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**MANAGING
STRESS**

**IN THE HOSPITALITY
INDUSTRY**



WASP

Managing Stress in the Hospitality Industry

Practical Guidelines

Managing Stress in the Hospitality Industry, Practical Guidelines is a handbook designed for practitioners, trainees, mentors, and tutors in the hospitality sector. The book is a valuable source of information for students in tourism-related subjects and for anyone who consider working in hotels, restaurants, event management or catering businesses.



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INTRODUCTION

Topic Annotation

The topic addresses various issues in stress prevention and stress management within the context of the hospitality industry. It explains the nature, manifestation and types of stress and its consequences. It also examines the methods to combat and utilize stress in an effective way. The suggested stress-relief techniques could be practiced either individually or in a group setting. The relationships between stress and work performance as well as personal well-being are also discussed. A special focus is put on achieving a long term work/life balance as a key factor towards successful stress management.

Learning objectives

- Understanding the causes and impacts of the work-related stress in the hospitality industry
- Analyzing the distinction between various stress triggers, their origin and manifestation according to the different employee's personalities
- Discussing methods and techniques of coping with stress
- Understanding the spillover effect of the employee's emotional status on the customer satisfaction and the service quality
- Recognizing early burnout symptoms in oneself or fellow coworkers and ways to prevent it
- Analyzing the main groups of stressors stemming from: 1) the external environment; 2) personality; 3) job position; 4) relationships at work; 5) social and family issues
- Examining the stress as a process - how it arises, manifests, develops and transforms;
- Designing skills and strategies for managing and reducing stress;

1 - Stress: basic definitions, causes and impacts



Source: <https://www.1stformations.co.uk/> What is "stress"?

You, as an individual and hospitality employee, have certainly experienced stress in your life and work. Nowadays, stress is overwhelming. Although, the technology progress promised to make our lives easier, it seems that the world is becoming more and more stressful place to live. We are constantly subjected to stress triggers (situations or events that disturb our mental, emotional or physical balance). Each of us react differently to stress: some get excessively angry, others become timid and withdraw, but very often the accumulated stress leads to physical illnesses and problems such as headaches, aggression and even heart attack. In the same time stress on the workplace may decrease your motivation and your performances. If you can't control the stress properly, you may lose your chances of promotion or even your job.

But don't think that stress is your enemy. In fact, sometimes stress could be a life savior. It is an ancient survival mechanism of your body, programmed to increase your awareness towards danger. If you are attacked, for example, stress will help you to tap your resources on maximum and react in a best possible way. In the same way, during your work, stress could help you to be more alert and focused and give the best you can, especially if you are tested or need to perform well. When used wisely, stress could mobilize your intellectual, physical or emotional potential. But if you overuse stress, this could lead to over-exhaustion and depletion of strength and energy in a long run.

In fact, the most successful people are those who have learned how to use stress for their benefit. Too much pressure will cause anxiety and burnouts, but too little will lead to boredom and apathy. That is why the stress management is an important tool for obtaining overall well-being and should be mastered by everyone, both on individual, as well as on an organizational level.

Stress is an adverse reaction to excessive pressure or other type of demand placed on the individuals

UK Health and Safety Executives (HSE)



Almost everyone knows how stress feels like. According to some studies, nine out of ten adults report that they have experienced serious stress at some time in their lives; almost half of these people say that their symptoms were bad enough to disrupt their lives. Some people experience stress to the point where they cannot function normally on a daily basis, they can't have enough sleep, they overindulged in harmful practices (such as alcohol drinking, binge eating, smoking, procrastination or even drug abuse), their relationships are endangered and their productivity compromised.

Even if you think that you are managing stress well, most probably there will be times that you will be shaken by the circumstances. Changes of events, loss of loved ones, unexpected unemployment, illness or situations that you never imagined possible will trigger stress and will test our preparedness for the time of crisis.

