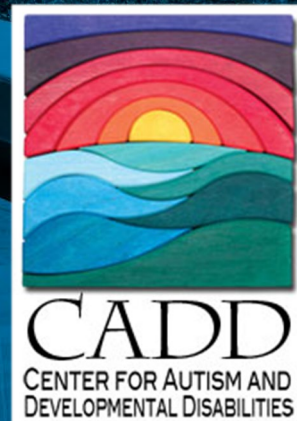


University of Houston  Clear Lake

Assessing and Teaching Job-Related Social Skills: Maximizing Success of Neurodiverse Employees

Dorothea C. Lerman, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA-TX



My Collaborators

- Dr. Sarah Lechago
- Dr. Jennifer Fritz
- Kelsey Leadingham
- Clarissa Ruiz
- Amanda Davis
- Megan Dora
- Carolyn Grob
- Justin Hunt
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- Channing Langlinois
- Courtney Laudont
- Trena Rouse
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- Loukia Tsami
- Natalie Villante
- Bridgette White
- Dan Wright

Employment of Individuals with NDD

- Overall: 25% - 55%¹



¹Cameron et al., 2022; Howlin & Mash, 2012; Maslahati et al., 2022; Roux et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2022



Employment and Other Day Activities

**Had a paid job in the
community**

14%

Worked in the community for
pay in settings that also employed
people without disabilities.

**Were in unpaid, activities
in facilities**

42%

Participated in unpaid activities
in facilities with others with
disabilities (sometimes called
day programs).

Had no work or activity

27%

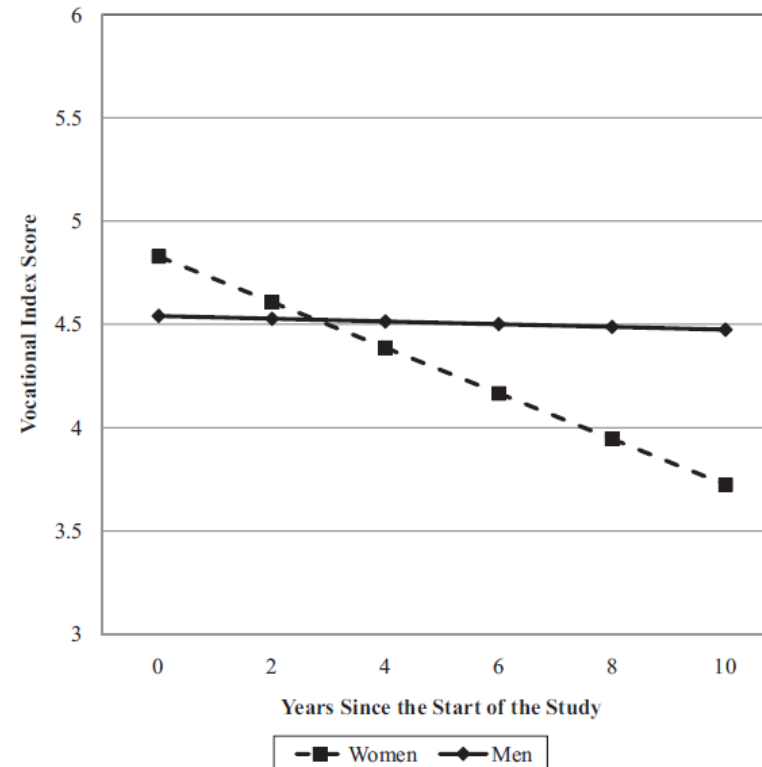
Had no work or activities
in the previous two
weeks in community or
facility-based settings.

National Autism Indicators Report, 2017

Employment of Individuals with NDD



- With VR services: 37%-60%²



Taylor & Mailick (2014)

