LOOK

LOOKING OUT, LOOKING IN

FOURTH CANADIAN EDITION

ADLER ROLLS PROCTOR II

THE (LOOK) SOLUTION

Print

LOOK delivers all the key terms and all the content for the **Interpersonal Communication** course through a visually engaging and easy-to-review print experience.

Digital

CENGAGE | MINDTAP

Stay organized and efficient with **MindTap**—a single destination with all the course material and study aids you need to succeed. Built-in apps leverage social media and the latest learning technology.

Student Resources

- Interactive eBook
- Flashcards
- Multiple-Choice Quizzes
- Video Quizzes
- Critical Thinking Questions
- Online Glossary
- Chapter Review Study Cards

Students: **nelson.com/student**

Instructor Resources

- Access to All Student Resources
- Engagement Tracker
- Instructor Companion Site
- PowerPoint® Slides
- Updated Test Bank
- LMS Integration
- Instructor Prep Cards
- Assignable Activities

Instructors: **nelson.com/instructor**

Visit **NelsonBrain.com** to start using **MindTap**. Enter the Online Access Code from the card included with your text. **If an access card is not provided, you can purchase instant access at NelsonBrain.com.**

This is an electronic version of the print textbook. Due to electronic rights restrictions, some third party content may be suppressed. The publisher reserves the right to remove content from this title at any time if subsequent rights restrictions require it. For valuable information on pricing, previous editions, changes to current editions, and alternate formats, please visit www.nelson.com to search by ISBN#, author, title, or keyword for materials in your areas of interest.

NELSON

This edition of LOOK is dedicated to my very supportive husband, John A. MacLean. —Judy

LOOK, Fourth Canadian Edition
by Ronald B. Adler, Judith A. Rolls, and Russell Proctor II

Brief Contents

UfaBizPhoto/Shutterstock.com

iStock.com/MachineHeadz

LightField Studios/Shutterstock.com

Contents

Flamingo Images/Shutterstock.com

Hero Images/Getty Images

HBRH/Shutterstock.com

iStock.com/PeopleImages

eurobanks/Shutterstock.com

Blue Planet Studio/Shutterstock.com

digitalskillet/Shutterstock.com

antoniodiaz/Shutterstock.com

Juanmonino/E+/Getty Images

Lipik Stock Media/Shutterstock.com

Features of LOOK

Invitation to Insight

Setting Your Communication Goals

Take the survey below to rate your present interpersonal communication skills. Afterwards, develop three to five communication goals you would like to achieve during this course. At the end of Chapter 10, re-take this survey to determine if and how you met these goals and if you rate your overall communication differently.

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree;
5 = Strongly Agree

1. I am a good communicator.
   1   2   3   4   5

2. I have a positive attitude about myself and my abilities.
   1   2   3   4   5

3. I can empathize with others.
   1   2   3   4   5

Invitation to Insight serves as prompts inviting students to think about, reflect on, and gain deeper insight into their own communication habits and issues. For example, readers are invited to examine their self-concept which is important to understand because it affects communication with others.

Looking at Diversity provides first-person accounts by communicators from diverse backgrounds. These profiles help students appreciate that interpersonal communication is shaped by who you are and where you come from. For example, perceptions and stereotypes can shape how people communicate.

Looking at Diversity

Ellen Cabot: From My World to the Real World

I am a 25-year old Mi'kmaq woman from Eskasoni First Nation, the largest Mi'kmaq community in Nova Scotia. It's located in Cape Breton overlooking the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes and consists of roughly 5000+ residents.

When you grow up on a First Nation reserve, you deal mostly with other native peoples merely because our community is located in the countryside, somewhat secluded from any non-native communities. We have our own schools that range from day-care to high school and that is where I was educated. For me, this reality represented my perception of the entire world. This was my world and I only knew what

I got older, I knew that I wo[...]
other "real world" which w[...]
cultures, different values, a[...]
people. This was a scary th[...]

After I graduated from [...]
versity. On my first day at C[...]
was overwhelmed by how [...]
life on the reserve. For insta[...]
differences was that Englis[...]
and all the time. And not on[...]
white people, but there we[...]
Saudi Arabia, Africa, and so[...]
nearly as friendly as they w[...]
they seemed to keep to the[...]
awkward and worried that p[...]
on the basis of how I looked[...]

SKILL BUILDER

Practising "I" Language

You can develop your skill at delivering "I" messages by following these steps:

1. Visualize situations in your life when you might have sent each of the following messages:
   - You're not telling me the truth!
   - You think only of yourself!
   - Don't be so touchy!
   - Quit fooling around!
   - You don't understand a word I'm saying!

2. Write alternatives to each statement using "I" language.

Skill Builder provides practical information to help students improve their communication skills, such as how to monitor your feelings and emotions when communicating in different situations.

On the Screen highlights films and TV shows that illustrate issues relating to communication. These features help to promote student engagement and can be used to generate discussion.

ON THE SCREEN

black-ish

In the TV show *black-ish*, family members exchange messages ranging from highly confirming to highly disconfirming. As the strains within Dre and Bow's marriage grow, the show is an ideal example of how relational climates can spiral in either a positive or negative direction depending on how messages are delivered and received. You'll see examples of both defensive-causing and defensive-preventing behaviours as you watch this entertaining and thought-provoking show.

In Real Life

Perception Checking in Everyday Life

Perception checking only works if it is sincere and fits your personal style. The following examples show how perception checking sounds in everyday life and may help you find ways to use it when you are faced with ambiguous messages.

My Boss's Jokes

I get confused by my boss's sense of humour. Sometimes he jokes just to be funny, but other times he uses humour to make a point without coming right out and saying what's on his mind. Last week he was talking about the upcoming work schedule and he said with a laugh, "I own you all

when he ha
anything at
toward my
up with you
anything.
    After lea
perception c
quiet on the
and then yo
saw Jaime,
maybe you
that maybe
said you we
with Jaime?
    My dad

In Real Life illustrates how the communication concepts from the text can be applied in everyday life. Seeing how communication skills can be used in familiar situations gives students the modelling and confidence to try them in their own life. For example, perception checking in everyday life is helpful when faced with ambiguous messages.

