

## **Educational Programs and Practical Examples for Contributing to Work Engagement**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Companies are constantly seeking talented personnel who are highly engaged in their work. The factors that influence work engagement are job resources and personal resources. In this study, the progress in "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations" is evaluated following the implementation of the proposed educational program. Twelve activities for new employees of the target consulting company were implemented over three years. The contents of the activities that are considered to have a strong influence on "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations" are described. Quantitative and qualitative evaluations were conducted by means of questionnaires. Finally, future challenges are discussed.

Keywords: Work engagement, Education program, Job resources, Personal resources.

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

People with high work engagement take pride in what they do, work enthusiastically, gain energy from their performance and exude vitality (Shimazu, 2010). Companies are constantly seeking for such personnel. As a result of having taken part in various projects while being authentically engaged in the field of human resource development to date, we have been focusing on education and leadership development for the younger generation in particular. However, as the values of generations have been changing significantly along with the change of times due to the evolution of technology, we presume that the human resource industry itself has come to a turning point in which changes are required. For this reason, companies are constantly seeking for such talented personnel. Previous empirical studies have identified job resources and personal resources as the essential factors that influence work engagement (Shimazu, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker et al., 2007).

According to Shimazu (2010), personal resources can be improved by a "positive

self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" (Hobfoll et al., 2003). Furthermore, "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations" is said to enhance job resources as they are physical, social, and organizational factors that can i) reduce stressors and respective physical and psychological costs, ii) promote target achievement, and iii) promote personal growth and development (Shimazu, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker et al., 2007). Factors i) and iii) are considered to be applicable to this study. Therefore, in this study, we propose an educational program that can promote "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations".

The target of the survey is a venture company that has continued to expand. This company was selected for this study due to the challenges it has been facing in human resource development for its new employees. The nature of the company's business, consulting, requires its employees to be able to perform a wide variety of complex tasks and accommodate to circumstances. The target company requires new employees to undergo several years of training as it is crucial to prevent employees from leaving their jobs. For this reason, the target company was considered to be an appropriate subject of this study.

Next, the novelty of this research will be described. In recent years, companies have been exploring how to educate and understand the values and behaviors of the millennial generation (born between the 1980s and the mid-1990s), the representatives of the new generation. At international conferences in the field of human resource development, several keywords such as "agile", "microlearning", and "psychological safety", have been referred to as effective educational practices for the millennial generation. However, it is considered that the optimal methodology is still being searched by the global community.

Various approaches can be considered for the millennial generation whose main goal, according to Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), is not in building a career, and whose representatives, according to Altizer (2010), prefer flexible jobs and work-life balance. However, the aim of this study is to contribute to an increase in both "the happiness of the workforce" and "the promotion of growth potential of companies" by deliberating on the contribution to "work engagement" from an educational point of view. In addition, preceding studies on work engagement have demonstrated that the more abundant personal resources and job resources are, the more work engagement will increase, and that it has a positive influence on companies. For example, according to Despoina et al., (2009) as job resources and personal resources increase the workforce, organizations need educational programs for enhancing employees' positive self-assessment. Furthermore, Shimazu (2010) mentions that activities, such as studying, which are related to self-help and centered on self-care for enhancing personal and job resources in order to increase work engagement, as well as public aid focusing on improvements in the workplace environment are necessary.

Methods for measuring work engagement are also described in several other papers. Furthermore, regarding engagement and employee engagement, Jonathon et al. (2008) state that activities that incorporate engagement lead to positive outcomes on work performance and retention in companies, a statement that is related to work engagement, although not entirely. Employee engagement is positively and significantly related to employees' productivity, creativity, innovation, customer service, and in-role and extra-role behaviors (Piyali et al., 2016). Providing employees with support at the workplace may be a strategic way to enhance their level of

engagement (Piyali et al., 2016). From the above, it can be said that the uniqueness of this study is in the proposal of specific educational programs from the viewpoint of educational programs aimed at enhancing work engagement, and respective application to companies.

Educational programs with the aim to contribute to work engagement have been seldom recognized as it is generally considered that there are many effective educational programs that are appropriate for the characteristics of each company and the diversity of participants. Therefore, the versatility of individual programs is debatable even if such programs were introduced. However, in response to such uncertainty, the leading author of this paper has implemented the educational program described in this study, which is based on responses from over 300 companies and more than 10,000 students across many industries over 15 years.

Two common points are being considered based on the findings of the program. The first point is the difficulties faced by new hires that have just joined society after completing their studies. New graduates have to deal with loss in confidence due to embarrassing situations at work for the first time in their lives, no matter how different the corporate philosophy is or the industries in which they work. The second point is related to the peculiarity of the millennial generation, for whom building a career is not the main goal, but rather having flexibility in their jobs and preferring to have a good work-life balance. Therefore, the educational program described in this study is aimed at increasing work engagement considering these two common points. Finally, future challenges are discussed.

#### **A. Understanding the concept of being in another person's position**

Although it is possible to understand the concept of being in another person's position, it is difficult to truly understand what others think, and to act based on another person's point of view. Acting upon the knowledge of what others think is itself a self-conscious task. Two people, A and B, pair up, and position themselves back to back. A has a sheet with a simple picture, and B has a blank sheet of paper. B draws a picture based on A's description of the picture. However, B is limited by several behavioral restrictions. First, B can only say "yes" or "no", and second, they cannot see each other's drawing. Therefore, this activity is focused on performing an action while understanding the situation of the other person. As a result of the person describing the picture experiencing how to describe it to another person, this task, in which the person who is listening sees things differently from the person who is describing, enables the deepening of the understanding of being in another person's position. This task can be applied as a method to communicate to a supervisor at work when reporting or consulting work.