²Alverson & Yamamoto, 2017; Roux et al., 2016; Taylor & Mailick, 2014

> 10 supported employment in the community



6

sheltered + community



5

< 10 in sheltered vocational setting

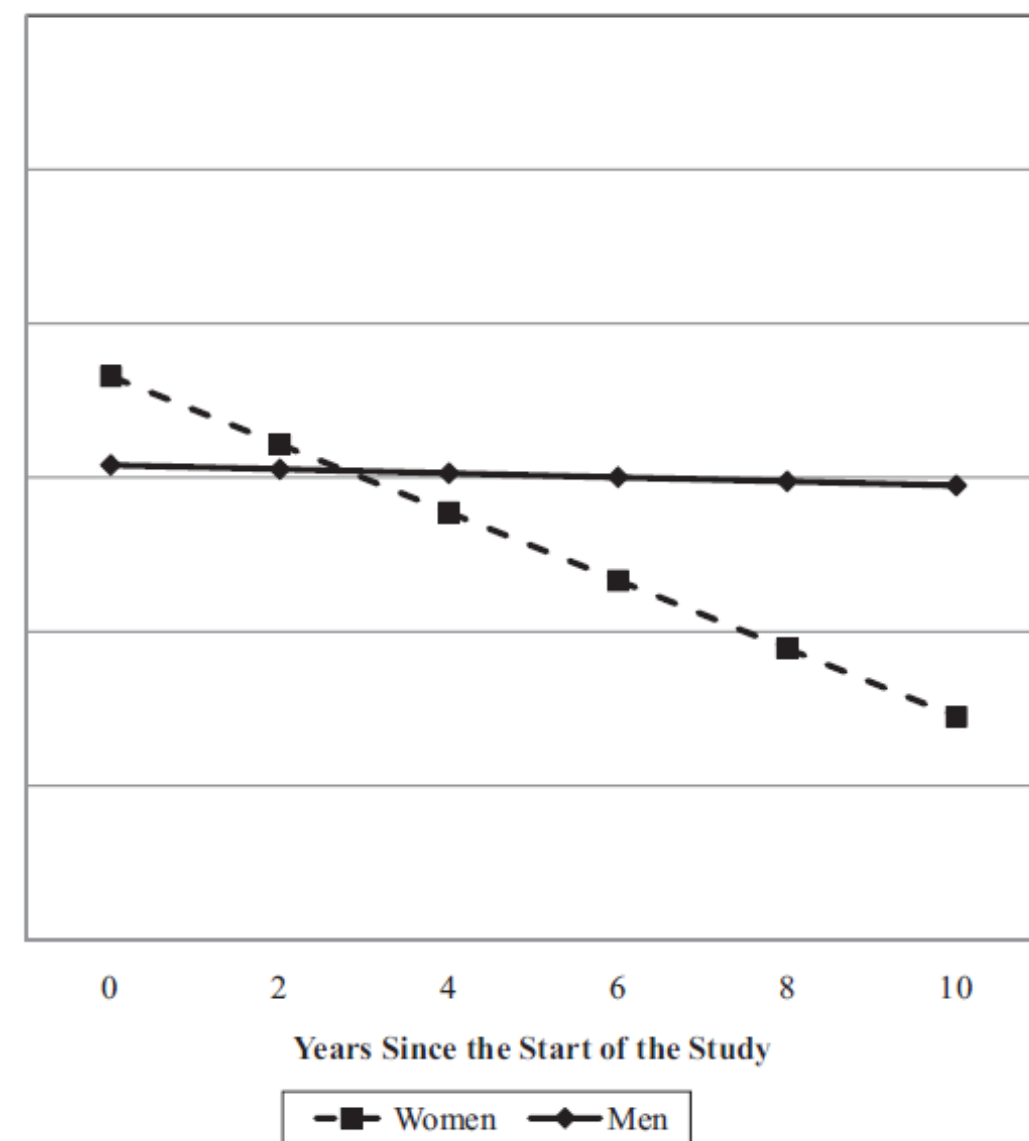


4

>10 in sheltered vocational setting



3



Employment of Individuals with NDD



- Less likely to receive job-placement and on-the-job support services¹



¹Nye-Lengerman, 2017

Why Vocational Difficulties?



Baldwin et al., 2014; Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004; Muller et al., 2003

Why Vocational Difficulties?



Butterworth & Strauch, 1994; Cheney & Foss, 1984; Ford et al., 1984;
Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Mueller, 1988

We Can Help!!!!





Potential Targets: What Should We Teach?

