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Beyond Assumptions:

Leadership Practices That Help Employees with Disabilities Stay, Grow, and Thrive

A practical conversation about how everyday assumptions, expectations, and support shape the path into—and through—competitive employment.

Presented by

Jamie L. Moyer

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ABOUT ME

LEADER, PRACTITIONER, AND ADVOCATE

Jamie Moyer is Chief Program & Development Officer at Bloom Consulting and President of Texas APSE. His work spans transition, disability employment, program design, and leadership development. As a first-generation college graduate, U.S. Army veteran, and disability advocate, Jamie brings professional expertise and lived experience to conversations about work, support, and belonging.

His focus is practical: What do people need from leaders and support systems to contribute, grow, and stay?

Personal Mission: Help people and workplaces replace assumptions with understanding—and turn understanding into action.

Beyond Assumptions



Jamie L. Moyer, MSOL, CAS, BCP

SESSION AGENDA

Beyond Assumptions

N

See the Assumption

Study the Moment

Name What Leadership Controls

Practice a Better Response

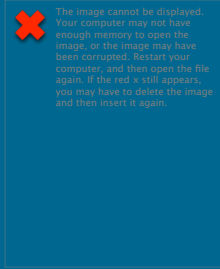
Prepare for Workplace Relationships

Choose One Action



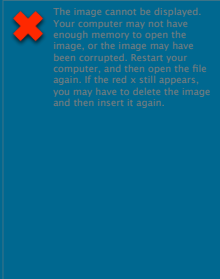
EVERYONE MATTERS

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Our Question

What changes when we ask one more question before judging?



Our Goal

Prepare people to communicate, learn, and advocate—while preparing workplaces to respond with clarity and support.



Beyond Assumptions

The Story Isn't Whole

An employee's actions are visible. Context, barriers, strengths, communication differences, and unmet needs often are not. Strong support begins by separating what we observed from the story we told ourselves.



Notice the Assumptions



Build the Conditions

Why This Matters for Transition

Competitive employment is not sustained by job skills alone. Employees also need clear expectations, usable feedback, accessible training, and a way to ask for support.

In 2025, 38.1% of working-age people with disabilities were employed, compared with 74.8% of those without disabilities. The gap is not a measure of individual potential; it is a signal to examine access, opportunity, and workplace conditions.

Transition planning should prepare the person—and the environment.

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Three Conditions

Ask three questions of every transition plan, placement, coaching relationship, and workplace response:

- Does this build support?
- Does it preserve fairness?
- Does it make success clearer and more achievable?

The goal is not lower expectations.

The goal is shared expectations, fair access, and support that helps the person take ownership.

Beyond Assumptions

SUPPORT: Does the person know where to go, what to ask, and what help is available?

FAIRNESS: Are expectations consistent while individual barriers are addressed?

SUCCESS: Can strengths show up, feedback be understood, and growth remain possible?

When Following Directions Becomes a Write-Up Scenario

Beyond Assumptions

For approximately a year, an employee with a disclosed Autism diagnosis had occasionally been told that once all clients had left and the required paperwork was complete, employees could clock out and go home.

One day, after all clients had left, the employee gave the team leader their paperwork and asked whether they could clock out and leave. The team leader reviewed the paperwork, confirmed that it was complete, and asked the employee to make sure the remaining office trash was taken to the dumpster. The team leader then told the employee to have a great day.

The employee completed the final task, clocked out, and went home.

The following day, the supervisor noticed that the employee had left approximately one hour early. The supervisor called the employee, said leaving early was unacceptable, and informed them that they would be meeting with the program director.

The employee had previously received four write-ups related to similar workplace misunderstandings.

The PAUSE Framework

Considering Before Concluding

Beyond Assumptions



Facts before labels • Perspectives before conclusions • Responsibility before discipline

Applying PAUSE to the Scenario

Beyond Assumptions



PAUSE THE LABEL

Leaving early did not automatically mean irresponsibility. The employee followed an established practice and the team leader's direction.



ASK WHAT HAPPENED

Verify what the employee asked, what the team leader approved, and what the supervisor understood before considering discipline.



UNDERSTAND EVERY PERSPECTIVE

The employee believed they had permission. The team leader appeared to approve it. The supervisor later saw the timecard without that context.



SET CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY

Define when employees may leave, who can approve it, how approval is documented, and who owns conflicting directions.



