**WORK AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO COGNITIVE FUNCTION**

**Work**

Middle-agers are good workers. In comparison to young adults, they are more inclined to:

1. Resolve job conflicts and try to work out what is wrong (120, 148).
2. Participate in challenges and changes in the workplace (120, 148).
3. Have a lower avoidable absenteeism rate (148).
4. Become expert at what they are doing and be willing to mentor or teach others (16, 120, 184, 185).
5. Use life experience and maturity on the job (14, 16, 120, 184, 185).
6. Be less emotionally labile (16).
7. Value work, but also value being a good parent, a loving spouse, and involved with the children (14, 16, 148).

Work is viewed differently by different middle-agers, as well as by different generations, as summarized in Table 15-1. Consider that the older middle-aged person grew up under the influence of the Great Depression and with the Protestant ethic. Both stressed the economic and moral importance of work. Thus, work became respected and sought. Being without a job or idle was a harbinger of problems and meant being lazy and worthless. How has this middle-aged adult adjusted to mechanization, waning of the work ethic, and the demise of a full day's work for a full day's pay? For the young middle-ager, what was a promising career or lifetime employment may have ended in being laid off permanently by the company, forced early retirement, or forced job hunting. Finding different work could be difficult.

Educate and counsel the client who is unemployed and job hunting. Utilize Box 15-3, Suggestions for Someone Who Is Unemployed, to educate and stimulate discussion. Or you may want to educate the client about career options described in the Box Client Education: Career Track Options in Late Middle Age.

The person may be fortunate enough to be in a business or profession in which he or she works successfully for self or is allowed freedom within a specialized area of work. That person will experience the dignity of being productive and will enjoy increasing self-esteem, autonomy, and sense of achievement. However, many middle-aged adults are employed in a system in which the value is on production, not the person. Often, in contrast to union-set rules, whereby no more than a specified amount can be done within a specified time, ever-greater output is demanded on the job.

The Information Revolution is pulling people apart similar to the way the Industrial Revolution brought people together. There is a greater variety of job choices, but there is less loyalty to one workplace or one boss. Middle-aged Americans are creating a new style of employment and more flexible careers. Midlife for some is a time of career change. More people than ever plan to work past retirement age. Workers age 55 through 64, the Baby Boomer generation, are the fastest-growing segment of the workforce (11, 36, 48, 114).

There are several categories of workers that are different from the past. They have been described as follows (48, 114):

**Box 15-3 Suggestions for Someone Who Is Unemployed**

1. Offer hope and encouragement, but guard against sounding “superior.” This may be a dark valley, emotionally, economically, philosophically, and spiritually.
2. Remind the person that unemployment is a reflection of current economic conditions and social trends, not of personal worth.
3. Seek opportunities to affirm the person’s talents and positive attributes.
4. Help him or her consider all the options, including launching a business from home, changing careers, and working part-time.
5. Allow the person to express feelings, but do not encourage self-pity. Your time with the person should leave him or her feeling uplifted and hopeful. Pray with the person if he or she desires.
6. Offer to hold him or her accountable to a specific job-hunting schedule. It is often hard to stay motivated and organized without a friendly nudge.
7. Talk about subjects other than unemployment.
8. Encourage the person/family to relax and have fun. If you are a friend, invite them to your home or give them a gift certificate for dinner and a movie.
9. If the person is a friend or relative, provide practical, but discreet, help, including food, clothing, and finances.

1. **Free agents.** They seek and find professional and financial independence in a variety of entrepreneurial occupations. Many work alone, out of a home office, and are involved in community services as well as business ventures. They know how to market talents to the highest and most interesting bidder.
2. **Nomads.** They have no real loyalty to the job or the boss as they move from one geographic area and job to another. They spot the next trend, find a job at a company, and are ready to move with it. In their job hopping and hunting, they develop useful contacts and a variety of skills. They take advantage of job opportunities as they arise.
3. **Globalists.** They travel from time zone to time zone around the world as they work in a borderless economy with their laptop computers. They constantly network, scout out opportunities, and improvise as necessary.
4. **Niche finders.** They spot new markets emerging from recent social and economic trends and build, market, and manage a company to capitalize in it. They are the leaders in the new industry.
5. **Retreads.** They relish learning and stay abreast of technologic change. Because of their maturity and experience, they will never be without a job. Self-improvement, helping peers adapt, and reminding younger workers that computer skills are only one facet of the job guarantee that they will never become obsolete.