Securing Employment

- Completing applications
- Interviewing

General Vocational Skills

- Following instructions
- Managing time
- Navigating job site

Job-Specific skills

Job-Related Social Skills

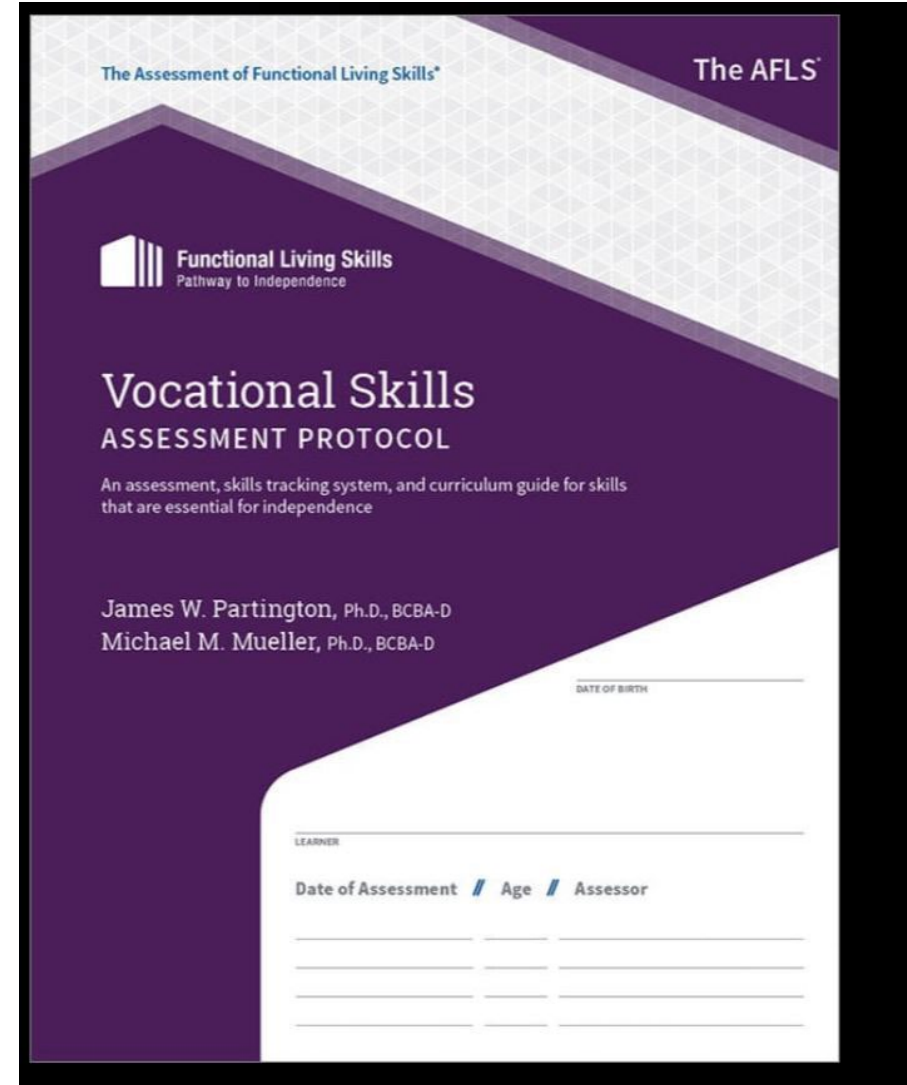
- Asking for assistance
- Responding appropriately to feedback

Problem Solving

Hygiene/Grooming

Prerequisites for Job-Related Social Skills and Problem-Solving Skills

- Follows instructions
- Has functional communication skills
- Can complete some jobs
- Remains on-task for short periods



Assessing Job-Related Social Skills



Vocational Social Skills Assessment (VSSA)

A large, stylized eagle graphic in a lighter shade of blue, positioned in the lower right quadrant of the slide. The eagle is shown in profile, facing left, with its wings spread wide, suggesting flight or strength.

VSSA Overview

- Evaluates skills directly and efficiently
- Measures performance via direct observation
- Embedded within authentic work experiences
- Utilizes arranged situations
- Identifies essential job-related social skills and associated targets
- Guides goals, intervention planning, and progress monitoring

