



FSU Employee Assistance Program • 850.644.2288 • 877.246.4679 • eap.fsu.edu

Soft Skills to Know:

## Demonstrating Confidence

**D**emonstrating confidence communicates the certainty of your positions, decisions, and the reliability of outcomes you say will appear. Confidence is a leadership quality and a soft skill that can help you achieve goals.

Showing confidence is not a sign of arrogance or the inability to accept feedback. The power of confidence means other key traits likely exist. These include high self-esteem, the willingness to take risks, the ability to achieve goals, resilience, and knowing how to meet challenges with a “can do” attitude. To build your confidence, seek to remove negative influences in your life that undermine it. These influences can be subtle like negative self-talk, unsupportive people, or even your immediate work environment (e.g., desk clutter, disorganization).



## Emotional Intelligence in Customer Service



**E**motional intelligence (EI) applies very well to customer service, where it has big payoffs. To use EI in customer service, focus on your customers’ emotions and not your own. You will appear more empathic, identify customer needs more quickly, and calm an angry customer faster. You will experience less stress on the job by being proactive rather than reactive to a customer’s emotionality. Try it. See if you aren’t less worn out at day’s end.

## Think Outside of the Box

**Y**ou’ve heard the expression “thinking outside of the box.” It’s thinking creatively and solving problems in ways that defy convention. Outside-the-box thinkers see the same information differently from the way their coworkers do. When others “zig,” they “zag.” You can learn how to think outside of the box. The payoff can be huge for your employer. Learning this skill starts with experiencing failure caused by conditioned linear thinking. Try a few exercises designed for this purpose. Once you have an “aha!” experience with the exercises, then you’ve got the idea.



Resource: [www.creativethinking.net](http://www.creativethinking.net) [search: “exercises”].

## Holiday Stress! Trim the Trimmings This Year!



**A**re there chores, events, or activities that you can remove from your holiday checklist this year, thereby reducing your stress? If expectations from family and friends pin the success of the season on you every year, it may be time to take care of yourself by reducing the level of magnificence you are accustomed to delivering. Eliminating even one event or simplifying gifts for distant relationships can reduce the sensation of feeling overwhelmed. Examine the checklist that is beginning to form, and give yourself the gift of less. Move some of your “must haves” to the “nice to have” column, and discover whether trimming the trimmings has you enjoying the season more.

# Relationships—the Secret to Happiness

**M**any articles, books, and speeches have discussed the secret to finding happiness, but there is only one 75-year study that has attempted to pin down the answer. It's the Grant and Gluek Study, which began in 1934. And it continues today. The project focuses on the lives of two completely different groups of people—a large group of low-income people from Boston, Massachusetts, and a similarly large group of Harvard graduates. The only finding common to both groups of what ultimately brings joy is quality relationships. Recent studies on the negative effects of loneliness lend support to these findings. Developing strong and positive relationships is a social skill that also has some important ingredients. And it can be learned. If you're past your teens and younger years and you find your health and relationships are lacking, it can be a bit more of a challenge to fire up an active friends network. Start with a visit to a workplace counselor or EAP. For advice on reestablishing a social life after lots of time away from the practice of doing so, consider the book "The Friendship Crisis: Finding, Making, and Keeping Friends When You're Not a Kid Anymore."



Source: <http://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/grantandglueckstudy>.

# Empathize Without Becoming a Counselor

**E**mpathizing is how we form meaningful relationships. With empathy, we don't just recognize a person's feelings and experiences—we move closer to them by causing them to feel as though they are deeply heard. This creates bonding. Do you have a knack for being a good listener and empathizer? If so, remember to quickly refer a friend or co-worker to the next step, such as the EAP or another helpful community resource. Spending time engaging with the problems of others is generous and may offer relief, but too much involvement can often cause delay or decrease the motivation to take the next step necessary to finding a lasting solution. All of us should try to help others, but professional counseling is an applied sciences occupation. You may not mind lending personal time to offer support as a good listener, but taking on this role for too long could facilitate a crisis if the problem requires specialized help and help is not acquired soon enough.



# Stress Tip... Reduce Catastrophic Thinking

**H**umans worry, but when we focus on the worst-case scenario, it is called catastrophic thinking. It's worry on steroids. Catastrophic thinking is agitating and exhausting. It can be toxic to your mental health. Catastrophic thinking can be applied to almost anything—child safety concerns, bills, personal health, the environment, deadlines, etc. Remaining concerned while avoiding one's worst fears is possible. 1) Recognize that catastrophic thinking is a drain on your mental energy. 2) Reduce worry levels by constructing contingency plans and solutions *in writing*. 3) Take a mental break with "thought blocking" by refusing to worry about something for a set period of time. 4) Consider how you engaged in catastrophic thinking in the past, but here you are today with those past fears or concerns never having come to pass or coming without the impact you originally imagined.



# Stalking Awareness

**S**tudies show that a woman over the course of her life will have about an 8% chance of being stalked. For men, it's about 2%. Stalking is unwanted or repeated shadowing, observation, and scrutinizing of another person. It may involve following a person, showing up where and when they do not expect it, and ignoring boundaries of privacy. Stalking is a crime. Many incidents of workplace violence have been linked to stalking, although later may only be labeled as "domestic violence" related. If you're stalked at work, don't keep it a secret. Tell your employer or HR advisor, or discuss it confidentially with the EAP and get the support you deserve. Don't be reluctant to let your employer know about the victimization. Your safety and that of coworkers is your employer's most important concern.



Source: <http://victimsofcrime.org> [search: "stalking"].