Stressor is an event, situation, circumstance or stimulus that trigger stress



The stressors you encounter in your everyday life or on the work place can be grouped in four groups:

1. **Bio factors:** Your body is accustomed to a certain rhythm of life and any changes could lead to stress (example: if you skip your usual breakfast, your body will experience stress-like symptoms). Adapting to winter or summer timetable or the jet leg after a transcontinental flight are also bio-related stressors that impacts negatively your physical, emotions and mental state
2. **Physical factors:** Physical stress occurs when the human body is affected by sleep deprivation, overworking, excessive physical exertion, unhealthy diet, injury or trauma, infection, disease or chronic pain. A tooth ache for example is a type of physical stressor that could provoke a number of stress responses.
3. **Psycho (personal) factors:** those stressors stem from your values, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Very often if your ego (or identity) is challenged, you'll get stressed. For example, if at work someone treats you with indignity or insult you, you will react with anger, resentment or sadness and other negative emotions. The same goes if you are forced to do things that you don't consider as right or good, or if the quality of your work is bad for some reasons. Sometimes, you may feel crushed between you "ideal self" and the reality. You may feel like a failure in your work or private life (often based on subjective evidences), and this will lead you to sense of guilt, which produce chronic, long-term stress.
4. **Social factors:** This is the group of the most common stressors encountered today. Usually almost any interaction with another person is a potential cause of stress: either bad or good. Today, especially in the cities where everything is overcrowded, the social stress is augmented by the lack of personal space. Moreover, the new technology (like Facebook  and Instagram ) invade deeply into our private life and share with

everybody things that were once accessible only for the closest friends or family members. The social media leaves almost no space for solitude or intimacy. We are constantly aware of our image and concerned of what others may think of us. The social stress is produced from sources such as family, work, professional responsibilities and career advancement, financial worries etc. Moreover, women get additional stress because of harder family responsibilities (women are more engaged with raising kids and house chores), while men receive more stress at work.

It is interesting to note that ordinary daily hassles such as being late for work, losing a key, shopping, preparing dinner, putting kids to bed etc. create a critical mass of stress which is almost as disruptive as the stress created by life-changing event such as loss of a close family members. Very often stress impacts (negatively) the sleep patterns and eating behavior thus leading to more physiological and psychological damages.

Some of the most **frequent stressors** in our lives are:

- Health problems (either own, or with family member)
- Being overwhelmed with responsibilities
- Financial struggles
- Work related problems
- Family issues
- Being unhappy with physical appearance
- Disillusion with government politics
- Listening/watching/ reading news
- Household chores
- Using social media



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3 – Burnout syndrome



Source of photo: Getty images

When you are constantly stressed out, you may develop a condition known as **burnout**. This is a state when you lose motivation, your energy is depleted and you are completely exhausted. This reflects your health, your emotions and your relationships with others. Evidently, this also impacts negatively your job performance. Sometimes burnouts lead to illogical and harmful behaviors or dysfunction.

Job burnout is defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment for extended periods of time related to the individual's job.

