this area?
• Example: I love reading and drawing, but I've been staying at work late and I haven't had much free time for these hobbies.

Rest and sleep

Question: What does a good balance look like for you? Do you feel like you're spending enough time on this area?

•	• Example: I make sure to get eight hours of sleep almost every night. I just started a job where my shift starts at the same tim each day, which has really helped me balance work with rest.				

Great work! Now that you've explored what work-life balance is and why it's important, continue to the next page to build strategies to maintain it in your own life.

Make it Personal

Creating Your Balance

No matter where you are in your employment journey, creating balance can help you stay focused and avoid feeling overwhelmed, which is important for your well-being. We're going to work on building some strategies to balance work with other areas of your life.

Consider the strategies below and think about a way you could use the strategy in your own life. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Strategy 1: Set boundaries

- When searching for a job, set limits on how much time you spend applying for jobs each day to avoid burnout. For example, you might decide to spend two hours in the morning on job applications and leave the rest of the day for other activities or things you need to get done.
- When you have a job, set clear boundaries for when you are working and when you are off work. For example, try not to check work messages or emails during your personal time.

Question: Can you think of other examples of how you could set boundaries?
Question: What could setting boundaries look like in your own life?

Strategy 2: Prioritize self-care

- Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day. Even small breaks can help you recharge. For example, take a five-minute stretch break when you're looking for a job or try and get outside for some fresh air on your breaks at work.
- Make sure you have enough time in your schedule for things you enjoy, such as reading, walking, or spending time with friends.

Question: Can you think of other examples of how you could prioritize self-care?	
Question: What could prioritizing self-care look like in your own life?	

Strategy 3: Use time blocks

- Try dividing your day into blocks of time for different activities. For example, you could block off time in the morning for job applications, then use the afternoon for personal activities like exercise or hanging out with friends.
- Make sure to block time for rest and sleep so you have time to reset.

Question: Can you think of other examples of how you could use time blocking?

Question: What could using time blocking look like in your own life?

Strategy 4: Stay flexible

Things won't always go according to plan, and that's okay! Stay
flexible with your schedule and adjust when needed. For
example, if you have to work late or deal with unexpected
situations, try to adjust your personal time the next day to
make up for it.

Question: Can you think of other examples of how you could stay flexible?
uestion: What would staying flexible look like in your own life?

Strategy 5: Set realistic expectations

- Be kind to yourself and set achievable goals each day. For example, instead of expecting to apply to five jobs a day, start with one or two and build from there.
- Acknowledge that balancing work and personal life takes time.
 Don't be too hard on yourself if things don't always go as planned and adapt your expectations if they aren't working.

Question: Can you think of other examples of how you could set realistic expectations?				
uestion: What would setting realistic expectations look like in our own life?				

Great job exploring strategies to support your work-life balance! Remember that achieving balance isn't always perfect, and you'll need to work on it over time. It's helpful to save the strategies you think will work best for you in a place where you can easily access them and revisit them whenever you need a reminder.

Section 2: Managing Employment Stress

Employment stress is common, and it can have a big impact on your wellness. Learning employment skills, searching for work, or navigating a job all have different aspects that can become very stressful. It's important to have strategies to manage this stress and maintain your well-being.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Understanding the impact of work stress on your wellness.
- Building strategies for managing stress and maintaining wellbeing at work.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of how to manage employment stress for your well-being.

Engage and Explore

Understanding Work Stress

Employment stress impacts your overall well-being. Things like searching for jobs, writing resumes, or interviewing for positions are stressful for many people. At work, some aspects can be stressful, such as managing deadlines, pressure to perform in your role, or difficulties with coworkers. While experiencing some stress is normal, it can sometimes become too much and feel overwhelming. Just like a lack of work-life balance, work stress can

take a toll on our overall well-being and lead to things like anxiety or burnout. The good news is we can manage employment stress and protect our well-being if we have the right strategies.

What does work stress look like?

Let's get building these strategies! Read the following two scenarios to explore what work stress looks like:

Scenario 1: Work stress

Alex has been working at a local store for a few months now. Lately, they've been feeling overwhelmed because their manager keeps asking them to do extra tasks on top of their regular duties.

They feel like they can't keep up and have found their mind has started feeling like it's always racing. They've started having trouble sleeping and are feeling anxious before every shift. The stress has been piling up and Alex is starting to feel physically exhausted, has trouble concentrating, and is even beginning to dread going to work.

All this stress is really starting to affect their health and overall happiness.

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Scenario 2: Job search stress

Jordan has been looking for a job for a few weeks but hasn't had much luck. He's spent hours each day applying to different positions but has rarely heard back. He feels more discouraged with each rejection email, and he's started doubting his abilities.