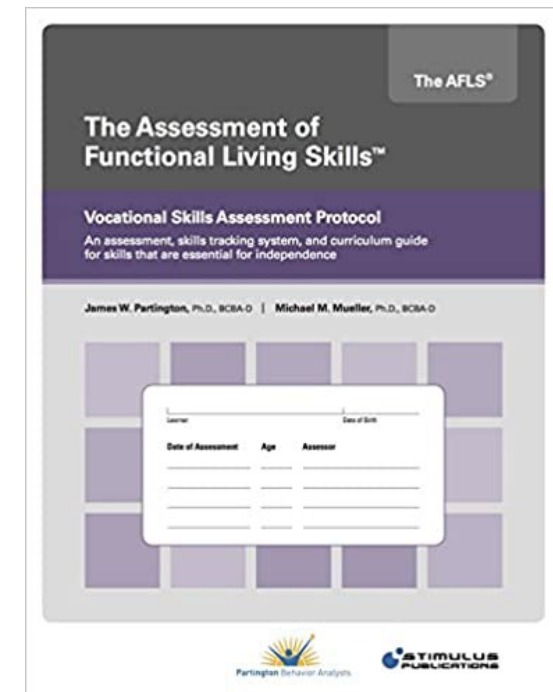


Situation	Brief Description
Task Interrupted	The supervisor interrupts an ongoing task to ask the learner to switch to a different task that must be completed immediately.
Materials Needed	The learner encounters broken or missing materials or runs out of materials that are needed to complete a task.
Vague Instructions	The supervisor assigns a new task that can be completed multiple ways without clearly describing or demonstrating how to complete it.
Task Not In Repertoire	The supervisor asks the learner to complete a task that the learner does not know how to do.

Situation	Brief Description
Feedback Provided	The supervisor delivers corrective task feedback that is clear, vague, or conflicts with the original instructions.
Task Completed	The learner completes tasks and does not know what to do next.
Supervisor Unavailable	The learner needs assistance but supervisor is missing from office or otherwise temporarily engaged.
Multiple Tasks Assigned	The supervisor asks learner to complete 2 or more tasks in a fixed or variant sequence.

VSSA Overview

- Correct responses to situations:
 - Focuses on appropriate replacements for inappropriate behavior
 - Drawn from Butterworth & Strauch (1994); Ju et al. (2012); Montague & Lund (2017); Partington & Mueller (2015) and others
 - Tailored to likely/current job placement



VSSA Overview

Situation Name	Skill
Task Interrupted	Switches immediately to new task, notifies supervisor, completes original task.
Materials Needed	Searches for materials, searches for supervisor (if needed), explains problem, asks for help.
Vague Instructions/Task Not in Repertoire	Searches for supervisor, asks for help.
Multiple Tasks Assigned	Transitions independently across tasks.

VSSA Overview

Situation	Skill
New Task Assigned	Confirms understanding
Feedback Provided	Acknowledges feedback, asks for clarification (if needed), confirms understanding, corrects mistakes.
Task Completed	Seeks supervisor, emits “done” statement, inquires about next step
Supervisor Unavailable	Searches for/completes other work

Possible Other Behaviors

- Orienting toward others
- Providing unsolicited assistance
- Remaining on-task
- Completing tasks accurately
- Greeting others
- Complimenting others
- Thanking others
- Responding to safety hazards
- Standing an appropriate distance from others
- Waiting turn to speak
- Asking appropriate questions

CAVEAT



- Is this target critical to obtaining or maintaining employment?
- Is this something that the learner would like to target?

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Clinic-Based Assessment for Evaluating Job-Related Social Skills in Adolescents and Adults with Autism