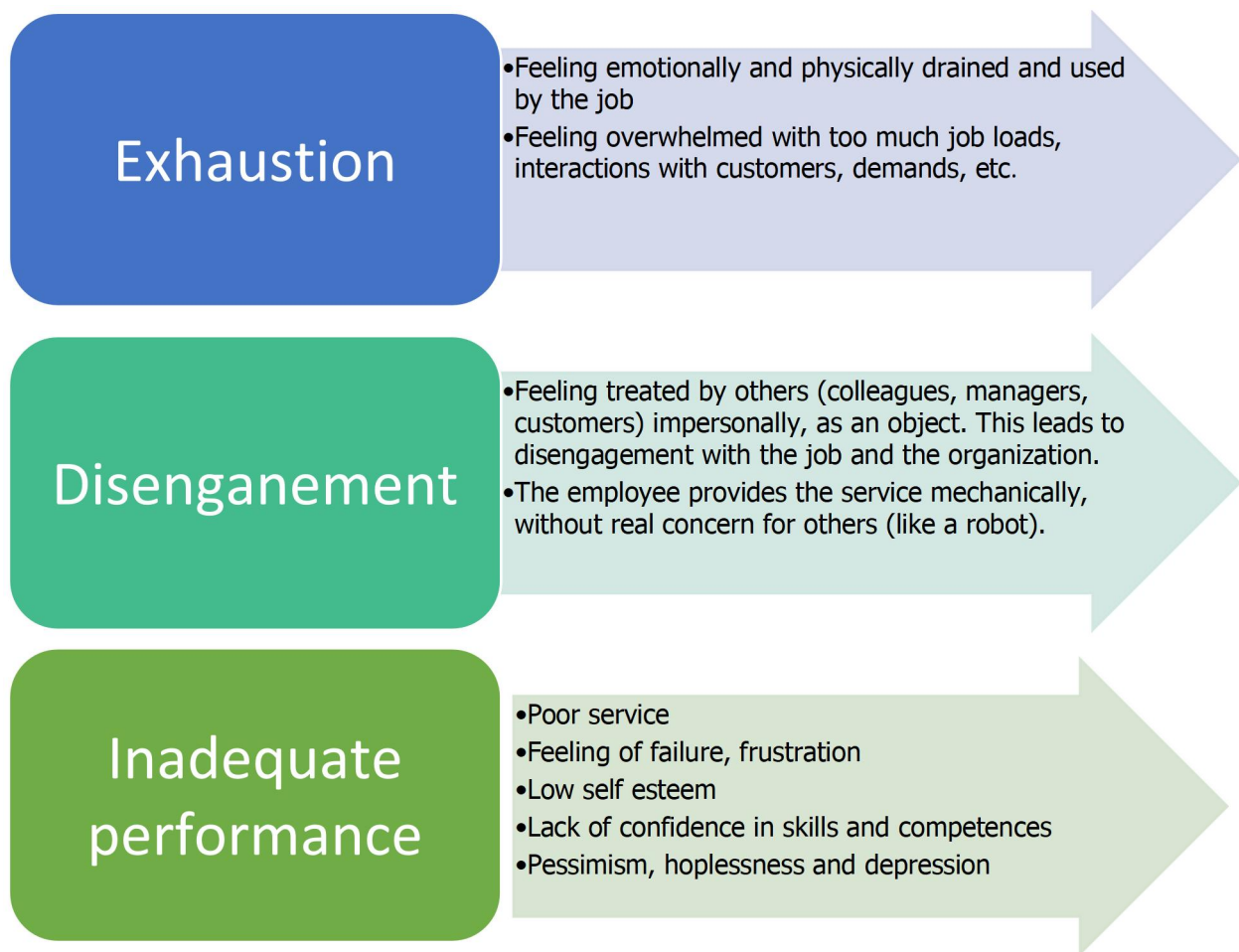
Shena and Huang, 2012

Many service failures are attributed to emotionally and physically exhausted worker. A high level of burnout usually leads to employee dissatisfaction and high turnover rates.

Burnout is most likely to occur during circumstances in which there is an incompatibility between the requirements of the job and the employee's abilities, resources and lack of control. It is often the result of:

- too much work with too little time to accomplish the tasks
- too much effort without adequate reward or sense of accomplishment,
- perceived injustice or unfairness in the workplace
- conflicts with coworkers, supervisors, customers or the values of the organization

Figure1 : Burnout signs and dimensions



Coping with burnout could be a matter of small adjustments or may require extreme change of the circumstances such as leaving one's job or starting a new career path. The contemporary tendency is that a person does not stay within the same professional field for life, but rather tries new challenges and occupations even at a later stage. The fresh start may prove beneficial not only as a stress relief tool, but also as a way of personal development and growth. It may bring new challenges and opportunities such as new relationships, better financial prospects and enhanced work/life balance.

Certainly, burnout does not imply that we should change our job right away. There are several less drastic measurements that could be done to alleviate the situation such as:

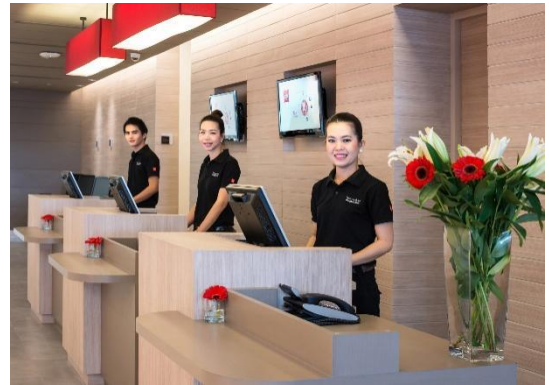
- **Reducing the unrealistic job demand:** If the work load is too heavy, discussion with managers and attempt to reduce the working hours could prove a useful approach.
- **Gaining control:** Negotiating with managers more control on the job time frame, flexibility, number and length of breaks, the way that job is done.
- **Increased feeling of appreciation and reward:** Negotiating proper compensation including financial stimuli, career growth and advancement, social benefits, learning and travel opportunities etc.