Communication at Work examines the chapter topic from a work perspective. Topics include how self-esteem plays a role in the workplace and how individuals use communication to manage their identity at work.

Communication at Work

Identity Management

Given that recruiters regularly check potential employees' online profiles and reject 70 percent of applicants during this part of the vetting process,[88] viewing your online presence from a neutral third-party perspective could be a valuable experience. Most people update and revamp their profiles when they are job hunting. To determine if your online identity helps or hinders your potential, plug your name into one or more search engines. If the results don't show you in a positive light, change the privacy settings on your account/s, customize who sees

pitch, and so on. Of course, it also includes the features most people think of when

Messages expressed by other than linguistic means.

What do you THINK?

Nonverbal communication isn't as effective as verbal.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

What do you THINK? appears at the start of each chapter and is later revisited with **What do you THINK now?** at the end of the chapter. These help students to assess their pre-chapter thinking and then reassess using post-chapter learning.

Feature boxes highlight and examine interesting aspects of communication, such as how body movement and body language can characterize someone as a "victim" and make them an easy target for criminals.

Fighting Dirty

Psychologist George Bach uses the term *crazymakers* to describe passive-aggressive behaviour. His term reflects the insidious nature of indirect aggression, which can confuse and anger a victim who may not even be aware of being victimized. Although a case can be made for using all the other approaches to conflict described in this chapter, it is difficult to find a justification for passive-aggressive crazymaking.

The following categories represent a nonexhaustive list of crazymaking. They are presented here as a warning for potential victims, who might choose to use perception checking, "I" language, assertion, or other communication strategies to explore whether the user has a complaint that can be addressed in a more constructive manner.

The Avoider Avoiders refuse to fight. When a conflict arises, they leave, fall asleep, pretend to be busy at work, or keep from facing the problem in some other way. Because avoiders won't fight back, this strategy can frustrate the

never quit
Instead of
they inno
cost?" dr
really dea
**The Gunn
plaints as
ments into
a while be
gripes. The
gunnysack
on the ove
**The Trivia
sharing th
do things
goat—lea
fingernails
the televis
**The Beltli
"beltline,"

CHAPTER 1

A FIRST LOOK
AT INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

LEARNING OUTCOMES

LO1 Assess the needs (physical, identity, social, and practical) that communicators are attempting to satisfy in a given situation or relationship.

LO2 Apply the transactional communication model to a specific situation.

LO3 Describe how communication principles and misconceptions are evident in a specific relationship.

LO4 Describe the degree to which communication is qualitatively impersonal or interpersonal, as well as the consequences of this level of interaction.

LO5 Diagnose the effectiveness of various communication channels in a specific situation.

LO6 Determine your level of communication competence in a specific instance or relationship.

LO1
Why We Communicate

As human beings, we are clearly wired for interaction and most of us wouldn't opt to live in isolation. In fact, isolation is so painful it is used as a punishment in penal systems. Bob Kull studied the effects of isolation by secluding himself on an island off the coast of Chile while he was gathering data for his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of British Columbia. He concluded that while there were moments of bliss, it was hard to escape the spiritual and emotional darkness to which he was subjected.[1]

What humans really want is communication and relationships and this is even more pronounced today. People are in constant touch with friends, family, and colleagues through the various miracles of technology and feel cut off from the world without their electronic devices. In fact, in an international study covering 10 countries throughout the world, 1000 university students attempted to go 24 hours without using cell phones, going on Facebook, texting, using Instagram, Snapchat, or Twitter, and so forth. The results showed that most students felt lonely and/or bored and they didn't know what to do with themselves. They felt that their phones offered connection and comfort. Some students suffered severe withdrawal symptoms, and across countries, they likened these symptoms to those experienced by drug addicts.[2]

What do you THINK?

I think I am an effective communicator.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

Regardless of how we interact with others, it is clear that communication is a very rewarding activity. And, if you think about it, we actually communicate to fulfil our physical needs, identity needs, social needs, and to attain practical goals.

Physical Needs

It's hard to believe that communication affects our physical health but medical researchers have provided considerable evidence of this. For example, it is common practice in birthing centres across Canada to place newborns immediately in skin-to-skin contact with their mothers. Referred to as the *golden hour*, this contact (and the resulting breastfeeding) helps new moms bond with their infants and improves infant survival rates.[3] Further, breastfeeding during the *golden hour* lowers rates of "ear infections, asthma, diabetes, childhood leukemia and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)."[4] In situations where new mothers are incapacitated for some reason, skin-to-skin with fathers works as well.[5]

Positive interpersonal relationships in adulthood also lead to better health. We know that socially isolated people are four times more susceptible to the common cold[6] and three times more likely to die prematurely while marriage, friendships, and religious and community ties increase longevity.[7] Compared to their married counterparts, divorced men and women have higher cancer rates.[8] Even the death of a close relative increases the likelihood of your own death.[9]

It appears that a life that includes positive relationships leads to better health. Socializing for 10 minutes a day, for example, improves memory and boosts intellectual function,[10] and stress hormones decline the more often people hear expressions of affection.[11] This might account for why the Canadian Health Network's definition of wellness is broad-based and recognizes the importance of social support and close personal relationships.[12] As a result, we're seeing the introduction of *social prescribing* across Canada where physicians actually prescribe a group visit to a museum or coffee shop, or any number of prosocial activities, as opposed to a pill, to combat aches and pains caused by loneliness. Other programs include *Symbiosis* that places McMaster University students needing affordable housing with seniors who live alone. Students get reduced rent and seniors get a companion.[13] This stance is acknowledged elsewhere, as well. A hospital in Ireland opened a pub on its premises so that seniors could interact with the other daily patrons. Clearly, this is a more inviting atmosphere than sitting in a residents' lounge, with nothing to see or do.[14]

Identity Needs

In addition to helping us survive, we learn who we are and gain our sense of identity through interactions with others. Learning if we're intelligent, creative, skilled, or inept does not come from looking in the mirror but from seeing how others react to us.