Dorothea C. Lerman¹ • Bridgette White¹ • Carolyn Grob¹ • Courtney Laudont¹

Journal of
Applied Behavior Analysis

JOURNAL OF APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

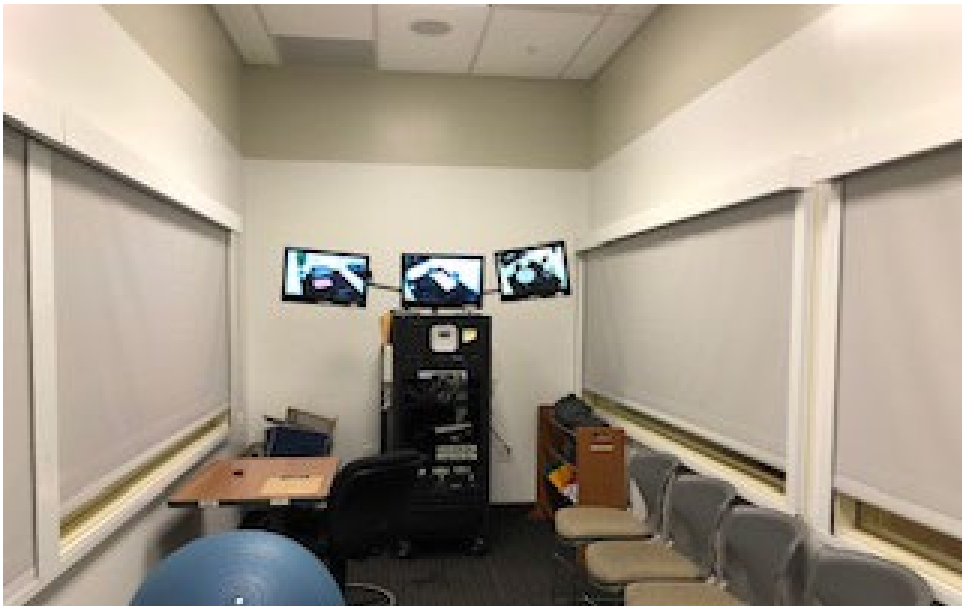
2019, **52**, 150–172

NUMBER 1 (WINTER)

*ASSESSING AND TEACHING JOB-RELATED SOCIAL SKILLS TO
ADULTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER*

CAROLYN M. GROB, DOROTHEA C. LERMAN, CHANNING A. LANGLINAIS AND
NATALIE K. VILLANTE





Typical Tasks

- Folding shirts
- Rolling/sorting silverware
- Sorting objects
- Stuffing envelopes
- Stapling papers
- Alphabetizing books/folders/envelopes
- Cleaning room
- Stocking shelves
- Computer-related jobs (e.g., data entry, web searches, typing)

Vocational Social Skills Intervention (VSSI)

A large, stylized eagle graphic in a lighter shade of blue, positioned on the right side of the slide. The eagle is shown in profile, facing left, with its wings spread wide, suggesting flight or strength. The graphic is composed of smooth, flowing lines.

Research on Vocational Interventions

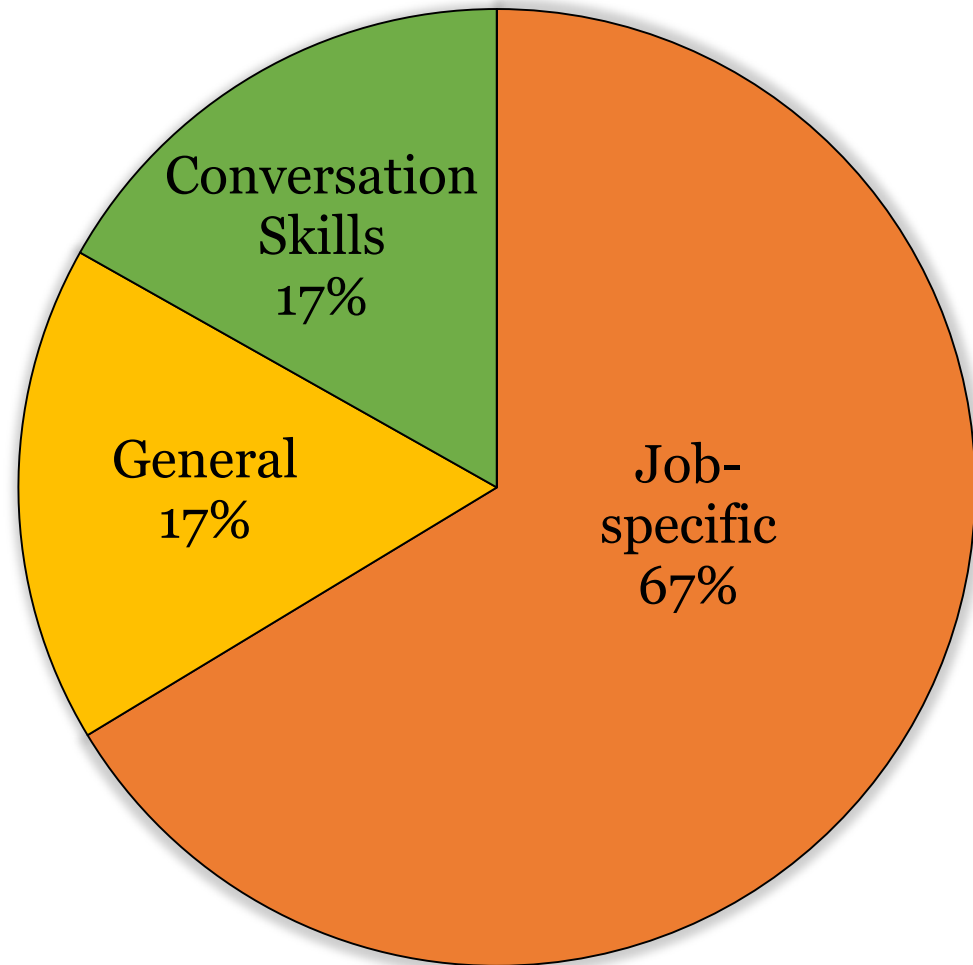
- Focus on those with more severe disabilities
- Few target “soft skills” related to job retention