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How to reduce stress in the hotel?

- **Stretch:** Stretching or muscle relaxation can help refocus in the moment. There are lots of easy exercises you can do while sitting at a desk, in a back room or in a bathroom if you are feeling overwhelmed.
- **Use your senses:** This mindfulness technique will bring your mind away from stressful thoughts and back to the present moment. All you have to do is observe, listen, smell and feel:



Source: <https://www.onlychefs.co.uk/>

- 5 things you **can see** (any five things such as the water fountain in the lobby, the clock on the wall, etc. – the idea is to bring your attention to your surrounding)
 - 4 things you **can touch:** may be the desk in front of you or the frame of a picture
 - 3 things you **can hear:** could be the guest checking in or the phone rings in the distance
 - 2 things you **can smell:** example: the brewing coffee or the lunch from the kitchen
 - 1 thing you **can taste:** may be a candy, a coffee or a sweet from the welcoming jar
- **Take a short walk:** Although not always possible, if you can get out even for a short walk in the grounds of your premises it is likely to help, firstly because it helps your body deal with the excess stress chemicals, and secondly a change of scenery can help you prioritize the tasks you have to complete.
 - **Breathe deeply:** Another symptom of stress is shallow breathing. We do this to get more oxygen into our system if we are in physical danger. If the threat is not physical than breathing deeply can help you relax and refocus
 - **Talk:** If you are feeling particularly anxious, speak to a trusted colleague or your manager. Simply airing your concerns can help you see them more clearly and they may be able to offer additional support if you are overstretched.

4 – Stress-free Training in Hospitality: Mentors’ and Trainers’ Guide



Photo source: hotbeadkitchen.org

Everyone could agree, that the training is important for the employees’ success, the quality of the service they provide and ultimately, for the prosperity of the hospitality organization. You, as a trainer, have the task to introduce new workers in the work environment, to show them the basics of the job, the quality standards that they should adhere to and to motivate them to strive to give their best in whatever they do. The training should be conducted in a close association with the different departments in the company, allowing the trainees to have first-hand on job experience in a real work environment. It should provide solid understanding in the overall operations of the hotel/ restaurant with a focus in one or two areas of service (ex: front desk, culinary and restaurant, conventions and events planning, housekeeping, maintenance, spa and wellness center, accounting and marketing etc.).

The **successful training session** should be well-prepared with regard to:

Objectives and aims of the organizations

(both the VET school and the Hospitality company)

Desired learning outcomes

(including the skills and competences that have to be acquired)







The trainees, their:

- personal aims
- background
- preferred learning styles
- motivation

Realize your important role as a trainer! You are not there just to teach the trainees what to do, but also to transfer your knowledge, insights, wisdom, experience and zeal for work. You will need to create a relationship with them based on trust, respect and care. Very often you will have to

tap on intuition and improvisation rather than pre-learned techniques, but just in case, here are some useful tips that you can use when conducting your training:

At the **beginning of each session**, you:








-  Welcome the trainees in a proper and engaging manner. If appropriate, use games and icebreakers to create an atmosphere of openness and trust and to engage the participants in a fun and personal way
-  Introduce the session, providing short overview of the objectives and the main topics
-  Explain how the learning process will be organized and how the practical training will be conducted
-  Give appropriate instructions on safety issues and possible risks related to the work environment
-  Allow trainee to introduce themselves, get familiar with each other and with the work environment, and share any questions and concerns related to the training
-  Demonstrate value and respect for each individual trainee, regardless of his/her ethnic background, religion, skin color, gender, nationality, age or previous experience.