#### **B. Understanding various interpretations of circumstances**

Participants learn the relationships among human values, emotions, and actions based on cognitive behavioral therapy (Tanuma et al., 2017), and consider their daily life events as case studies. Feedback from instructors or seniors and failure in completing tasks may be taken negatively by participants, and impact their autonomy and the desire to face challenges. For this reason, concrete case studies as discussed in the group in order to avoid such situations. Constantly questioning one's notions and thoughts enable a person to change their circumstances and communicate with the others. Therefore, this activity aims to improve "positive self-evaluation related to the

ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations" in addition to leading to better relationships. Furthermore, young generations may face difficulties in acquiring a deep understanding of cognitive behavioral therapy if they are exposed to it abruptly. Therefore, it may be effective to use illustrations and cartoons when introducing the subject.

Table 1 Programs for new employees of the target company over three years.

Target	Program Title	Detailed contents of the program
Year 1	Business manner	-Business manners as social workers, interpersonal reception
	A review of the training camp	-Refreshing a camp to foster teamwork
	Improve communication skills	-About human values - <u>Understanding the concept of being in another person's position.</u> - <u>Understanding various interpretations of circumstances.</u> -Communication skills required on work
	Working method and followership	-Problem solving -Followership
Year 2	Time Management	- <u>Prioritize tasks</u> - <u>Increase operational efficiency</u> -Looking back on how to use time to increase productivity
	Talent development	- <u>Awareness of one's own strengths</u> - <u>Interview of peers on one's own strengths</u> - <u>Feedback from peers on one's strengths</u> - <u>Changing the perspective on weaknesses</u> - <u>Discovering one's own values</u> - <u>Connecting one's own values to the company's vision and business</u> - <u>How to utilize one's skills in the company</u>
	Productivity improvement	-Self-analysis for productivity improvement -Target setting for productivity improvement
	Resilience	-Deepen understanding of resilience
Year 3	Mindfulness	- <u>Practicing mindfulness</u>
	To work as a professional	-Learn important minds to work as a professional -Setting goals as a professional
	Dialogs and coaching	-How to motivate your juniors -Coaching practice
	Innovation	-Propose ideas for better workplaces

Table 2 Programs dealt with in this research in this study.

	Program contents	Category	Time required	Expectable Effects / Aims
A	Understanding the concept of being in another person's position.	Workshop	10 minutes	FHR
B	Understanding various interpretations of circumstances	Workshop	30 minutes	FHR /PSE
C	Prioritize tasks	Workshop	15 minutes each	Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings / Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)/ Able to be relieved from stress
D	Increase operational efficiency	Workshop	30 minutes	Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings / Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)/ Able to be relieved from stress
E	Awareness of one's own strengths	Advance homework	-	DSA
F	Interview of peers on one's own strengths	Advance homework	-	DSA/ PSE / FHR
G	Feedback from peers on one's strengths	workshop	10 minutes	DSA/ PSE / FHR
H	Changing the perspective on weaknesses	workshop	15 minutes	DSA/ PSE / FHR
I	Discovering one's own values	workshop	30 minutes	DSA/ PSE
J	Connecting one's own values to the company's vision and business	workshop	15 minutes	DSA/ PSE
K	How to utilize one's skills in the company	workshop	20 minutes	DSA/ PSE
L	Practicing mindfulness	workshop	60 minutes	DSA/ PSE / FHR / Able to be relieved from stress

FHR refers to "Fostering human relations."

DSA refers to "Deepening self-awareness."

PSE refers to "Positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience."

### C. Prioritize tasks / D. Increase work efficiency

The purpose of these activities is to have participants visualize and organize their own situation, enabling them to find hints to solve problems (tasks), improve

motivation for trying new things, and relieve stress. First of all, participants write their issues, what they have to do, and what they want to do on a sticky note. Then, each participant plots what they wrote on three graphs.

The first graph indicates the priority order based on two axes, importance and time. All priorities can be visualized with this method. As the priorities have been plotted on a graph with these axes as opposed to being itemized (Hiramoto, 2014), the decision making process in priority order is facilitated, a distinctive feature of this method (Figure 1). The second graph enables participants to independently recognize non-urgent and important tasks and immediately set goals for future progress (Stephen R. Covey, 2015) (Figure 2). In the third graph, participants plot what they wrote on two axes, skilled/unskilled and like/dislike. This graph enables participants to understand the reasons why progress in their work is hindered as well as encourage them to think of improvements for smooth progress (Hiramoto, 2014) (see Figure 3).