The constant stress of waiting for responses is taking a toll on his mental health. Jordan's feeling stuck and anxious about his future and is starting to question if he'll ever find a job that fits his needs.

Scenario 3: Learning about employment

Ari has never worked before and starting to think about getting a job. She's started a course about building employment skills and is overwhelmed by the things she feels like she needs to know. The course covers everything from resumes to job interviews to filing taxes for the first time, and Ari is feeling like she's really behind. Whenever she doesn't understand a concept, she feels discouraged and her stress grows.

She's getting increasingly worried about failing before she even starts! Her stress is making it hard to focus and feel motivated. Ari is starting to feel pretty anxious about the whole process of finding a job and is wondering if she will ever be able to work at all.

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Great work! Now, take a moment to think if you can you relate to any of the scenarios. Consider the questions below and write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Question: Have there been times where you've felt stress from employment?				
Question: When were they and what was causing you stress?				

Question: What did this stress feel like and how did it affect you?						

How can we manage work stress?

Now that we've done some work to understand employment-related stress, our next step is to build some strategies to manage it. Explore the strategies in the chart below to learn more about different stress management techniques and how you can use them.

Strategy	How it helps	How to use it	
Deep breathing techniques Feeling anxious at work or during a job search? Deep breathing can	When you're stressed, your body's fight-or-flight response is activated. Deep breathing can help get you out of this, bringing your focus	Try breathing in slowly for four counts, holding for four counts, and exhaling for four counts. Repeat this several times to	

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help you calm your mind and reduce this stress.	back and calming your nerves.	reduce stress and regain focus.
Break tasks into smaller steps Big tasks can feel overwhelming. Breaking them down into smaller steps can make them more manageable.	By dividing a larger task into smaller, more manageable steps, you can reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.	Focus on completing one small task at a time and celebrating each accomplishment. This approach helps build momentum and reduces stress. Small wins lead to big results over time!
Time management schedules Scheduling your time to manage it effectively can reduce stress by	By organizing your day and setting clear boundaries, you can minimize stress and feel more in control.	Create a schedule that prioritizes tasks based on deadlines or importance. Use tools like calendars or apps to track your time.

giving you more control over your tasks.			
Self-care practices Taking time for self-care is important for your well-being, especially when you're dealing with stress.	Taking breaks during work or job search activities helps prevent burnout and maintain mental and physical health.	Schedule time or use quick breaks to engage in activities that recharge you, whether it's taking a walk, reading, or spending time with friends.	
Reach out for support If work or job search stress is too much, don't hesitate to ask for help.	you feel less isolated and more understood. Those you trust can also often share perspectives and		

		support like a counselor to help you manage stress effectively.
Practice mindfulness Being mindful means focusing on the present moment rather than worrying about the past or future.	Mindfulness helps you stay focused, calm, and grounded. It can help you manage stress by staying present in the moment, preventing you from getting carried away with the stress.	Practice mindfulness by paying attention to your thoughts, body sensations, and feelings in the moment. Use simple techniques like noticing your breath or observing your surroundings.

Great work! You've explored what work is, what it looks like, and some strategies to manage it. Let's keep moving and create a personalized plan for dealing with work stress when it comes up. Continue to the next page to get started.

Make it Personal

Create Your Own Work Stress Toolkit

Let's put what we covered to use and practice managing work stress. The activity below is a guide for identifying if you feel too stressed from work. It includes strategies to help you build your own work stress toolkit.

To start, think of a time you felt stressed because of an employment situation. This could be a situation related to learning about work, applying for a job, or while working at a job. Got your scenario? Awesome! Follow the steps below to practice. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Identifying Work Stress

The first step for managing stress is acknowledging it.
 Think about your scenario and notice how you feel by considering...

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Physical symptoms
Do you feel unusually tired or drained? Are you having headaches or do you notice your muscles are tight?
Mental symptoms
Are you finding it hard to focus? Are you caught in a cycle of negative thoughts or self-talk?

	Your feelings
	Are you irritable? Do you feel like work or life is too much? Are you constantly worried about deadlines or performance?
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	Your behaviours
	Are you avoiding tasks or delaying work? Are you withdrawing from coworkers or turning to unhealthy habits?

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2	2. Think about what your work-life balance looks like during this scenario by considering
	Your boundaries
	What does your balance between work and other aspects of life look like? Is your work impacting your personal time and making it hard to relax?
	Personal time
	Do you feel like you're neglecting your hobbies, rest, or social time because of work? Do you feel like you're always thinking about work?