Anderson, et al., 2017

Interventions

- 50% - Behavioral Skills Training
- 28% - Video-Based Instruction
- 22% - Self-Management

SKILLS TAUGHT



Ideal interventions

- Efficient, low-cost, nonintrusive
- Transfer from teaching setting to job site
- On-site supervisors willing to implement

Potential Interventions

Instructions
(Spoken/Written)
and Rules

Behavior
Skills
Training

Feedback

Prompts
(Spoken,
Visual,
Technology)

Reinforcement

But First....

- Ensure that correct task completion → reinforcement (S^R)
 - Is task completion per se a conditioned S^R ?
 - Is praise/social approval an effective S^R ?
 - Is delayed/intermittent reinforcement S^R ?
 - If not, are tokens a viable option?



Instructions (Spoken/Written) & Rules

- Concise descriptions with rationales
- Access to written product on job site

If the supervisor tells you to fix your work and you don't understand how to fix it:

1. Thank your supervisor for the feedback

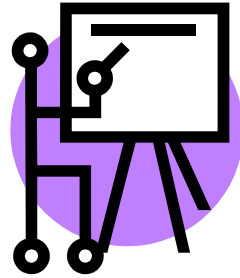
2. Ask your supervisor to show you how to fix your work.

3. Tell the supervisor you will fix the task

4. Fix your mistakes and finish the task.

Behavior Skills Training

- Instructions + modeling + practice with feedback
- Video modeling
- Establish performance criterion (e.g., 3-6 correct responses in a row)



Feedback

- Provide descriptive praise and corrective feedback



“Nicely done! You let me know when you had finished your task and asked what you could do next.”
“You went to the break room when I was unavailable but you should have found other work to do.”

-



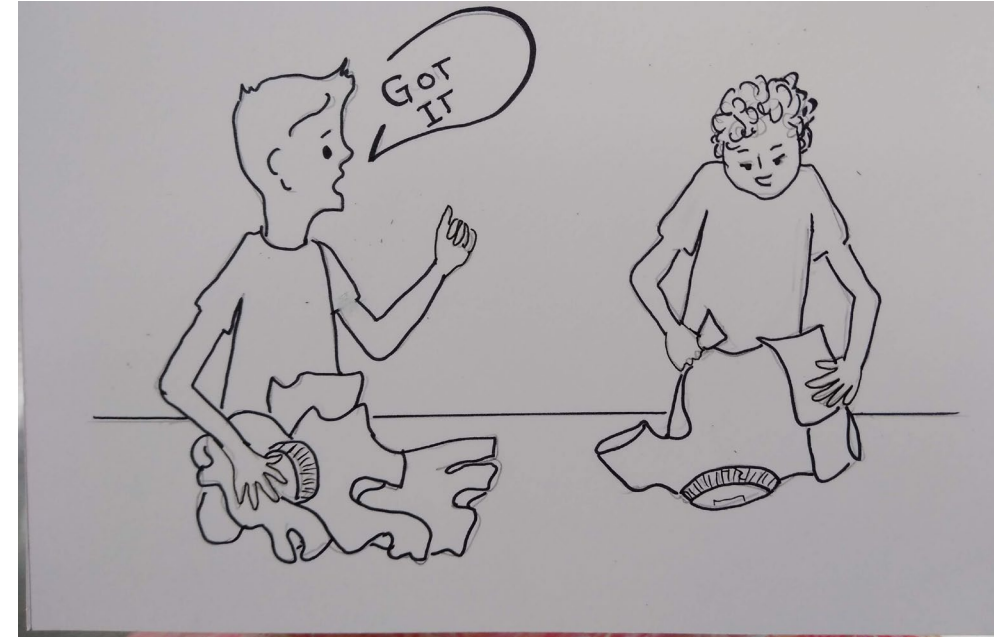
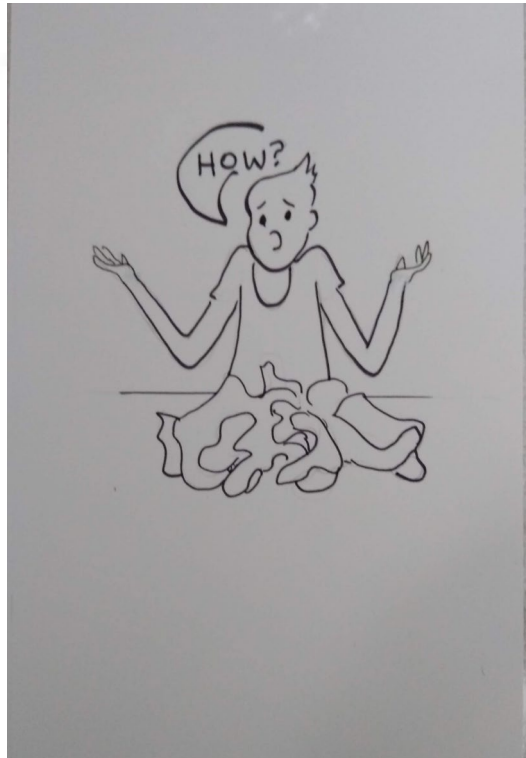
Quick model, opportunity for practice