Perhaps you have read about the famous "Wild Boy of Aveyron" case. The boy was discovered in January 1800 in France, digging for vegetables in a village garden. Having spent his childhood with no human contact, he couldn't speak, he uttered only weird cries, and he had absolutely no identity as a human being. As author Roger Shattuck put it, "The boy had no human sense of being in the world. He had no sense of himself as a person related to other persons."[15] Only with the influence of a loving "mother" did the boy begin to behave—and, we can imagine, think of himself—as a human. Like the boy of Aveyron, we enter the world with little or no sense of identity and we learn who we are through others.

Social Needs

Communication also satisfies a whole range of social needs that include pleasure, affection, companionship, escape, relaxation, and control.[16]

Research suggests a strong link between effective interpersonal communication and happiness. In a study of over 200 college students, the happiest 10 percent described themselves as having a rich social life.[17] In another study, women reported that "socializing" was more satisfying than virtually any other activity.[18] Married couples who are effective communicators are reported to be happier than less skilful couples.[19]

In spite of knowing that communication is vital to social satisfaction, many people aren't very successful at managing their interpersonal relationships. One study revealed that 25 percent of the 4000-plus adults surveyed knew more about their neighbours' dogs than about their neighbours' backgrounds.[20] Further, the number of close friendships we have is in decline. In 1985, North Americans had an average of 2.94 close friends, but by 2005, it dropped to 2.08.[21] It's also worth noting that educated individuals had larger and more diverse relationship networks. Given the importance of relationships, some theorists argue that they may be our single most important source of satisfaction and emotional wellbeing, and that this holds across cultures.[22]

Practical Goals

Finally, communication is used most often to satisfy our **instrumental goals**: getting things done. For example, you use communication to tell the hairstylist to take just a little off the sides or to negotiate household duties with a roommate. Other instrumental goals are important to career success. One study showed that the ability to speak and listen effectively was among the top factors that helped university graduates find jobs.[23] On-the-job communication is just as important. The Conference Board of Canada offers regular communication workshops to business professionals that cover a wide range of topics such as eye contact, body language, listening, making presentations, and interpersonal influence.[24]

Psychologist Abraham Maslow suggested that the physical, identity,

---

Invitation to Insight

Setting Your Communication Goals

Take the survey below to rate your present interpersonal communication skills. Afterwards, develop three to five communication goals you would like to achieve during this course. At the end of Chapter 10, re-take this survey to determine if and how you met these goals and if you rate your overall communication differently.

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I am a good communicator.

   1   2   3   4   5

2. I have a positive attitude about myself and my abilities.

   1   2   3   4   5

3. I can empathize with others.

   1   2   3   4   5

4. I express my emotions well.

   1   2   3   4   5

5. I express myself well.

   1   2   3   4   5

6. I am aware of the nonverbal messages I am sending and receiving.

   1   2   3   4   5

7. I am a good listener.

   1   2   3   4   5

8. I self-disclose to my friends and family.

   1   2   3   4   5

9. I can communicate assertively when necessary.

   1   2   3   4   5

10. I handle conflict well.

   1   2   3   4   5

Goals that I would like to achieve during this course:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Instrumental goals
Goals aimed at getting things done.

The film *Cast Away* captures the pain of being isolated from communication with others.

You're tattooed on my skin
Don't know where you end
and I begin
You're tattooed on my soul
Are you the part that makes
me whole

—Damhnait Doyle and
Christopher Ward, "Tattooed"*

social, and practical needs we have been discussing fall into five hierarchical categories, each of which must be satisfied before moving on to the next.[25] See **Figure 1.1**. The most basic needs are *physical*: air, water, food, rest, and the ability to reproduce. The second level is *safety*: protection from threats to our well-being. Beyond physical and safety needs are the *social* needs we have mentioned already. The third level has to do with *self-esteem*: the desire

to believe that we are worthwhile, valuable people. The final category described by Maslow is *self-actualization*: the desire to develop our potential to the maximum, to become the best person we can be. As you go through your day, take a moment to assess which communication need

*Reprinted with permission from Damhnait Doyle, care of Jones & Co., and with the permission of Christopher Ward.

Self-Actualization

Self-Esteem Needs

Social Needs

Safety Needs
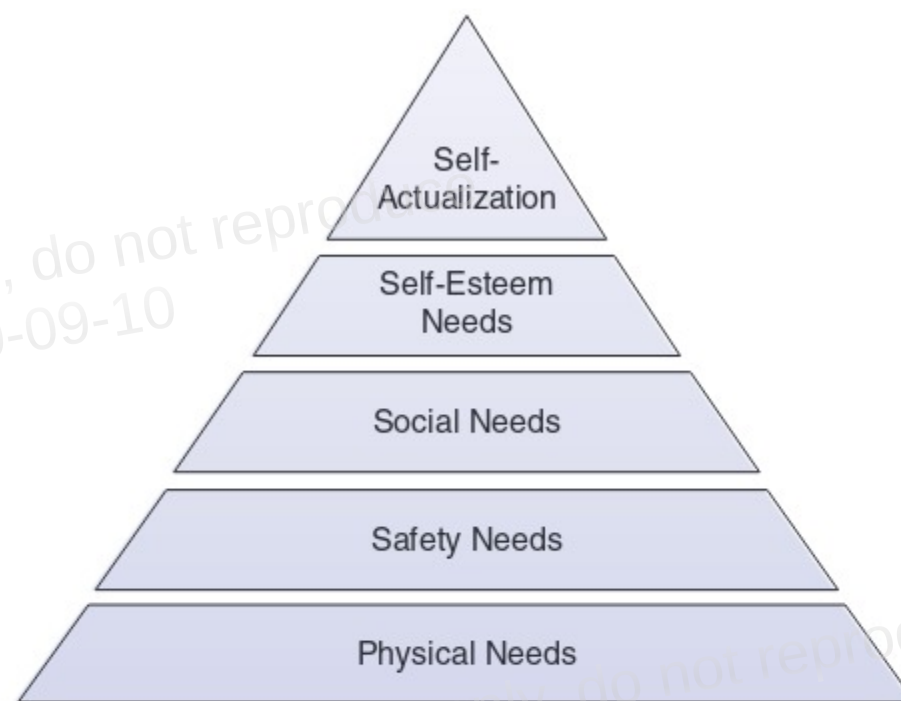
Physical Needs

It is through communication that we meet our physical, safety, social, and self-esteem needs and rise to self-actualization.