3. Think about how you're handling the employment side things. Notice any changes in your performance by considering				
Productivity				
Are you finding it hard to meet deadlines? Or not meeting your usual standards?				
Mistakes				
Are you making more errors than you usually do?				

Engagement Are you feeling disconnected from your work, coworkers, or where you work?
4. Now that you've explored the stress, identify what's causing it. If you need help, consider things like
How you've been feeling each day
What's been happening that might have caused the stress?

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Patterns
What has been stressful in the past? Has this been causing you stress again?

5. Your final step is to make a plan! Think about the strategies in your toolkit (go back to the previous part if you need to) and identify which one's you could use to help manage the stress you feel in this situation by considering...

Which strategies would be most helpful for you in the situation?

Are there any you've used before? Are there any you know don't work?

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l	How would you	use the strategy?
	What steps would	l you take?

Great work making a plan to manage work stress! It's a good idea to keep these steps somewhere you know you can find them. Use them next time you're experiencing stress at work.

Section 3: Prioritizing Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is key to how we experience our work. It affects how we feel about our job and our overall well-being. Whether you're already working at a job, planning to start, or just building employment skills, understanding and building strategies to foster job satisfaction is important.

In this section, we'll cover:

- What job satisfaction is and why it's important.
- Signs to tell if you're satisfied or not with your job.
- Strategies for fostering job satisfaction.

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of what affects your job satisfaction and how to take steps to ensure your work is supporting your wellness.

Engage and Explore

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction isn't just about being happy. It's about feeling purposeful and motivated in what you do so enjoy your work. Doing work you enjoy contributes positively to your well-being.

When you're satisfied at work:

• You're more motivated to go to work.

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- You're more likely to feel good about yourself and your contributions.
- Your overall health can improve.
- You're more engaged and productive.

Read the scenario below and consider the questions to explore the benefits of being satisfied with your work. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Scenario

Amina started a job at a call centre, answering customer questions. At first, Amina was nervous about starting work and learning a new role, but after a few weeks, she began to feel excited. She liked that the work was repetitive, so she knew what to expect, but that each call was different, which kept things interesting.

Amina focused on what she could do to help each customer and felt a sense of purpose whenever she could solve their problems. She looked forward to going to work and felt motivated to do her best.

As she worked, Amina noticed she was learning and improving her problem-solving skills, confidence, and ability to manage stress. This positive attitude helped her stay engaged and productive. She also noticed that her satisfaction at work had a ripple effect outside of work and she felt more positive about life in general.

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Amina made friends with some of her coworkers, developed a sense of community at work, and realized it improved her mental health.

Question: What things helped Amina find purpose and motivation at work?					
Question: How did feeling satisfied at work impact other areas of Amina's life?					

Now let's explore what it can look like when you don't have a sense of job satisfaction. If you're not satisfied at work:

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- You're more likely to feel burnt out.
- You may become dissatisfied with other areas of your life.
- You're likely to feel stressed or even anxious a lot of the time.
- You might experience physical and mental health challenges.

Read the scenario below and consider the questions to explore the risks of not feeling satisfied with your work. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Scenario

Taylor started a job at a call centre, answering customer questions. At first, Taylor was excited about earning money and starting work, but after a few weeks, he began to feel drained. The work felt repetitive. The calls were often also stressful as many customers were upset or rude. Taylor found it hard to stay motivated and struggled to go to work each day.

He didn't feel like his work made any difference and it was affecting his confidence. He often felt frustrated and anxious during his shifts and even found it hard to get a good sleep afterward. Taylor realized he wasn't excited about the work he was doing, and he felt disconnected from it.

Over time, this dissatisfaction started to affect other parts of his life. He felt stressed and down, and it even impacted his relationships and mental health.

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Question: What things caused Taylor to feel a lack of purpose and motivation at work?					
Question: Taylor's lif	: How did feel e?	ing unsatis	sfied at wor	k impact ot	her areas of

Let's Practice

Let's get started by reflecting on your own experiences.

Start by identifying a time you felt satisfied with a job. If you haven't had a job, you could think about a time you felt satisfied with what you were doing at school. Now consider these questions and write

Question: What things made you feel satisfied?
works for you.
your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that

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Question: [Do you think this affected other areas of your life? What
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Question: Did this affect your overall well-being? In what ways?

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haver with v	n't had a job, you what you were d	you did not feel satisfied with a job. If you a could think about a time you felt unsatisfied oing at school. Now consider these questions ers below or in a notes app or another digital you.
Ques	tion: What thing	gs made you feel unsatisfied?