“Our people are our greatest assets. We’ve got to have strong people, who are passionate about what they do”

Gail Mendel, CEO of Wyndham Destination Network

Transferring theory into practice

You will be in charge of the training session and your responsibility is to provide a solid understanding of the subject and to ease the transfer of theoretical knowledge (acquired in the VET school) into practice. In this regard, the you should:

-  Provide a brief ***theoretical background*** relevant to the training session and give many practical examples from personal experience or else.
-  ***Deliver information*** and ***learning content*** using various traditional and modern methods and learning tools
-  Allow trainees to ***share their own experiences*** related to the topic and engage them in a discussion in a positive and constructive manner. ***Involve*** as much as possible their creativity, emotions, past experience and personal background related to the subject.
-  ***Demonstrate*** and ***apply learning concepts*** and techniques to create greater understanding of the subject
-  Give opportunity for ***“hand on the job” experience***: allow trainee to perform the tasks and the techniques in a real work environment.
-  ***Make learning fun*** and use as many case studies, practical examples and humor as possible (see the Example with Storytelling).
-  ***Conclude session*** with an overview of what was learnt. Use repetition to help the retention of information.

- 📌 **Prepare** and deliver handouts, quizzes, books or articles and other *tangible materials* which trainees can take home and revise later as a future reference to what was discussed during the training session.
- 📌 **Test regularly** to assure that the trainees are progressing well and that the desired learning outcomes are achieved. Test could be both theoretical and practical. Tests should be designed to challenge learners' ability to process new information and acquire new skills on the working place
- 📌 Apply **good moderator skills**: keep training sessions on track, run the classes according to the schedule, give room for discussions but be ready to focus on the main topic when side issues take over.
- 📌 **Be flexible and adjust** to the needs of each particular group and even to each individual trainee by using different schedule of topics, different time frame or different learning methods and tools
- 📌 **Use the breaks** wisely and provide enough time for relax and informal interaction among the participants. Remember that the informal setting creating during the break has the potential to bring additional benefits to the learning process (see as an example the *Brown bag session* given below).
- 📌 **Seek feedback** from the learners and try to improve the training process, methods, tools or learning contents as much as possible, tailoring the learning session to the needs of the trainees.

You, as a trainer should **use a creative approach** to motivate and inspire the trainees in order to achieve the desired outcomes. You should encourage learners to create personal goals related to the training, in order to foster their motivation and to increase their receptiveness and discipline.

Before the very start of the session, make sure that the **trainees are aware** of what is going to be learned and what core skills or competences are going to be developed. Thus they will know how exactly the training session could be beneficial to them and why they should play active role in their own learning experience. In the same time, they should be given with an opportunity to evaluate their personal progress and to analyze their strength, weaknesses and gaps that need to be addressed. **Monitoring on the learning process** is important for all parties involved: company, VET school and trainees because it gives a sense of accountability and may suggest ways of improvement.

During the training process the **collaborative learning** (or so-called "**peer-to-peer**" learning or "**peer coaching**") should be encouraged and foster. This happens via team work, debates, role games and group tasks. The collaborative learning taps on social benefits and provides a shared platform for experience and knowledge.

Peer Coaching is a process through which two or more professional team members/ colleagues work together to:

- ✓ reflect and work on a task;
- ✓ expand and build new skills;



- ✓ share ideas;
- ✓ teach one another;
- ✓ conduct research and solve problems

You also should allocate enough time and resources for repeating a number of times the routine tasks that has to be memorized or elaborate in details. **“Practice makes perfect”** attitude refers exactly to the on-hand job experience and could be especially applicable for most of the operations within the hospitality sector.

Here’s a handy **last-minute checklist** to make sure everything is ready for your training session:

- ✓ **Dress appropriately.** Take into consideration your audience to figure out what to wear. In general, match your manner of dress to that of your trainees—or go slightly more professional.
- ✓ **Arrive early.** Give yourself time to check last-minute arrangements and get yourself mentally geared up for the session.
- ✓ **Check room temperature.** Adjust it appropriately for the number of people who will be in the room and the size of the space you will all be occupying.
- ✓ **Check audiovisual hardware and light switches.** Conduct one last run-through to make sure everything is still running smoothly. Know which switches work which lights so you can achieve the ideal lighting for audiovisual materials and note-taking. Check window-darkening equipment and make sure blinds or shades are working properly.
- ✓ **Check arrangements.** Make sure you have everything you need—including the training space for the entire time you need it.
- ✓ **Lay out training supplies.** If you will be demonstrating tools or equipment, make sure you have everything you need.