you may be trying to satisfy when you communicate with others. You might find this exercise quite revealing.

LO2
The Process of Communication

We've been discussing *communication* as though the meaning of this word were perfectly clear. Before going any further, we need to explain how the communication process between individuals takes place.

A Linear View

In the early days of studying communication, researchers thought of communication as a one-way event where a message flows from the sender to the receiver. Then the receiver becomes the sender and responds. This back-and-forth approach was referred to a **linear communication model**. It actually describes what happens when we text. However, as you know, texting can be an inadequate form of communication because it lacks the host of nonverbal cues that are available in interpersonal, face-to-face communication. These help you determine what the communicator is attempting to convey to you.

In reality, we know that interpersonal communication is much more complicated than the basics of sending and receiving messages. That is why the transactional model of communication was developed.

A Transactional View

The **transactional communication model** (**Figure 1.2**) expands the linear model to better capture the complicated nature of human communication. This model uses the word *communicator* instead of *sender* and *receiver*, thus reflecting the simultaneous nature of communication. Consider, for example, what might occur when you and a housemate negotiate chores. As soon as you begin to hear (receive) the words sent by your partner, "I want to talk about cleaning the kitchen . . ." you grimace and clench your jaw (sending a nonverbal message of your own while receiving the verbal one). This reaction leads your housemate to interrupt herself defensively, sending a new message: "Now wait a minute . . ." You can see from the example how both individuals simultaneously send and receive messages. Even as you stand by and listen, your attitude can be conveyed through your body, facial expressions, and posture. In other words, transactional communication is simultaneous communication.

A transactional model also shows that communicators often come from different cultural backgrounds and have very different personal experiences. These are referred to as **environments** and they greatly affect how the other person's behaviour is interpreted.

Consider some factors that might contribute to different environments:

- Individuals from two different ethnic groups not might agree on what constitutes a delicious dinner.
- People who are well off do not worry about the price of houses, heating, or taxes while these are serious issues for people who have low or minimal incomes.
- Someone who lived a long, eventful life might interpret an event differently than a young, inexperienced person.
- One person may be passionate about a subject while another is indifferent to it.

Environments are not always obvious. Notice how the model in **Figure 1.2** shows that the environments of A and B overlap. This area represents the background that the communicators have in common. For example, when people have similar backgrounds (they went to the same high school, were on a team together) and they share a similar cultural background (they both come from the same Indigenous community), then you can see how easy communication might be. As the shared environment becomes smaller, communication becomes more difficult. For example:

- Managers who have trouble understanding the perspective of their employees are less effective and

FIGURE 1.2
Transactional Communication Model

© Cengage Learning
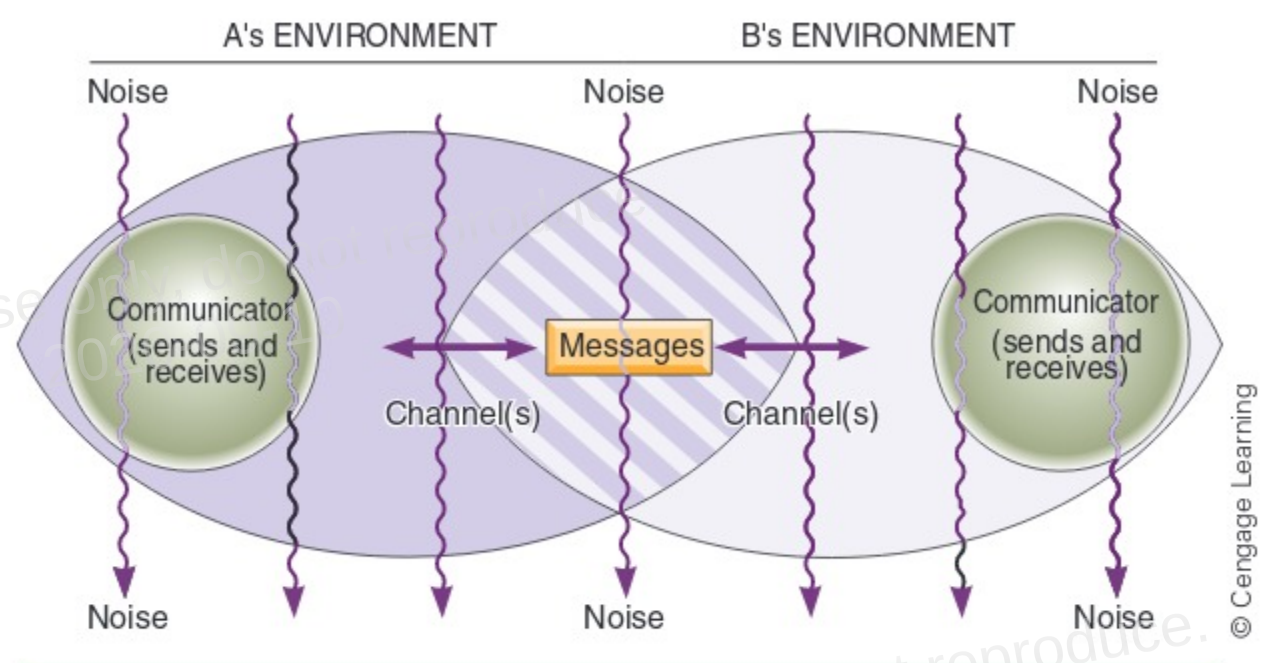
workers who do not appreciate the challenges of the manager are more likely to be uncooperative.
- Parents who can't recall their youth are likely to clash with their children, who have no idea that parenting is such a huge responsibility.
- Members of a dominant culture who have never been part of a minority may not appreciate the concerns of people from non-dominant cultures, whose own perspectives make it hard to understand the cultural blindness of the majority.

