SKILL TREE™

16: *The Power of Networking*

13–16 ADULT

A Lesson on Relationships, Opportunity, and Building a Competitive Advantage Through Connection

Introduction for the Facilitator

For learners at every stage, success doesn't happen in isolation. It happens through connection. **Networking** is the ability to build genuine relationships that open doors, share knowledge, and support progress.

This lesson redefines networking not as awkward self-promotion, but as a learnable **professional skill** that supports both career and personal growth. When students and workforce participants build real relationships rooted in trust and curiosity, they strengthen their **personal competitive advantage** in every industry or path.

Networking isn't just about who you know. It's about how you show up and the value you create by connecting with others in meaningful ways.

This lesson defines networking and presents it as an invaluable tool for adult learners in any setting. This lesson includes:

- **A relatable Scenario to show how networking matters**
- **8 Guided Group Discussion Questions with follow-up questions**
- **8 Journal Prompts to reflect on networking strategies**
- **8 personal Skill-Building Strategies**
- **A printable Action Planner for reflection and application**

CAREER TREE®

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Scenario: A Short Conversation, A Big Shift

Andrea, 24, is completing a health care certification and working as a medical assistant. At a community workshop, she sits next to an older professional who asks what she's working toward.

They talk for ten minutes, with both sharing what made them choose this field. Three days later, that person emails her a job posting for a local clinic with a note: "You'd be great here. Let me know if you apply."

Andrea gets the interview—and the job.

That one authentic conversation shifted Andrea's path, all because she showed up, listened, and shared.



Guided Group Discussion Questions

1. **What does networking mean to you, and how do you feel about it?**
   Follow-up: What do you think could make it hard or awkward?
2. **What makes a connection feel real and respectful instead of fake or forced?**
   Follow-up: What helps you be yourself in professional settings?
3. **How can networking happen in unexpected places like a breakroom, class, or event?**
   Follow-up: Have you experienced this?
4. **Why is networking a competitive advantage?**
   Follow-up: How does it create opportunity?
5. **What's the difference between "knowing people" and "building relationships"?**
   Follow-up: What does long-term connection look like?
6 **What stops people from reaching out, following up, or asking questions?**
   Follow-up: How can we push through that hesitation?
7. **How do trust and authenticity affect networking success?**
   Follow-up: What are signs of strong professional character?
8. **What's one setting or moment coming up where you could practice networking?**
   Follow-up: What would success look like?

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Journal Prompts

1. **Describe a connection you've made that helped you grow. What made it meaningful?**
2. **What's your comfort level in networking situations? What would help you feel more confident?**
3. **Who is one person you'd like to learn from or build a stronger relationship with?**
4. **What's one networking myth or fear you'd like to overcome?**
5. **What strengths do you bring to conversations and professional spaces?**
6. **What makes you feel seen, heard, or encouraged when someone talks to you?**
7. **How do you want people to describe you after meeting you for the first time?**
8. **What's one relationship you'd like to nurture in the next 30 days? How will you start?**

Skill-Building Strategies

1. **Authentic Introduction Practice:** Practice a short, real intro that shares who you are and what you're working toward.
2. **Networking Notebook:** Keep a log of people you meet: names, roles, what you talked about, and how you might follow up.
3. **One Ask Per Week:** Reach out to one person each week with a thoughtful question, compliment, or check-in.
4. **Listen + Lift:** In every conversation, find one thing to affirm or support: "That's a great idea," or "You'd be great at that."
5. **Elevator Story:** Write and practice a 30-second version of your story: where you are, where you're going, and why it matters.
6. **Follow-Up Habit:** After a conversation or event, send a message to the other person or organizer within 48 hours. Mention something specific you appreciated.
7. **Networking Wing Person:** Attend an event with a partner and practice introducing each other.
8. **3-Way Bridge:** Introduce two people in your network who might benefit from knowing each other. You become a connector.

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Reflect and Prepare

Name:

What Is Networking?

Networking is building authentic relationships that support growth, opportunity, and shared success. It helps you expand your impact and build your personal competitive advantage.

Why This Matters to Me

Why is networking important for your career, training, or future lifestyle goals?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

My Connection Habits

Where I connect well: _____

Where I hold back or hesitate: _____

What I'd like to change or grow: _____

Belief Shift

Circle or write a belief to strengthen your networking mindset:

"I don't need to know everyone—I need to connect well."

"Authentic relationships create opportunity."

"My story matters."

"I grow by learning from others."

Other: _____

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Networking Practice + Progress

Name:

My 28-Day Networking Focus
What action, habit, or connection will you focus on this month?

Where or when will this happen (event, email, message, intro)? _____
How will you reflect or track your efforts?
❑ Connection log ❑ Journal ❑ Accountability check-in

Restart Plan
When I feel awkward or unsure, I will:
❑ Breathe and focus on listening
❑ Use my anchor phrase: "This is just a conversation."
❑ Ask a question to learn more
❑ Other: _____

Weekly Reflection Prompts
1. Who did I connect with this week and how?

2. What helped me feel more confident?

3. What surprised me about the conversation or setting?

4. How did this connection support my goals or growth?

28-Day Networking Tracker

Focus action or habit: _____

Week 1 ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑
How did week 1 go? Circle one word:
✔ Confident ✔ Awkward ✔ Curious
✔ Supportive ✔ Real ✔ Growing

Week 3 ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑
How did week 3 go? Circle one word:
✔ Confident ✔ Awkward ✔ Curious
✔ Supportive ✔ Real ✔ Growing

Week 2 ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑
How did week 2 go? Circle one word:
✔ Confident ✔ Awkward ✔ Curious
✔ Supportive ✔ Real ✔ Growing

Week 4 ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑
How did week 4 go? Circle one word:
✔ Confident ✔ Awkward ✔ Curious
✔ Supportive ✔ Real ✔ Growing

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