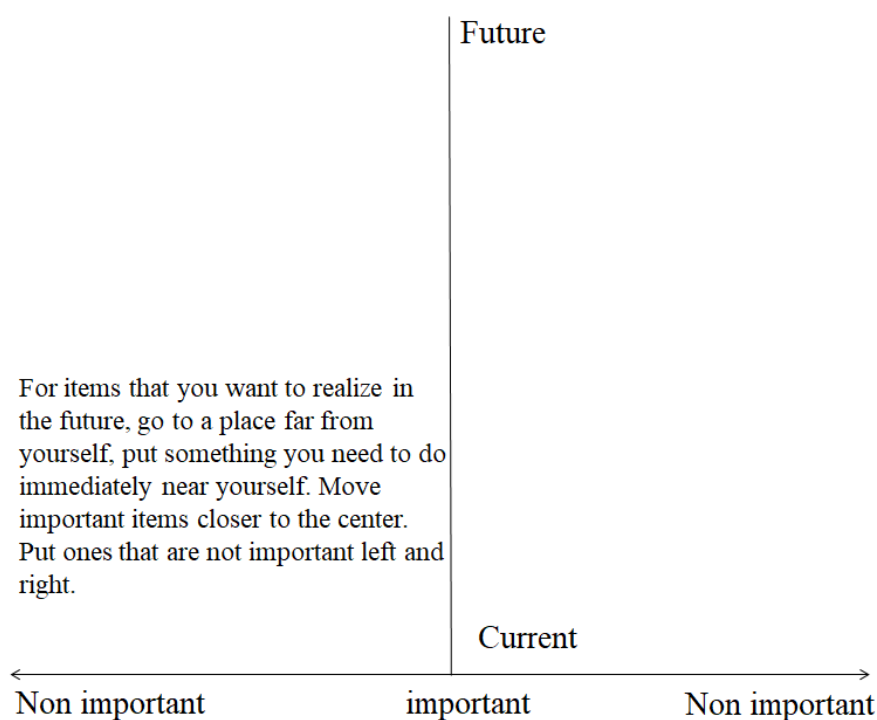


Figure 1 Importance and time axes. (Source:Hiramoto,2014)

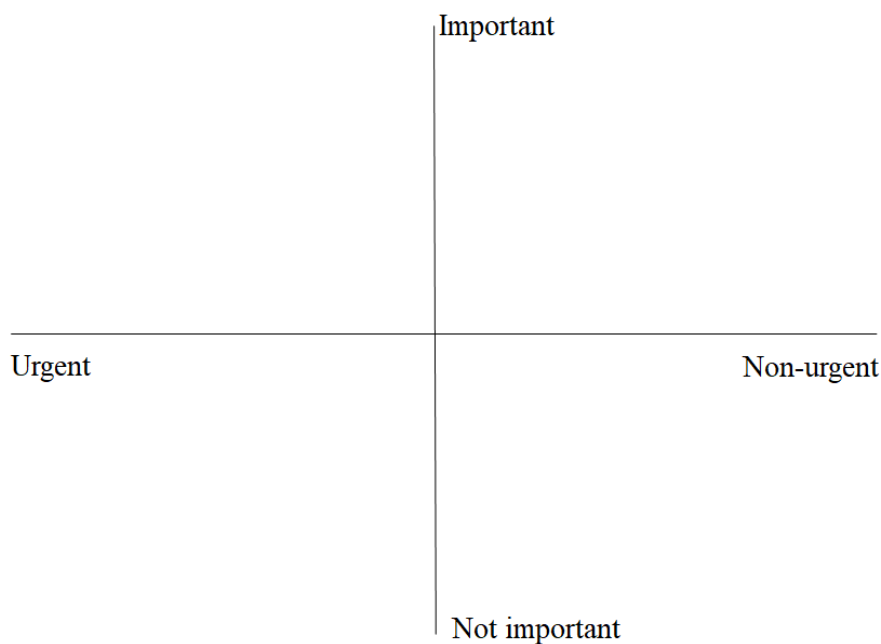


Figure 2 Importance and the urgency axes. (Source: Stephen R. Covey,2015)

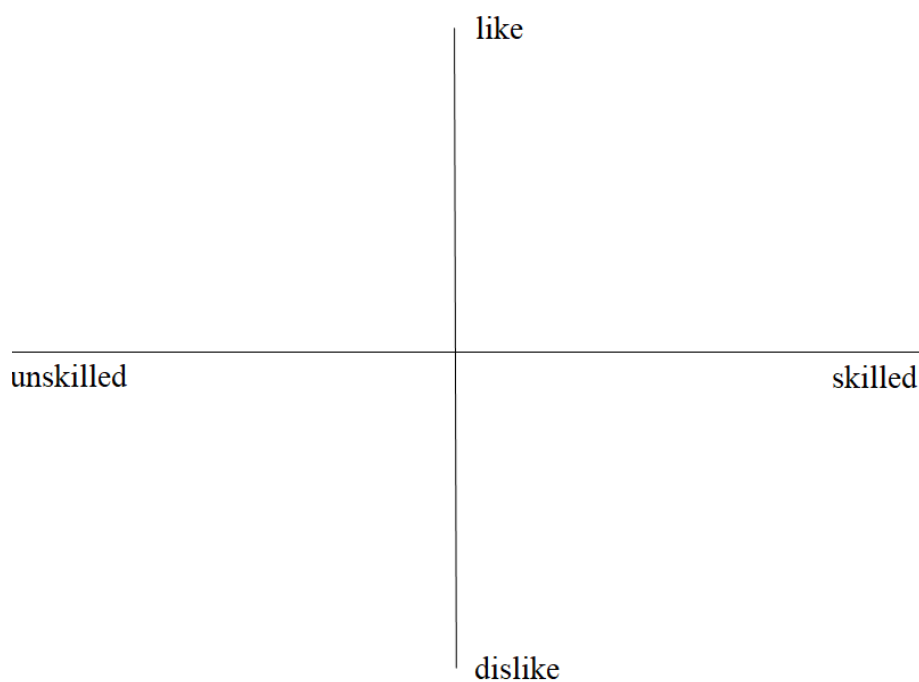


Figure 3 Skilled/unskilled and like/dislike axes. (Source: Hiramoto,2014)

**E. Awareness of one’s own strengths**

Participants identify their top five strengths using StrengthsFinder (Marcus Buckingham et al., 2001). This tool was developed by the American company Gallup Organization, which has been conducting public opinion surveys and consultations on a global scale in order to develop human resources for 80 years. Participants analyze their strengths in advance with this tool.

### **F. Interview of peers on one's own strengths**

Participants interview peers who have a thorough knowledge of the participants' work style, such as in-house seniors and subordinates, and people who know said participants well, such as family members and friends. Peers are asked to identify what they feel the participants' strengths are, and how to further improve these strengths. The purpose of this preliminary task is not only for participants to understand their own strengths but also to strengthen the relationships with peers (Figure 4).