Source: <https://simplifytraining.com/article/how-to-conduct-an-effective-training-session/>

Teaching methods and learning tools

The goal of the on-job training is to teach valuable skills, knowledge and competences needed for the trainees (or future employees) to perform specific tasks (or jobs) within the workplace. The training employs the existing workplace premises, tools, machines, documents and equipment and is evolved within the normal job environment or even during the actual work. It may however happen elsewhere in dedicated training rooms or workstations.


In the **hospitality industry** the **training is focused** on:

- ➔ Service;
- ➔ Interaction with guest;
- ➔ Performing routine operations;
- ➔ Dealing with emergencies and unexpected situations;

The training is designed according to the **specific job** in each department of the company and hence the skills and competences of the learners that should be acquired during the training may vary (see the Table bellow)


Competences and skills relevant to the different departments within the Hospitality company:

Department	Tasks and Responsibilities	Competences and Skills
<p>Front Office</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Welcoming guests and potential clients ➔ Check-in and check out ➔ Rooms assignment ➔ Information about hotel services, assistance to guests' needs ➔ Handling guest's complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Communication and interpersonal skills ✓ Foreign language skills ✓ Problem solving ✓ Use of computer and reservation systems ✓ Work under pressure ✓ Tradesman skills
<p>F&B and Catering</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Table setting and preparation of function rooms ➔ Greeting customers, escorting them to seats ➔ Taking orders ➔ Serving food and beverages ➔ Giving information, recommendations and advices on the menu ➔ Receiving payments ➔ Coordinating with team workers regarding events, parties, group sittings etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Knowledge of service techniques, various table settings, degustation techniques etc. ✓ Communication and interpersonal skills ✓ Team work skills ✓ Knowledge of food items, ingredients, health information etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Communicating with guests, contractors and providers of various services ➔ Close communication with F&B department for the catering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attention to details ✓ Excellent interpersonal and communication skills ✓ Problem solving competences ✓ Stress management, ability to handle pressure and to react to emergency situation
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Training should be tailored as much as possible to the needs of every individual within the group. Therefore, you should make an effort to research the background of the trainee, where they are coming from and what they are aiming at, their preferences, their strengths and weaknesses and even the group dynamics such as who is the leader and who are the followers, who are the extroverts and the introverts, the active and the passive participants, etc. The personalized training brings more benefits for everyone involved than the mass, “one size fits all” approach. In addition, when the trainees feel that their personal issues are being addressed, their confidence and motivation will increase, thus leading to better learning outcome.


When you get more familiar with the trainees, you should adapt the teaching session considering their preferred learning styles. Most people are more receptive to one way or other, while some prefer combination of several methods. The **learning styles** are as follows:



Learn by **DOING**.

Learning by Doing

- Involve the trainees in an actual task and daily operations
- Give them access to real work experience




Learning by Observing

- Demonstrate work techniques
- Showcase examples
- Prepare power point presentation



Learning by Feeling

- Prepare team building activities such as role plays and games
- Share personal experience and feelings
- Give platform for more social interaction



Learning by Thinking

- Provide opportunity for independent research and study
- Give additional materials such as print outs, books, articles, internet sites for further learning

You may employ various **training methods and tools** during the sessions. Here are some possible options:

- 🗨️ **Classroom-style training:** traditional method employed in a school setting. Appropriate for theoretical lessons and conveyance of information.
- 🗨️ **Demonstration:** performed by the trainer or other skilled employer. Usually this implies showing techniques and technology of work for repetitive tasks (such as arranging tables, providing services, preparing dishes, cleaning, filling in forms etc.)
- 🗨️ **Role-play scenarios:** allow trainee to take part in various “games”, imitating real life cases and situations. Let them be on the side of the customers, employers, managers etc. Analyze and evaluate their performance
- 🗨️ **Discussion:** Trainees will be involved in discussing various controversial topics related to the learning outcomes. They are expected to back up their point of view based on the study materials, their own professional or personal experience, previously accumulated knowledge, notions and ideas. All discussions should be conducted in a friendly and constructive manner while personal critics and offensive behavior should be avoided and sanctioned

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