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Course introduction

Introduction from Richard Forde Founder of EDGE Coaching Services and creator of this soft skills program.

Having delivered this course to a group of students as a part of the YMCA Young leaders' program 2022, I am delighted to have another opportunity to enhance your prospects and offer you a sound understanding of "Soft Skills" and how they can play a fundamental role in your success as you transition from Education to the world of work. The education system is continuing to do a fantastic job of preparing you to attain all you can in the years of studying and assessing, we would like to support that process by adding further skills to complement your subject knowledge.

I sincerely hope you absorb the information delivered and enjoy the process of learning how to be a successful employee, leader, and a well-rounded young person. It is the wish of EDGE Coaching Services that we assist in giving you that edge, so you can maximize your potential. This will not only enhance your life, but the lives of those you interact with, and by extension the lives of all Barbadians. In creating this program, we sincerely hope you **Engage** your curiosity, **Develop** your understanding, **Grow** your potential and **Evolve** to an even more successful you.

Enjoy the program.

Richard Forde (EDGE Coaching Services)

Course objective:

To facilitate students understanding of soft skills and why they are an important part of the world of work and leadership

Learning outcomes:

Students will know and understand 12 of the most critical soft skills

Students will be able to understand how to develop learnt soft skills using their day-to-day activities

Course make up

This soft skills course will be very interactive. To make it fun and engaging it will have elements which will include.

- Discussions
- Coaching
- Weekly journal
- Outdoor activities
- Games
- Individual exercises
- Paired exercises
- Group exercises

What are soft skills?

A soft skill is

"a personal attribute that supports situational awareness and enhances an individual's ability to get a job done. The term "soft skills" is often used as a synonym for people skills or emotional intelligence"

Session Two: Active Listening

Foreword from a company

Session objective:

- To support the students understanding of good listening

Learning outcomes:

- Students will know and understand different levels of listening
- Students will be able to begin to understand how to listen to more than just the words being said

What is active listening?

“Active listening is the practice of preparing to listen, observing what verbal and non-verbal messages are being sent, and then providing appropriate feedback for the sake of showing attentiveness to the message being presented. This form of listening conveys a mutual understanding between speaker and listener.”

Active Listening: Listen to receive

Some of the elements of Active Listening

1. Good eye contact
2. Attentive relaxed posture
3. Closed mouth smile
4. Be at the same level, both sitting or standing
5. Try not to have anything between you, like a desk



Levels of Listening

Level one listening is listening to respond.

- This is where you're listening and formulating an answer so that you can appease the person you are speaking with
- It is all about your internal dialogue, what does this mean to you, how long will this person go on, what are they on about.
- You probably have a judgement about the person or topic. This includes wishful listening, hearing only what you want to hear
- This is where you may be hearing, but you're not listening.
- You may have also recognized this yourself, when you are having a conversation, but you can tell the other person is not really listening

Level two listening is focused listening

- There is a real focus on the other person
- You can sometimes see it in each other's posture
- There is a great deal of attention with the other person and not much awareness of the outside world
- You are listening to their words, their emotions, and their expressions
- You may even notice what they don't say
- This level is where empathy, clarification and collaboration happen
- This level of listening is not about you or your opinion

Level three listening using all your senses to hear

This is a very difficult skill, so all I will say about this level is that when you listen at Level 3 it includes everything you can observe with your senses, what you see, hear, smell, and feel. The physical as well as the emotional sensations. this includes the action, the inaction, and the interaction you may have with someone. It is very difficult to master, but we can all get there with enough practice.

Good listening will include you mastering the following techniques

Technique	How it is done
Reflecting/mirroring	This is saying someone's exact words back to them
Paraphrasing	This is using slightly different words which do not change the substance or the meaning of what the other person said
Summarize	This is repeating back what was being said but more briefly without changing the substance on meaning
Clarifying	This is expressing succinctly the essential or the core of what has been said and adding something valuable picked up intuitively for emotions or discrepancies in the words or expressions of face or body that have been said in the words, to generate insight and clarity for the speaker and check you understood. For instance, "it sounds like..... or would you say....."
Encouraging self-expression	This will help to build trust and intimacy to encourage openness
Suspending judgment criticism and attachment	This is keeping an open mind. Judgments and criticism make people defensive and stop them from talking

Things to remember

1. If you have a solution before the speaker is finished, you were not fully listening
2. Show you are listening by nodding or showing other forms of empathy, like appropriate gestures
3. Try to shut out internal chatter, it is a distraction and will stop you listening
4. Empathize: Try to put yourself in the speakers' shoes to get a good understanding of the situation
5. Wait for the speaker to pause before asking questions, constant interruptions is very off-putting if someone is finding it difficult to get their point across
6. Confidence is inspired in a speaker if you listen intently