### **G. Feedback from peers on one's strengths**

Participants form groups of between four to six people. Group members take turns and share what they think the target participant's strengths and positive points are with the target participant. A time limit of one minute is set for each member. Meanwhile, the remaining group members take turns and share the strengths of the target participant with the group. This activity enables participants to objectively understand how they are perceived leading to closer relationships. The aim of this activity is to significantly improve relationships between employees by bringing them closer.

### **H. Changing the perspective on weaknesses**

Assumptions on one's own weaknesses hinder one's capacity to face challenges and weaken one's coping abilities. The purpose of this activity is to have participants overcome such limitations and increase the probability of changing weaknesses into strengths. Furthermore, this activity, which is based on the concept of reframing, aims to have participants understand the importance of building relationships with colleagues, recognizing positive aspects in people, and respecting people, in addition to improving self-esteem and self-efficacy. Reframing is a term mainly used in the field of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) which means the transformation of the human psychological framework (Kasaoki, 2008).

This activity is performed in groups of between four to six people. First of all, each person writes three weaknesses. Group members, excluding the target participant, discuss whether or not said weaknesses can be considered strengths if viewed from another perspective, or perceived as a positive personality trait. A time limit of one minute is set for each member who shares their opinion with the group. For example, perspectives on weaknesses such as "carelessness" and "negativity" can be changed to "carefulness" and "consciousness" respectively.

### **I. Discovering one's own values**

The Demartini et al. (2013) method is used to have participants discover the values they consider important. First of all, participants consider questions that explore what their values are, and write each answer on a different Post-it note. However, participants select and add additional answers for these questions being discussed at the time. After that, the Post-it notes are grouped by similarity and participants learn which values they appreciate from the common themes observed from each group. In this activity, participants answer questions such as "How do I spend my time?", "What makes you feel the most energetic?", "What do you think about the most?", "What do you want to learn the most?", and "What moves your heart the most?" (Demartini et al., 2013).



Person who answered the interview	What do you think is my strengths?	Please give me advice to further expand my strengths.

Figure 4 Interview of peers on one’s own strengths.

**J. Connecting one’s values to the company’s vision and business**

Participants’ values are connected to the company’s vision and business by the Demartini et al. (2013) method. The purpose of this activity is to have participants acknowledge the purpose of work once again. Participants discover the relationship between their strengths and values and the company’s vision and business by answering questions one to four successively and completing the diagram represented in Figure 5.

**K. How to utilize one’s skills in the company**

In this activity, participants consider how to deal with work in the future by combining their strengths and weaknesses with the company’s work environment. The SWOT analysis (Pickton et al., 1998) was modified in order to organize what kind of strategies and improvements will be taken to demonstrate participants’ skills (Figure 6).

**L. Practicing mindfulness**

Participants engage in mindful meditation after confirming its purpose according to the certain steps. According to Ogino et al. (2015), the steps are as follows: a person sits on a chair, corrects their posture while relaxing, slightly closes their eyes, and repeats the following four steps: 1. Follow Breath 2. Distraction 3. Notice Distraction 4. Reorientation of Attention. At first, participants meditate for approximately three minutes and repeat in order to incorporate the procedure in their daily work life. The purpose of mindfulness meditation is to cultivate the ability to release mental blocks, empathize with others, be resilient, transmit happiness, inventiveness, and demonstrate our abilities.

Please describe your current work details in detail.  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p>	Please describe your company's vision.  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p>
Please think about how your work done in box 1 links with your important values.  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p>	Please think about how your company's vision links with your important values.  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b></p>

Figure 5 Connecting one’s own values to the company’s vision and business.  
(Source:Demartini et al.,2013)

		About company	
		Opportunities	Threats
		Thinking that it is opportunity for you in the company environment	Thinking that it is inconvenient for you in the company environment.
About me	Strengths	What opportunities can you gain in your company's good environment by making the most of your strengths?	How will you overcome the inconvenient environment by using your strengths?
	Weaknesses	Depending on your own weaknesses, what sort of things do you need to avoid losing the opportunity of the internal environment.	How can we do to combine our weaknesses and the threat of the internal environment so that the worst situation is not invoked?

Figure 6 How to utilize one’s skills in the company.

Participants engage in journaling, writing mindfulness, after performing several mindfulness meditation sessions. Journaling encourages introspection by having participants write their feelings without analyzing or processing them. Such type of writing leads to awareness of the current situation of itself. Writing based on a theme may lead to discoveries within the theme. Journaling increases IQ (index of intelligence), enhances the ability to show compassion, promotes goal achievement, promotes emotional intelligence (EQ), memory and understanding, strengthens discipline, improves communication skills, heals, evokes creativity, and fosters

self-confidence (Yoshida, 2017; Huffingtonpost 10 Surprising Benefits You'll Get From Keeping a Journal, 2017).

Table 3 For programs that affect the questions.

	The question	For programs that affect the questions.
1	Deepening self-awareness.	E/F/G/H/I/J/K/L(See Table 2)
2	Increased feelings of self-esteem.	See Figure 7
3	Motivation to try new things improves.	See Figure 7
4	Improvement of point of view and the mindset on various matters.	A/B/H(See Table 2)
5	Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings.	C/D/L(See Table 2)
6	Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks).	See Figure 7
7	Able to be relieved from stress.	See Figure 7
8	Able to discover ways to improve human relationships.	A/B/H/L(See Table 2)
9	Feel the importance of being in the position of another person.	See Figure 8
10	Having an increased feeling of accepting and respecting colleagues.	See Figure 8
11	Having an increased feeling of gratefulness to the surroundings.	See Figure 8
12	Deepening bonds with colleagues.	See Figure 8

### 3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was conducted to verify the effects of the program. The questionnaire was designed focusing on "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience", which is considered an element of personal resources in work engagement, and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations", which is considered an element of job resources. Questions 1 to 7 are related to "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience", and questions 8 to 12 are related to "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations". Refer to Table 3 for activities that affect the questions.