EVALUATE AND FOLLOW UP

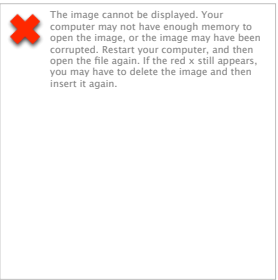
Reconsider the write-up using the complete facts, align leadership communication, and confirm the new process prevents another misunderstanding.

Disability Lens: Consider whether assumptions about autism affected how seriously the employee's explanation and repeated concerns were taken.

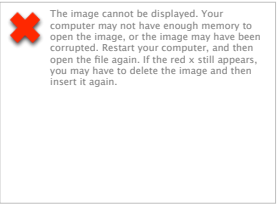
Four Leadership Moves

These practices support everyone and become especially important when disability, communication differences, or unfamiliar workplace norms affect how an interaction is understood.

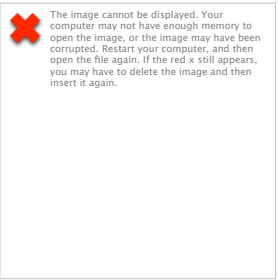
Clarity is not lowering the bar. It is making the bar visible.



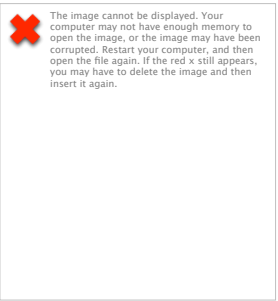
Describe what you observed—not the motive you assigned.



Ask what context, barrier, or instruction you may be missing.



Clarify the expectation and confirm shared understanding.



Agree on support, ownership, and a time to follow up.

CIE More than Placement



Competitive integrated employment includes competitive pay, integrated settings, comparable benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

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- Getting the job is one milestone. Sustainable employment also requires a real opportunity to learn, contribute, address barriers, receive useful feedback, and grow.
- Support should strengthen the employee's voice and responsibility—not replace them.

The Assumption Audit

Think of a workplace action often labeled “lazy,” “difficult,” “unmotivated,” or “not ready.”



1. What was actually observed?
2. What assumption followed?
3. What else might explain the action?
4. What question could create clarity?
5. What support could preserve both expectations and dignity?

What can we do?

Beyond Assumptions

Entering the Workforce

BEFORE DAY ONE

- Know strengths, needs, and non-negotiables
- Practice asking for clear instructions and feedback
- Choose who belongs on the support team

AT WORK

- Repeat back expectations and next steps
- Ask who, what, when, and where
- Request accommodation when a disability-related barrier appears
- Track wins, questions, and support that works

Support Persons

- Help rehearse self-advocacy before the first day
- Translate workplace norms without excusing unclear systems
- Ask the employee before speaking for them
- Coordinate with the employer—with permission
- Fade support intentionally; keep a re-entry plan
- Measure job quality, growth, and agency—not placement alone

Leaders & Employers

- Define essential results, routines, and decision rights
- Give feedback quickly, specifically, and privately
- Ask before assigning motive
- Invite the employee's input on barriers and solutions
- Use the accommodation interactive process when needed
- Create opportunities for development and advancement

Choose Understanding

LAZY

DIFFICULT

UNMOTIVATED

NOT READY

DOESN'T CARE

UNPROFESSIONAL

AGGRESSIVE

RESISTANT

INCOMPETENT

**BAD
ATTITUDE**

DISENGAGED

UNRELIABLE

RUDE

TOO SENSITIVE

NOT A TEAM PLAYER

QUIET = DISINTERESTED

DOESN'T FIT

Before you label an action, pause.

Describe what you saw. Ask what you may be missing.

Clarify the expectation. Agree on the next support and follow-up.

Competitive employment grows when people are prepared to advocate—and workplaces are prepared to listen, respond, and invest in their success.

What is one assumption you will challenge?

Thank You For Attention

Beyond the Assumptions

Meaningful change begins when we pause before applying a label, listen before reaching a conclusion, and take responsibility for the conditions we create.

As you leave, choose one action:

Challenge an assumption.

Clarify an expectation and who is responsible.

Listen more carefully to a concern.

Create support that strengthens someone's voice and success.

This work is not about lowering expectations or explaining away performance. It is about replacing assumptions with understanding—and building workplaces where employees with disabilities are supported, treated fairly, and equipped to stay, grow, and thrive.

Pause the Label. Seek the Facts. Choose Understanding. Then Act.

Let's continue the work—and become the leaders, advocates, and partners willing to make change happen.

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