Communication channels also play a significant role in the transactional model, and their importance can be seen in the following example: Should you say "I love you" in person? By renting space on a billboard? Via Twitter or Instagram? In a text or on Snapchat? Channel selection matters even more when sending breakup messages. A recent study of 1000 cellphone users found that 45 percent had used their phones to end a relationship—usually by text![26] Perhaps you have Googled Snapchat's worst breakups.

In addition to environments and channels, **noise** also affects human communication and it comes in three forms. The first is *external noise*—such as loud music or too much smoke in a crowded room. You can

Transactional communication model
A characterization of communication as the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages in an ongoing, irreversible process.

Environment
The field of experiences that lead a person to make sense of another's behaviour.

Noise
External, physiological, or psychological distractions that interfere with the accurate transmission and reception of a message.

TABLE 1.1
Some Examples of Noise

External Noise

Sounds, running motors, talking, music, smoke, temperature, perfumes, smells, visual distractions, clothing, lighting, language, nonverbal communication, culturally diverse mannerisms

Physiological Noise

Pain, hunger, fatigue, visual problems, pounding heart, body temperature, thirst, itch, twitching, hearing loss, numbness, dizziness

Psychological Noise

Embarrassment, anger, disappointment, confusion, nervousness, inadequacies, fear, joy, pressure, boredom, pessimism, optimism, apathy, shame

The relationships between the characters on the show *Schitt$ Creek* show the transactional nature of interpersonal "communication."

see how your communication would be affected in such circumstances. The second type of noise is *physiological noise*—biological factors that interfere with accurate reception, such as illness, fatigue, hearing loss, and so on. Finally, there is *psychological noise*: forces within that interfere with the ability to understand a message accurately. For instance, a student might become so upset that he failed a test that he is unable (or unwilling) to understand where he went wrong. Psychological noise can cause many communication problems. See **Table 1.1** for more examples of noise.

For all the insights they offer, models can't capture some important features of interpersonal communication. A model is a "snapshot," but communication more closely resembles a "motion picture." In real life it's difficult to isolate a single discrete "act" of communication from the events that precede and follow it.[27] Consider the *Zits* cartoon. If you read only the final frame, Jeremy appears to be the victim of his mother's nagging. If you then read the first three frames, you might conclude that if Jeremy were more responsive to his mother, she might not need to be so persistent. And if you watched the two of them interact over the days and weeks preceding the incident in this cartoon, you would have a larger (but still incomplete) picture of the relational history that contributed to this event. In other words, the communication pattern that Jeremy and his mother have created together contributes to the quality of their relationship.

This leads to another important point: Transactional communication isn't something that we do *to* others; rather, it is an activity that we do *with* them. In fact, person-to-person communication is like dancing with someone in that it depends on another person's involvement. And like good dancing, successful communication doesn't just depend on the partner who's leading. Both partners must coordinate their movements. Likewise, the way you communicate almost certainly varies from one partner to another.

Now the definition of *communication* can be summarized. **Interpersonal communication** is a continuous transactional process involving participants who occupy different but overlapping environments and create relationships through the exchange of messages, many of which are affected by external, physiological, and psychological noise.

Interpersonal communication

A continuous transactional process involving participants who occupy different but overlapping environments and create relationships through the exchange of messages, many of which are affected by external, physiological, and psychological noise.

LO3
Communication Principles and Misconceptions

Before we look at the qualities of interpersonal communication, it's important to define what communication is, what it isn't, what it does, and what it can't accomplish.

Communication Principles

Communication Can Be Intentional or Unintentional

Some communication is clearly intentional: You plan your words carefully before asking for a big favour or offering criticism. Some scholars argue that only intentional messages like these qualify as communication, but others hold that even unintentional behaviour is communicative. Suppose, for instance, that a friend overhears you muttering complaints to yourself. Even though you didn't intend for her to hear your remarks, communication took place!

In addition, we unintentionally send nonverbal messages. You might not be aware of your sour expression or sigh of boredom, but others see and hear them nonetheless. The debate continues about whether unintentional behaviour should be considered communication, and it's not going to be settled in the near future.[28] In *LOOK*, we will examine the communicative value of both intentional and unintentional behaviour.

Communication Is Irreversible

If you have ever said something and regretted it immediately, then you know that communication is irreversible. While an apology can mollify hurt feelings, the impression you've created cannot be erased. It is no more possible to "unreceive" a message than to "unsqueeze" a tube of toothpaste.

It's Impossible Not to Communicate

We never stop communicating because we constantly send nonverbal messages through our facial expressions, posture, age, ethic group, clothing, and so forth. If you have ever experienced the silent treatment, then you know that the communication continues after the person has stopped talking. Overall, it's as if our bodies are communication transmitters that cannot be turned off.

Communication Is Unrepeatable

Because communication is an ongoing process, it is impossible to repeat an event. A certain smile that worked well when you met a stranger last week might not work with one you encounter tomorrow: It would feel stale or be inappropriate under different circumstances. Even with the same person, you can't recreate an event because neither of you is the same person. You've both lived longer and the behaviour isn't original. Your feelings about each other may have changed. You need not constantly invent new ways to act around familiar people, but the "same" words and behaviours can have a different effect each time they are spoken or performed.