- Plan for fading

Prompts

Modalities

- Spoken
- Visual
 - Gestures
 - Models
 - Text
 - Pictures



Prompts

Modalities

- Spoken
- Visual
 - Gestures
 - Models
 - Text
 - Pictures

Can you show me how?

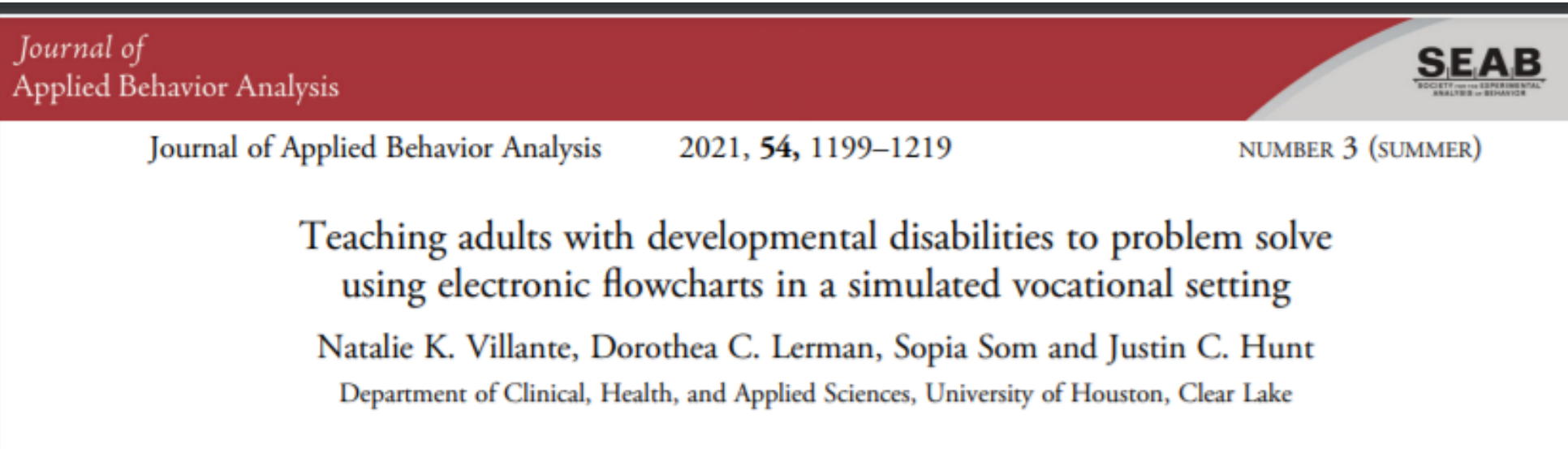
Could you demonstrate it?

I need a model.

How do I do it?