Question: Do you think this affected other areas of your life? What were they?

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Ques	tion: Did this aff	ect your overall well-being? In what ways?

Make it Personal

Taking Control of Your Job Satisfaction

As you saw before, sometimes, we love what we do and are satisfied with our jobs, but other times we don't love it. Not every job is going to be your dream job, and that's okay! Wherever you're at, there are ways to improve your job satisfaction by making small changes to frame your work to match your interests, passions, and skills so you can feel more satisfied overall.

Look at the strategies below that you can use to increase job satisfaction. If you can, think of an example of what this could look like for you in the workplace. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Strategy

1. Identify the tasks or aspects of your job that you enjoy and see if you can find ways to do more of them.

Every job has parts we enjoy more than others. By focusing on the aspects that interest you and discussing them with your manager or team, you may be able to adjust your role to include more of what you love.

• Example: Sarah works in an office and she's mainly responsible for administrative tasks such as organizing files and scheduling meetings. While she finds the paperwork repetitive, she loves planning events and interacting with clients. She talks to her manager about taking on more event planning responsibilities and soon begins organizing team-building activities. This change helps Sarah feel more engaged and motivated at work.

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2. Look for opportunities to build or improve the skills you're passionate about.

Even if your job isn't your dream job, you can find ways to grow by focusing on skills that align with your future goals. Small adjustments to how you approach your tasks can help you stay motivated while also preparing for future opportunities.

• Example: Chris works as a landscaping assistant, mainly handling tasks such as mowing lawns, pulling weeds, and general clean-up. While the work is fine Chris is feeling a bit stuck. It's not his dream job and one day he wants to become an architect. Chris decides to connect his job to his passion for architecture. He starts paying attention to the design aspects of the work, like arranging shrubs and plants in ways that complement a building. He uses this as an opportunity to learn more about architecture and develop skills related to his dream job.

3. Adjust how you approach your tasks to make them more enjoyable.

Some work tasks may feel repetitive or boring, but a small shift in how you approach them can make them more interesting. Finding small ways to personalize your work can increase your enjoyment and motivation.

•	Example: Lily works in customer service, and although taking
	customers' orders can feel repetitive, she starts to find joy in
	personalizing her approach. Instead of saying the same
	thing every time, she starts to add small personal touches,
	like asking people about their day or remembering returning
	customer's names. This small change makes the task feel
	more enjoyable for her.

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4. Connect with coworkers to make work more enjoyable and build a sense of community.

Work feels easier and more enjoyable when you have positive relationships with your coworkers. Finding ways to connect and collaborate can boost your energy, motivation, and overall job satisfaction.

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•	Example: Marco works in a busy store and often feels
	drained by the constant tasks, like restocking. He starts
	spending more time with his colleague, who has a positive
	and energetic attitude. They are able to make fun games to
	see who can restock faster. His coworker's positive attitude
	inspires him to approach difficult situations with patience
	and humor. Marco finds that working alongside them is
	helping his own motivation and energy levels.

5. Look for ways to tie your work to a purpose or something that aligns with your values.

Feeling connected to a greater purpose can help make work more fulfilling. Even if your role seems small, reminding yourself of how your work impacts others can increase job satisfaction and motivation.

• Example: Nina works in a charity organization that offers food for those in need. She often feels that her efforts are small in comparison to the larger mission, but she reminds herself that every small task – whether it's organizing donations or answering calls – helps improve someone's life.

This sense of contributing to something bigger than herself helps her feel fulfilled and connected to the cause.

Great work exploring the importance of job satisfaction and some strategies to increase it for yourself!

Reflect and Connect

We've covered a lot in this module, including:

- Understanding the importance of maintaining work-life balance.
- Identifying and managing work-related stress.
- Exploring job satisfaction and how to craft your job to align with your passions.

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 strategy would you use to create better work-life balance?

•	Example: Setting clear boundaries. I would let my employer know my availability and stick to a schedule that allows me to rest and recharge. If I need accommodations, like reduced hours or a flexible schedule, I'd communicate that.
Wha	nt does stress feel like for you? What do you experience
	ntally, emotionally, and physically?
•	Example: I have trouble focusing and remembering tasks, I feel anxious, and I get headaches.

What strategies have you or would you use to manage work stress?

Example: Keeping a to-do list helps me stay organized and prevents me from feeling lost in my tasks.
t parts of your current job, or any past job, have you yed the most?
Example: I really enjoyed greeting customers at my last job because it helped me practice my social skills and made me feel more confident talking to new people. I also liked organizing the shelves because I found it calming and satisfying when everything was neat and in the right place.

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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