Communication Has a Content and a Relational Dimension

Whenever we communicate, the message has two dimensions: the content dimension and the relational dimension.

Sometimes the relational dimension of relationship is quite evident to others.

The **content dimension** refers to the content itself. "Would you close the door?" represents the content in that the door is open and you would like it shut. The **relational dimension** expresses how the parties feel toward one another.[29] Imagine, two ways of saying, "Would you close the door?": one that is demanding and another that is matter-of-fact. The different tones of voice can send very different relational messages.

Sometimes the content dimension of a message is all that matters and at other times, the relational dimension message is important. This explains why arguments can develop over apparently trivial subjects like whose turn it is to wash the dishes or how to spend the weekend.

Communication Misconceptions

Along with understanding the communication principles, avoiding the following misconceptions can save a good deal of interpersonal trouble.[30]

More Communication Is Always Better

Sometimes excessive communication is unproductive, like when two people "talk a problem to death" without making progress. As one book puts it, "More and more negative communication merely leads to more and more negative results."[31] Even too much noncritical communication can backfire. Pestering a prospective employer or texting too many "call me" messages to a friend can generate a negative reaction.

> **Content dimension**
> A message that communicates information about the subject being discussed.
>
> **Relational dimension**
> A message that expresses the social relationship between two or more individuals.

Meanings Are in Words

It's a big mistake to assume that saying something is the same thing as communicating because what makes perfect sense to you can be interpreted in entirely different ways by others. For example, one of the authors told an acquaintance that she enjoyed painting at her summer cottage. The acquaintance asked if she did landscape, still life, abstract. But she had to disappoint the person by saying that it was just routine upkeep around the house—some years the deck needed a face lift, other years the doors and window frames needed a touch-up.

Successful Communication Always Involves Shared Understanding

We don't always want our communication to be clear and concise. For example, if you think that a friend has a grotesque tattoo and you're asked what you think, then giving a vague, unclear response may be better. "Oh, that is really unusual." You sacrifice clarity for kindness and relational maintenance.

Some research shows that satisfying relationships depend in part on flawed understanding. Couples who *think* their partners understand them are more satisfied than couples who *actually* do understand what the other person means.[32]

A Single Person or Event Causes Another's Reaction

If you lose your temper and say something to a friend that you immediately regret, your friend's reaction depends on

One woman is responding differently than the others. Could this be due to a communication misconception?

a host of events besides your unjustified remark. These include her frame of mind (uptight or mellow), her personality (judgmental or forgiving), your relational history (supportive or hostile), and so forth. Because communication is a transactional, ongoing, collaborative process, it's usually a mistake to think that any event occurs in a vacuum. For instance, you're talking with a friend and she breaks her pen. She glares at you and says, "Now look what you've made me do." Clearly, there's more going on with her than your immediate conversation.

Communication Can Solve All Problems

While communication can solve many problems, it cannot solve them all. If you and a roommate are having difficulties paying monthly expenses, then even the most efficient interpersonal communication will not resolve your financial woes.

LO4
The Nature of Interpersonal Communication

Now that you have an understanding of the communication process, it's time to look at the nature of interpersonal communication.

Two Views of Interpersonal Communication

Communication scholars define interpersonal communication in two ways: quantitatively and qualitatively.[33] A **quantitative** definition focuses on the number of people involved and includes *any* interaction between two people, usually face to face. Two people interacting is referred to as a **dyad**, and this type of interaction is called *dyadic* communication. So, in a quantitative sense, the terms *dyadic communication* and *interpersonal communication* are interchangeable. Using a quantitative definition, a sales clerk talking to a customer or a police officer issuing a ticket are interpersonal acts because they involve two people and are probably **impersonal** in nature. For instance, a clerk might tell you to have a nice day without even looking at you.

Some scholars argue, however, that it's not quantity that distinguishes interpersonal communication, it is *quality*.[34] Using a qualitative definition, interpersonal communication occurs when people treat one another as unique individuals, regardless of the context or the number of people involved. Several features distinguish qualitative interpersonal communication from less personal communication. These features include

Even the "closest" relationships can become impersonal over time.

uniqueness, irreplaceability, interdependence, disclosure, and intrinsic rewards.[35]

Characteristics of Qualitative Interpersonal Relationships

The first feature is *uniqueness*. **Qualitative** interpersonal relationships are characterized by unique rules and roles, and, therefore, every relationship that you have is different. In one, you might exchange good-natured insults, whereas in another you are more formal. Likewise, you might handle conflicts as they arise with one friend and withhold resentments until they build up and explode with another. One communication scholar coined the term *relational culture* to describe people in close relationships who create their own unique ways of interacting.[36]

A second feature of qualitatively interpersonal relationships is *irreplaceability*. Because interpersonal relationships are unique, they can't be replaced. This explains why we usually feel so sad when a relative dies or a love affair cools down. No matter how many other relationships we have, that particular one can't ever be replaced.

Interdependence is a third feature of qualitatively interpersonal relationships. This simply means that the other's experiences affect you as well. While this can bring pleasure, at other times it may be a burden. But interdependence goes beyond the level of joined fates—our very identity depends on the nature of our interaction with others. As Kenneth Gergen explains, "One cannot be 'attractive' without others who are attracted, a 'leader' without others willing to follow, or a 'loving person' without others to affirm with appreciation."[37]

A fourth feature is *disclosure* of personal information. While we don't typically reveal much about ourselves in impersonal relationships, we tend to disclose private thoughts and feelings when we're in a qualitative interpersonal relationship.

The final feature of interpersonal communication is *intrinsic rewards*. That means that simply spending time with friends, lovers, and others is enjoyable and personally rewarding.

Because relationships that are unique, irreplaceable, interdependent, disclosing, and intrinsically rewarding are rare, qualitatively interpersonal communication is relatively scarce. Considering the number of people with whom you communicate daily (classmates, neighbours, etc.) or the amount of time bantering online, impersonal relationships are by far in the minority.