The relationship between questions and "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" are as follows: "1. Deepening self-awareness", leads to "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem" and as a result, "3. Motivation to try new things improves". In addition, the participants were "7. Able to relieve themselves from stress" due to improved "5. Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings" and "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)", which resulted in being "7. Able to be relieved from stress", leading to a "3. Improved

motivation to try new things". In addition, the "4. Improvement of point of view and the mindset on various matters" is related to "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem" and "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" (Figure 7).

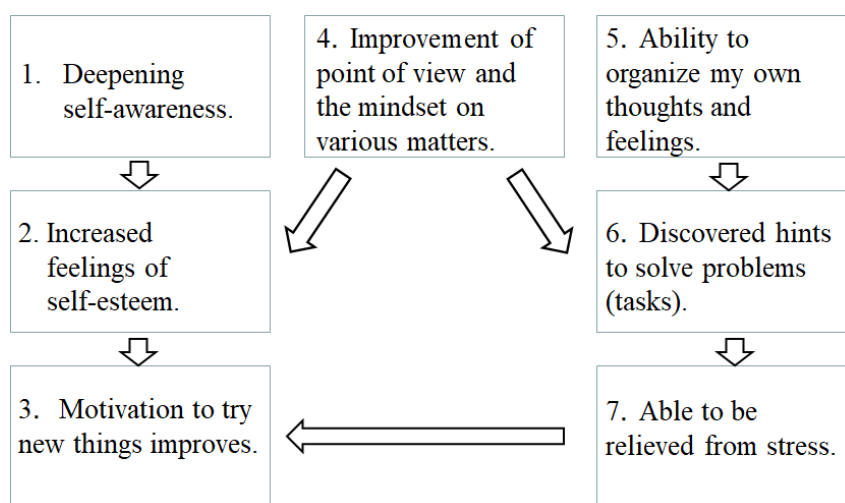


Figure 7 Relationship between questions on “positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience”.

The relationship between questions and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations" are as follows. By being "8. Able to discover ways to improve human relationships", participants could "9. Feel the importance of being in the position of another person", "10. Having increased feelings of accepting and respecting colleagues", "11. Having increased feelings of gratitude to their peers", and finally, they could "12. Deepen bonds with colleagues" (Figure 8).

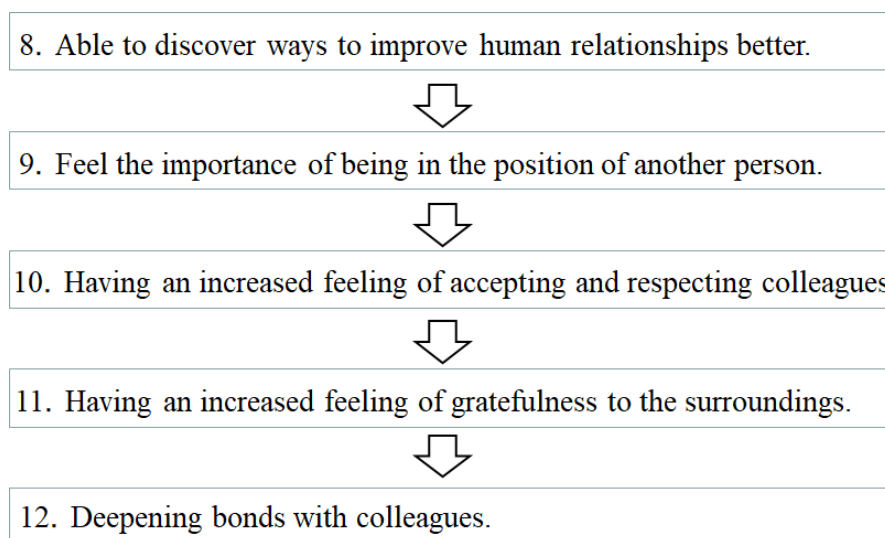


Figure 8 Relationship between questions on “fostering teamwork and the improving human relations”.

Table 4 Questionnaire Results.

Category		The question	Average score	Agree/ Total
Positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience.	1	Deepening self-awareness.	8.23	21/24
	2	Increased feelings of self-esteem.	7.69	16/24
	3	Motivation to try new things improves.	7.43	14/24
	4	Improvement of point of view and the mindset on various matters.	8.12	18/24
	5	Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings.	8.43	17/24
	6	Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks).	7.76	16/24
	7	Able to be relieved from stress.	7.74	16/24
Fostering teamwork and the improving human relations.	8	Able to discover ways to improve human relationships.	8.42	14/24
	9	Feel the importance of being in the position of another person.	8.15	19/24
	10	Having an increased feeling of accepting and respecting colleagues.	9.16	18/24
	11	Having an increased feeling of gratefulness to the surroundings.	8.15	18/24
	12	Deepening bonds with colleagues.	9.16	21/24

### 3.1. Questionnaire implementation methodology

Target people were asked to evaluate the questions and write comments. The following 10-level options were provided from 1. Do not agree at all, to 5. Neither agree or disagree, to 10. Strongly agree. For comments, participants were asked to write the reasons for the evaluation of each item.

- Test subjects

14 employees (five males / nine females) in the second year of regular employment and ten employees (five men / five females) in the third year of regular employment, all of whom participated in the training program.

## 4. EVALUATION RESULTS

### 4.1. Questionnaire Results

The results are indicated in Table 4. For questions no. 1 to 7 on "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience", the average is 7.91, and for questions no. 8 to 12 related to "fostering the awareness of coworkers and the improvement of human relations", the average is 8.60. Therefore, the training program is considered effective for "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" and "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations."

