

Topic: Education/Employment

Activity: Studying Versus Working: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Objective

- ✓ Participants will become familiar with some of the decisions people in the United States face regarding education and employment opportunities.
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify pros and cons of employment versus education.

Lesson Time

25 minutes

Materials

- ☐ Copies of “Studying Versus Working: A Critical Incident,” 1 per participant (included)
- ☐ Flipchart paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Tape

Introduction

Having to decide between working and getting an education is a difficult choice that many people in the United States face. It is important to weigh your choices, brainstorm thoughts and ideas, and discuss decisions with family members (who might be affected by your decision) and other trusted adults.

Practice

1. Put participants into small groups of 3-4. Ask each group to choose someone to report back later to the larger group.
2. Distribute copies of “Studying Versus Working” to each participant. Ask participants to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group. If the facilitator senses that most participants are unable to read, s/he should read the critical incident aloud to the large group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to deal with Kiran’s situation. Some ideas might include the following:
 - Working part-time while studying part-time
 - Working and saving money for a while before going to school
 - Finding out if the auto body shop owner would be willing to assist Kiran with GED classes
 - Finding someone at the shop who could help Kiran improve his English (which in turn could help him with his GED test) while he is working
 - Asking the shop owner if a position would be available in the future, after Kiran has given himself a specific amount of time to study
4. Bring the large group together and ask group reporters to summarize the main points of their small-group discussions. Record these on flipchart paper and discuss as necessary.
5. Lead a discussion addressing any of the following Reflection Questions that you feel may not have been adequately addressed during the previous discussion:

Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident?
- What could Kiran do?
- What are some possible consequences of Kiran’s choices?
- How would you handle this situation?
- Who can Kiran talk with about this? What resources are available?

Studying Versus Working: A Critical Incident

Kiran* was 18 when he arrived in the United States with his mother and three younger siblings. He was very excited about the educational opportunities available to him, and immediately enrolled in an English class for adults at the local community college. His mother was able to get a job at a local grocery store, and his three younger siblings enrolled at the local public elementary school. Kiran helped the family by taking responsibility for some household duties and walking his younger siblings to and from school each day.

One of Kiran's neighbors was a very friendly and helpful man who owned an auto body shop nearby. Knowing that Kiran was hard-working and responsible, he offered Kiran training and a job. Kiran was reluctant to take the offer because he was hoping to get his General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and attend college as a full-time student.

Our thanks to RefugeeWorks and its Employment Training Institute participants for the information on which this critical incident is based.



* This resource is based on the real-life experience of refugees resettled in the United States. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.

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This document is a product of the Orientation Technical Assistance Project, funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, Grant No. 90RB0037. The views herein do not necessarily represent views held by the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

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