Prompts

- Technology
 - Videos
 - Automated reminders
 - Messaging



Prompts

- Modalities
 - What is feasible and acceptable on job site?
 - What has been effective for learner in past?
 - How easy to fade?
- Timing
 - Before / after opportunity to respond
- Prompt Fading
 - Delay prompt
 - Reduce amount of prompt
 - Transition across prompts

Reinforcement



Food/drink

Videos

Music

Praise and other forms of attention

Positive performance evaluations

Additional or extra-long breaks

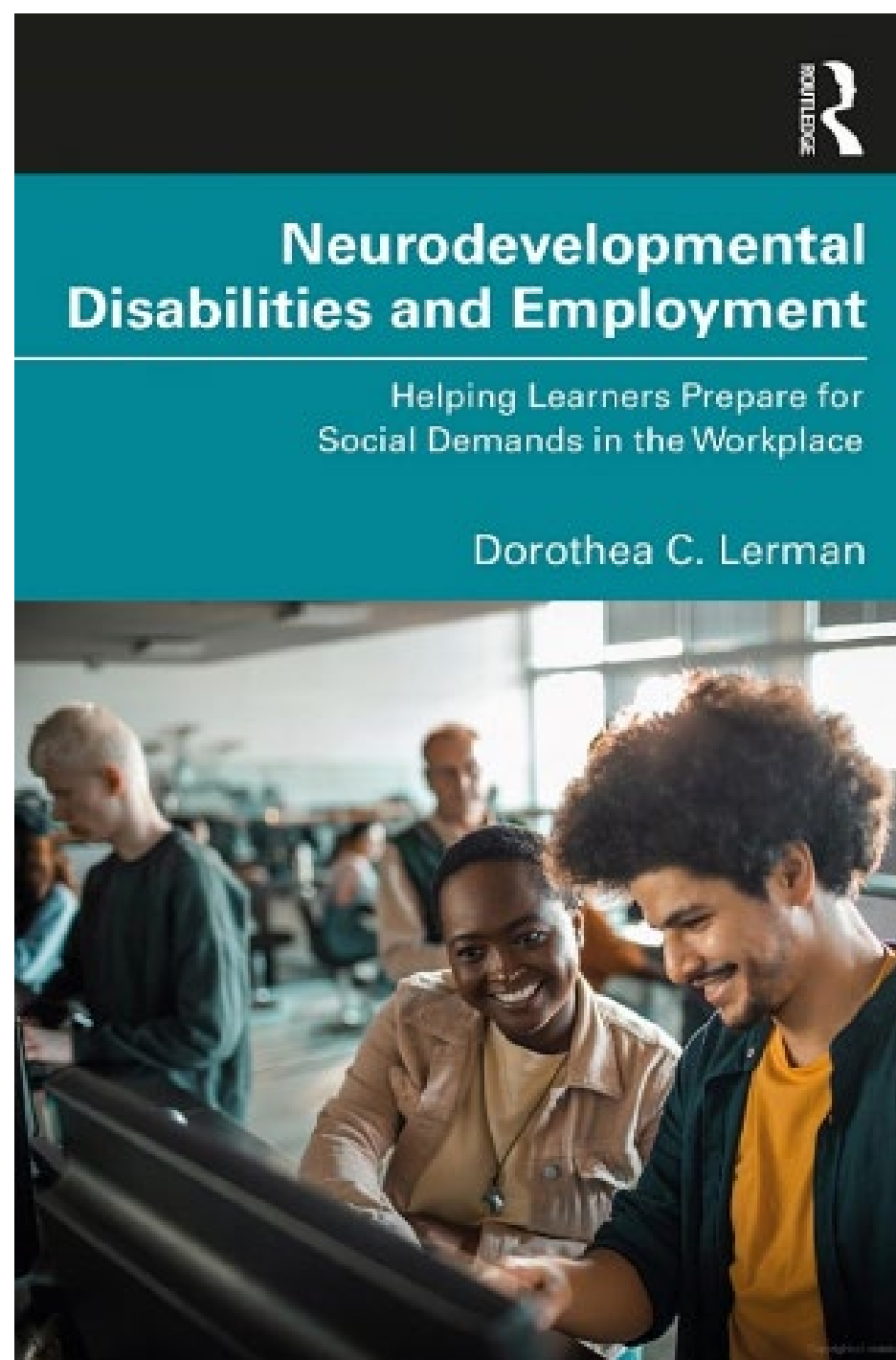
Assistance with tasks

Choice of tasks

Early dismissal or late start

Extra vacation days

Money, gift cards, tokens, and other types of conditioned (generalized) reinforcers



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Thank you!

Questions?

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