## 4.2. Relationship between questions

As the relationship between the questions in Figure 7 and Figure 8 become clearer, implementation priority becomes clearer accordingly leading to the identification of future tasks. Said questions are considered for this reason.

Comments that are related to "2. Increased feeling of self-affirmation Increased feelings of self-esteem" due to "1. Deepening self-awareness" are as follows:

- By knowing myself, my mindset, which tended to be negative became positive.
- The work that finds strength led to confidence because I could understand visually.
- I rediscovered myself, and my anxiety was reduced.
- I was made to think what I should become as an adult.

On the other hand, there are opinions that the output was not good causing inability to deepen understanding within the provided time, and individual follow-up is necessary.

Comments that are related to "3. Improved motivation to try new things" due to "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem" are as follows:

- When I understood what I wanted to do, it was because I wanted to do it.
- I realized that I learned from the path that I have been and got the opportunity to lead my own a path from now.
- I thought that I want to improve the company even more.
- I become motivated for my own future

On the other hand, there are opinions such as: "I have no experience of success and I am not confident", "I cannot affirm myself too much", so we set up life-sized goals that can be practiced on the field, and we need follow-up leading to small success experiences at a later date.

Comments that are related to "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem" due to "4. Improvement of point of view and the mindset on various matters" are as follows:

- Changed to positive thinking.
- I was able to learn that my weaknesses with actually strengths.
- It became an opportunity to think about myself positively.
- I changed in a good direction and my scope of thinking expanded.

Comments that are related to "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" due to "4. Improvement of point of view and the mindset on various matters" are as follows:

- The judgment criteria of various matters are more than I thought.
- I can get new knowledge. I can see things from different perspectives.
- I obtained opportunities to receive opinions for a new perspective on one matter.
- I learned how to understand problems

Comments that are related to "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" due to "5. Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings" are as follows:

- By seriously thinking that the problem is I was able to understand how to deal with it.

- I have obtained many hints. It is important to dig deep.
- I was able to reset and want to have a new start.

On the other hand, there are opinions mentioning that time was insufficient and there were individual differences, so by enriching the preliminary tasks before participation, Participants can prepare accordingly and their participations can be more effective.

Comments that are related to "7. Able to be relieved from stress" due to "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" are as follows:

- I noticed that I have been suffering from surprisingly small things.

- I felt a little bit relieved because I could think seriously on what I have been worrying about.

- In the end, I thought that it is important for me to continue listening

On the other hand, there are opinions mentioning that the problems remain the same and that the problems could not be solved within the allocated time, so that it is necessary to understand the problem itself and encourage self-sustainability to solve on their own in daily life.

Comments that are related to "3. Improved motivation to try new things" due to "7. Able to be relieved from stress", are as follows:

- I learned that I can change.

- Although not yet completed, but my motivation has improved.

- It seems that I can learn from failures.

On the other hand, there are opinions mentioning "I want to talk more" and "I could not say what I wanted to say", so that in addition to individual follow-ups, it is necessary to encourage autonomy by themselves by solving challenges with ingenuity.

Comments that are related to "9. Feeling the importance of being in the position of another person" due to "8. Being able to discover ways to improve human relationships" are as follows:

- I am becoming less self-centered on thinking about various matters.

- I am now able to think about the other's feelings

- I am now able to understand the actions of my superiors and juniors.

- I felt the importance of altruism.

Comments that are related to "10. Having an increased feeling of accepting and respecting colleagues" due to "9. Feeling the importance of being in the position of another person" are as follows:

- I feel like I want to know more what others think about.

- I feel that I need to understand others.

- I found a way to listen to others and accept what they think.

Comments that are related to "11. Having an increased feeling of gratefulness to the surroundings" due to "10. Having an increased feeling of accepting and respecting colleagues" are as follows:

- I want to thank everyone who works around me.

- I realize that I am being supported.

- I can now feel thankful to others.

- Because I was asked to think deeply, I can think up to my parents.

Comments that are related to "12. Deepening bonds with colleagues" due to "11. Having an increased feeling of gratefulness to the surroundings", are as follows:

- Thanks to this training, I can become this close with my colleagues in three years.

- I can realize again that there are colleagues who are supporting me.

- It is a time to recognize that people who work in the same company do not necessarily have the same way of thinking, which require everyone to respect and understand each other.

- It became a place of opinion of everyone, and the bond has deepened.

Based on the above comments, the relationship between the questions in Table 3, Figure 7, and Figure 8 are considered to be effective. Therefore, it became clear that emphasizing activities that are related to the questions that start the relationship such as "1. Deepening self-awareness", "4. Improvement of point of view and mindset on various matters", "5. Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings", "8. Being

able to discover ways to improve human relationships", has a positive influence on other items. On the other hand, some participants expressed that lack of time and inability to express their opinions hindered deep understanding. The following considerations are independent from the subjectivity of participants and the matters related to the program.

Regarding questions with many comments indicating lack of time, namely "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" and "7. Able to be relieved from stress", the results of the questionnaire suggest that, once again, it is necessary to review these questions as the effectiveness of the program is influenced by participants' willingness to take the initiative.

### 4.3 Effectiveness of the program

The effectiveness of the program will be considered through the comments on each question.

Comments that can be judged to be effective in regards of "1. Deepening self-awareness " are as follows:

- It reminds me of my natural thoughts and perfect feelings even on hard days when I am being pressed with work.
- I was able to further understand my thoughts through visualization.
- The opportunity to learn about oneself again by getting an objective opinion.