Communicators who strive to acquire a large number of "friends" on social networking websites are engaging in superficial, impersonal relationships. As one critic put it, "The idea . . . is to attain as many of these not-really-friends as possible . . . Like cheap wine, 'friends' provide a high that can only be sustained by acquiring more and more of them. Quantity trumps quality."[38]

Personal and Impersonal Communication: A Matter of Balance

Most relationships fall somewhere on a continuum between these two extremes. You might appreciate the unique sense of humour of a grocery clerk or connect on a personal level with the person cutting your hair. Or a demanding, by-the-book manager might be warm and easy going with her family.

Just as there's a personal element in many impersonal settings, we also communicate in impersonal ways with the people we care most about. When we're distracted, tired, busy, or just not interested, we don't want to be personal. In fact, interpersonal communication is rather like rich food—too much can make you uncomfortable.

The personal–impersonal balance in relationships also changes over time. New lovers talk excessively about their feelings, but as time passes, their communication becomes more routine. While interpersonal communication can make life worth living, it isn't possible or desirable all the time. The challenge is to balance the two types.

> **Qualitative definition of interpersonal communication**
> Communication in which the parties consider one another as unique individuals rather than as objects. Such communication is characterized by minimal use of stereotyped labels; by unique, idiosyncratic rules; and by a high degree of information exchange.

LO5
Social Media and Interpersonal Communication

Clearly, face-to-face conversation isn't the only way people create and maintain personal relationships. Communicators rely heavily on **social media** such as Facebook, SnapChat, Twitter, Instagram, Facetime, Skype, and so on to connect with others. A great example of this is Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield. You may recall that he went into space in December 2012 for several months and used social media to entertain and inform Canada, and the world, about life in zero gravity. He played guitar, sang songs, and tweeted breathtaking photos of earth taken from his "out of this world" vantage point. People felt as if they had gotten to know him. Examples like this may account for why researchers are finding that the difference between face-to-face and virtual relationships is eroding.[39]

Benefits of Social Media

A growing body of research reveals that mediated communication isn't the threat to relationships that some critics once feared.[40] For example:

- According to one study, some media tools offer "low-friction" opportunities to create, enhance, and rediscover social ties." These benefits outweigh the costs.[41]
- Staying in touch with current friends and family members while still connecting with old friends they have lost are major reasons for using social media.[42]

> **Social media**
> Collectively describes all the channels that makes remote personal communication possible.

- Text-only formats can minimize perceptual differences resulting from gender, social class, ethnicity, and age.[43]
- More than 80 percent of social media users are

Ariel Skelley/Blend Images/Getty Images

involved in some kind of voluntary group or organization which is substantially more than non-users.[44]

- Facebook users are more trusting, have more close friends, and get more support from friends than non-users.[45]

It's important to note that social media isn't a replacement for face-to-face interaction. College students who frequently use instant messaging found face-to-face communication better "in terms of satisfying individuals' communication, information, and social needs."[46] However, mediated communication can promote and reinforce relationships in that if you regularly communicate with friends and family online, you're likely to call and see them more often.[47]

Using social media can increase both the quantity and the quality of interpersonal communication for several reasons. First, it is easier to maintain relationships.[48] Busy schedules can make it tough for people separated by long distances and multiple time zones to connect. However, the *asynchronous* nature of social media allows

NASA, Canadian Space Agency, 2013

JGI/Tom Grill/Blend Images/Getty Images

Looking at Diversity

When Speaking Doesn't Come Easy

Courtesy of Brent Foote

Brent Foote

Communication is one of the most interesting subjects a person can study because of its emphasis on relationships. That's why I chose communication as a focus area in my Community Studies/Sports Leadership degree at Cape Breton University, Nova Scotia. Ironically, when I was growing up, communication was extremely difficult for me because I have a severe fluency disorder (speech impediment).

There is a process for interpersonal communication that students learn in their intro classes which relates well to my past. Growing up, I knew what I wanted to say (for the most part) but the problem was that not all the words would come out, or I had difficulty pronouncing them. The next issue was breathing—I'd try to stuff my sentences into one breath, but I'd run out of air! All of this was accompanied by embarrassment and frustration which were followed by a combination of shame and helplessness because I could not speak like others. The penetrating stares from listeners didn't help.

Fortunately, my disability was recognized early by my parents and school administrations who moved quickly to get me the help I needed. I underwent long hours of speech therapy to build my communication competence and I also had tremendous support from family, friends, teachers, and working professionals. They were patient and attentive, and they stopped anyone who attempted to have fun at my expense.

One of the most helpful things that others do for people like me is offering positive nonverbal feedback. This can be anything from a smile, a nod, or being visibly patient. These cues encourage the person to communicate without fear of judgment. Yet, I still struggle at times. A conversation can go smoothly for a bit and then things can get bumpy. Panic sets in and I run out of breath as the pressure from both internal and external environments mounts. Listeners who recognize this and offer reassuring nonverbal messages immediately protect me from serious embarrassment. Therefore, it is very important for me to acknowledge fantastic school atmospheres, welcoming workplaces, and other friendly environments that made me feel at home.

Studying communication was very special to me. I took courses in Interpersonal Communication, Rhetoric in Popular Culture, Public Speaking, and Facilitation/Training and Design which all contributed to parts of my academic success.

I could have done nothing about my disability. Instead, I chose to live differently and use sport and recreation leadership to help people become more active. I am presently enrolled in the Master of Physical Education program at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland. The best piece of advice I can give anyone is to find something that you are good at and use it to help beat whatever makes you struggle!

Brent Foote

Source: By Brent Foote. Used with permission.

us to share information in a way that otherwise would be impossible. However, as one computer consultant said, discovering that a friend or relative is online is "like walking down the street and sometimes running into a friend."[49] Even when face-to-face communication is convenient, some people prefer to share personal information via mediated channels. This might account for why Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple, suggested that personal computers be renamed "interpersonal computers."[50] Although social media can enhance relationships, Barry Wellman from the University of Toronto notes that most people typically incorporated all the avenues of communication.[51] Before moving on, do the exercise in the *Invitation to Insight* box to learn how social media influences the depth of your interpersonal relationships.