Comments that can be judged to be effective in regards of "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem" are as follows:

- By knowing myself, my mindset, which tended to be negative became positive.
- Through the lecture I have learned the importance of treating myself well.
- I was able to learn that my weaknesses with actually strengths.

Comments that can be judged to be effective in regards of "3. Improved motivation to try new things" are as follows:

- I was able to learn that I could change.
- It seems that I can learn from failures.
- It led to wanting to try to challenge oneself to new things in order to change myself.

Comments that can be judged to be effective in regards of "4. Improvement of point of view and the mindset on various matters" are as follows:

- I was able to change my point of view.
- The criteria for judgment regarding different things have increased beyond just my own ways of thinking.

Comments that can be judged to be effective in regards of "5. Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings" are as follows:

- It was an opportunity to know what I really think about by exploring my mind and heart for the first time.
- It helped me to become a better self as I had time to think after having cleared my mind out.
- I was able to reset and want to have a new start.
- The time of mindfulness was very good. I could relax.

Comments that can be judged to be effective for "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" are as follows:

- I learned how to treat problems.
- By seriously thinking that the problem is I was able to understand how to deal with it.



- There are hints to be found in advice given by peers.
- Because it is an opportunity to receive opinions from new viewpoints on the same thing.

Comments that can be judged to be effective for being "7. Able to be relieved from stress" are as follows:

- I noticed that I have been suffering from surprisingly small things.
- I was filled with energy when I took the training.
- I became able to restrain stress because of the training.
- I felt a bit little lighter by thinking seriously about what I was troubled by.

The following considerations can be made from the comments in questions 1 to 7 on "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience". One comment on "1. Deepening self-awareness" mentioned that "I was able to further understand my thoughts through visualization", and another comment on "5. Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings" mentioned that "it was an opportunity to know what I really think about by exploring my mind and heart for the first time". These comments suggest that, regarding these two questions, the visualization of one's thoughts and feelings are beneficial. It is challenging for a person to express oneself when visualizing thoughts unless said person has an understanding of the surrounding environment. Therefore, visualization contributes to the understanding of the surrounding environment. For example, the thinking process involved in the deepening of self-awareness activity where participants discover their own values, participants discover their own values based on their surrounding environment.

In addition, based on the comments on "1. Deepening self-awareness", that mention "The opportunity to learn about oneself again by getting an objective opinion" and "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" that states that "There are hints to be found in the advice given by peers", providing a lot of time for communication among the participants is considered beneficial as it had been found to be effective. Feedback from participants who joined the company in the same period and in similar positions leads to an objective understanding of the surrounding environment and oneself.

Other comments, such as "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem", "3. Improved motivation to try new things", "4. Improvement of point of view and mindset on various matters", and "7. Able to be relieved from stress", suggest that an approach in which maximum positive feedback is given on all questions and participants are encouraged to focus on their strengths is considered effective, due to the impact of instructors' feedback on participants. When advice is solicited, positive feedback contributes to resilience for recovering from failure as said failures are perceived positively and possibilities for change are discovered. In addition, changes in one's own perception resulting from positive feedback leads to the ability to successfully control the surrounding environment. Furthermore, if concerned participants learn how to use their strengths, an approach in which participants are encouraged to focus on their strengths will lead to participants having a positive self-evaluation.

The comment "By knowing myself, my mindset, which tended to be negative became positive" from "2. Increased feelings of self-esteem." also leads to participants having a positive self-evaluation. Having participants perform activity H "Changing the perspective on weaknesses" through activity E "Awareness of one's own strengths", and then receiving feedback through activity F "Interview of peers on

one's own strengths" and activity G "Feedback from peers on one's strengths" will lead to participants becoming more positive, possibly due to the contribution of the above to positive self-evaluation.

The comment "It led to wanting to try to challenge oneself to new things in order to change myself." in "3. Improved motivation to try new things" suggests that the feeling of wanting to challenge oneself to new things contributes to an increase in resilience, which is the ability to recover from failures. In addition, the comment "It seems that I can learn from failures" demonstrates that resilience, which is the ability to recover from failures, increases as a result of switching to a positive attitude towards moving on (by understanding that learning is involved in failures) due to the understanding that, unless failures are treated positively, nothing will change.

The comment "I was able to learn that I could change" demonstrates that resilience increases when possibilities to change oneself are discovered and the motivation to move on is improved. The comment "I felt a bit little lighter by thinking seriously about what I was troubled by" in being "7. Able to be relieved from stress" is related to the understanding of the surrounding environment. The reason for this assumption is that learning about the relationship between human values, emotions, and behaviors based on cognitive behavioral therapy and considering the daily life events of participants (activity B "Understanding various interpretations of circumstances") is related to the understanding of the environment surrounding oneself, as different participants described daily events from different viewpoints.

Comments that can be judged to be effective for "8. Being able to discover ways to improve human relationships" are as follows:

- By knowing how to interact with my superiors, I became able to work better.
- I acquired a good attitude towards communication with others as well as communication skills.
- I was able to understand my differences with the other people's values.

Comments that can be judged to be effective for "9. Feeling the importance of being in the position of another person" are as follows:

- I began to think about the importance of doing my job from the point of view of my bosses and juniors.
- Because there are many lectures that teach how to think of others, I learned the importance of altruism.
- I started thinking less while focusing on myself.
- I was particularly able to feel the result through the practice of A.'s work, "Understanding the concept of being in another person's position".

Comments that can be judged to be effective for "10. Having an increased feeling of accepting and respecting colleagues" are as follows:

- I became able to listen and not to deny people's way of thinking.
- Through group work the feelings of accepting and respecting others became stronger.
- Everyone sharing their weaknesses and strengths was mutually accepted.

Comments that can be judged to be effective for "11. Having an increased feeling of gratefulness to the surroundings" are as follows:

- Because you are asked to think deeply, feelings of appreciation for parents also came up.
- I became able to have feelings of humble gratitude.
- I came to want to thank all the people around me.

Comments that can be judged to be effective for "12. Deepening of bonds with friends" are as follows:

- Even though the company is the same, the thoughts and feelings of people are different, so the training was the time for mutual recognition and deepening of bonds.
- I think that the training became a place to exchange opinions with each other, and the overall bonds were strengthened.
- Because it was possible to find good sides in people, that are different from those showing in everyday life, that may have led to deepening of bonds.

The following considerations can be made from the comments in questions 8 to 12 on "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations". These comments suggest that facilitating active sharing of mutual values and challenges on various topics during lectures, accepting each other positively, and giving positive feedback resulted in "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations".

The comments "By knowing how to interact with my superiors, I became able to work better" and "I acquired a good attitude towards communication with others as well as communication skills" suggest that the activities resulted in the improvement of human relationships can be made by having participants cope with seniors, and have interpersonal skills and positive attitudes. Furthermore, the comment "because there are many lectures that teach how to think of others, I learned the importance of altruism" suggests that there was an "improvement of human relationships" as a result of activity A "understanding the concept of being in another person's position", which led to improvement of human relationships in case it is possible to act with consideration of other parties.

The comments "Everyone sharing their weaknesses and strengths were mutually accepted" and "Even though the company is the same, the thoughts and feelings of people are different, so the training was the time for mutual recognition and deepening of bonds" suggest that this educational program leads to "fostering teamwork", which can be achieved if students are given the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with their colleagues by activity H "Changing the perspective on weaknesses" and activity G "Feedback from peers on one's strengths", and realizing the importance of observing positive aspects in people and recognizing and respecting them. Therefore, the comments on 8 to 12 suggest that the activities contribute to "fostering teamwork and the improving human relations".

#### **4.4 Program drawbacks**

Comments that are considered ineffective with respect to "3. Improved motivation to try new things" are as follows:

- Motivation goes up, but since there are many things that cannot be done in practice, it makes me confused.
- "The motivational effect of wanting to try new things only continues for one or two weeks.

It may become a chance to improve motivation, but in order to make that effect continue, it is necessary to have a system of regular approaches and an internal environment in companies in which employees face new practical challenges.

Comments that cannot be judged to be effective in regards of "6. Discovered hints to solve problems (tasks)" are as follows:

- The problems one is facing at the time are not necessarily the same as the problems covered in the lecture.
- 3 hours of lecture time was not enough to solve all of my problems.

The topic handled during training and topics dealt with by individuals may be different at the time. In such a case, we think that the lecturer's individual approaches to participants are effective for individuals to find solutions to their personal problems.

Comments that cannot be judged to be effective in regards of being "7. Able to be relieved from stress" are as follows:

- When I could not say what I wanted to say I wasn't really relieved from my stress.
- It was the stress coming from interpersonal relationships at work that got relieved rather than the stress from tasks at work.

Judging by the two reasons for stress, which are problems that are hard to speak about in front of everybody, as well as individual work causing stress, each one of them having a different solution, we believe that individual approaches are effective.

#### **4.5 Future measures resulting from questionnaire results**

Implementation methods for the program will be considered. The following three items are considered measures. (1) Encourage individuality, (2) Enhance prior preparation, and (3) Implement follow up with individuals. As for (1), as stated above, the participants' willingness to be autonomous increased the effectiveness of the program. Participants' attitude in creating an environment to understand themselves, and not being merely passive receivers, suggest to be able to change that some participants felt that "time was not enough" or "could not say what they want to say" as a result. As for (2), regarding activities in which participants commented that there was not enough time, "5. Ability to organize my own thoughts and feelings", it may be necessary to distribute the text in advance and arrange an environment that allows participants to make preparations. Regarding (3), participants may have difficulty in deepening understanding independently due to subjectivity even if participants are given enough time for preparations, for example, "1. Deepening self-awareness". "1. Deepening self-awareness" is considered important as it affects other questions and is related to work performance.

### **5. SUMMARY**

In this study, the progress in "positive self-evaluation related to the ability to control the surrounding environment and to resilience" and "fostering the awareness of coworkers and improvement of human relations" is evaluated, following the implementation of the proposed educational program. The findings of the questionnaire that conclude that "Self-affirmation and self-efficacy that leads to the ability to control the environment and situation in which a person is placed and resilience" and "fostering the awareness of coworkers and improvement of human relations" are effective. Therefore, the proposed program affects personal resources and job resources, which are the required factors of work engagement mentioned in the introduction, i) reduce stressors and respective physical and psychological costs, and iii) promote personal growth and development (Shimazu, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker et al., 2007).

Future tasks aimed at increasing effectiveness of the program are described below.

- If individual problems cannot be openly discussed, it is necessary to facilitate self-understanding and problem solving for each student.
- It is necessary to facilitate a strong relationship between the contents of the program and participants' work for practical application.
- Solving individual problems of participants within the limited training time may be

challenging at times. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the quality of lecture contents.

- It is necessary to contribute to ii) promote target achievement which is a job resource. This could not be realized in this program.
- It is necessary to directly improve thinking skills that contribute to the improvement of productivity in order to i) reduce stressors and respective physical and psychological costs, ii) promote target achievement, and iii) promote personal growth and development.
- As the participants' own visions are clarified with the deepening of self-awareness, it may take time for participants to directly link their vision with their work. Therefore, participants need to link their daily work with their vision. Unexpected results, such as participants selecting a different job, may result from these two elements not being connected. Efforts to link work and participants' vision will also be required by companies.
- The duration of the effects of this program are not known regardless of the program contributing to work engagement.

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