Challenges of Social Media

Despite its benefits, social media does have some serious challenges.

Invitation to Insight

How Networked Are You?

The studies cited in this section suggest that social media enhance the quality of your interpersonal relationships. See if you agree or disagree by completing the statements below.

Identify a relationship that . . .

1. has been enhanced by regular social media usage.

2. was created as a result of social media or dating sites.

3. would suffer or perhaps end if social media weren't available.

What do your answers tell you about the impact of mediated communication on interpersonal relationships? Give examples of times when social media hurt or hindered relationships.

Leaner Messages

Face-to-face communication is rich because it abounds with nonverbal cues that help clarify the meanings of one another's words and offer hints about each person's feelings.[52] By comparison, mediated communication is a leaner channel for conveying information. For instance, imagine you haven't heard from a friend in several weeks and you decide to ask, "Is anything wrong?" Your friend replies, "No, I'm fine." If you received this message as a face-to-face response, it would contain a rich array of cues to interpret the message: facial expressions, vocal tone, and so on. Compare that response to a text message that contains only words. At least a phone message would give you a few vocal cues.

Because most mediated messages are leaner than the face-to-face variety, they can be harder to interpret. As receivers, it's important to clarify our interpretations before jumping to conclusions. As senders, we need to be aware of the many different ways our words can be interpreted by others.

Another challenge of social media is what Joseph Walther refers to as "hyperpersonal" communication—accelerating the discussion of personal topics and relational development beyond what normally happens in face-to-face interaction.[53] This may explain why some online lovers "rush" into marriage. Others have difficulty shifting to a face-to-face relationship.[54] Finally, recall the study of the 1000 students around the world who went 24 hours without connecting with others. Although this proved extremely difficult, some participants found that their face-to-face communication was deeper and more satisfying.[55]

Disinhibition

The tendency to transmit messages without considering their consequences can be especially great in online communication, where we don't see, hear, or sometimes even

UfaBizPhoto/Shutterstock.com

know the target of our remarks. This is referred to as **disinhibition** and it can take two forms.

The first is volunteering personal information you may not want some receivers to see. A quick scan of social media reveals a huge degree of delicate information that could prove embarrassing in some contexts: "Here I am just before my DUI arrest." This may not be what you want prospective employers or certain family members to see.

In addition to offering personal information about their life, individuals are more direct—often in a critical way—than they would be in face-to-face interaction.[56] Worse still can be the ramifications of sexting when the relationship goes awry.

Permanence

Nothing really goes away on the Internet. A regrettable text message, photo, or web posting can be archived virtually forever. Even worse, it can be retrieved and forwarded in ways that can only be imagined in your worst dreams.

Competence in Social Media

Like interpersonal communication, social media competence calls for a unique set of skills.

Think Before You Post

Because the Internet never forgets, what is posted today can, and perhaps will, haunt you in the future. Obviously, this can be especially damaging to your career. According to some surveys, 70 percent of recruiters rejected candidates based on online information such as photographs, comments by and about the candidate, and membership in groups.[57] Similarly, during the 2015 federal election campaign, we saw candidates from the Liberal, Conservative, and NDP parties drop out of the race after posts containing inappropriate material were discovered.[58] But the stories don't stop there. A 16-year-old British girl lost her job for complaining on Facebook, "I'm so totally bored!!" A 66-year-old Canadian psychotherpist was permanently banned from visiting the United States after a border guard's Internet search found that he had written an article in a philosophy journal describing his experiences with LSD 30 years earlier.[59] While such treatment may be unfair, the point is that a little discretion now might save a lot of trouble later on.

Be Considerate

The unique nature of social media calls for a special set of behaviours which many refer to as "netiquette." Here are a few.

The Joy of Tech™ by Nitrozac & Snaggy

Unemployable due to stupid personal stuff I put on my facebook page.

Me too!

FOR ME, IT WAS AN EMBARRASSING YOUTUBE VIDEO.

© 2007 Geek Culture Industries. For more comics, visit geekculture.com

joyoftech.com

Signs of the social networking times.

Respect the Needs of Your Face-to-Face Conversational Partner

If you have been texting since you could master a keyboard, you may not realize that face-to-face conversational partners get insulted when you start texting. As one observer put it, "While a quick log-on may seem, to the user, a harmless break, others in the room receive it as a silent dismissal. It announces, 'I'm not interested.'"[60]

Keep Your Tone Civil

If you've ever posted a snide comment on a blog, texted back a nasty reply or uploaded an embarrassing photo, you know that it is easier to behave badly when the recipient isn't right in front of you. One way to improve behaviour in asynchronous situations is to ask yourself a simple question before you post, send, or broadcast something: Would you deliver the same message in person? If the answer is no, you may want to hold off before hitting the "enter" key.

Don't Intrude on Bystanders

We have all has been exposed to moviegoers whose screens distract others, to people who speak so loudly on their phones that you can't hear your conversational partner, or to pedestrians who are more focused on their handheld devices than watching where they're going. These should also serve as our cues to treat others more respectfully when we're using technological devices.

> **Disinhibition**
> The tendency to transmit messages without considering their consequences.

LO6
What Makes an Effective Communicator?

To help you understand what makes someone such a good communicator, it is helpful to know what defines communication competence and the characteristics that competent communication possess. Communication scholars have identified some important and useful information about communication competence.[61]

Communication Competence Defined

Communication competence involves achieving one's goals in a manner that, ideally, maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs.[62] This definition may seem vague, but it is guided by several important characteristics described below.

There Is No "Ideal" Way to Communicate

Just as there are many kinds of beautiful music or art, so are there many kinds of competent communication. Some very successful communicators are serious whereas others use humour, some are gregarious whereas others are quiet, and some are straightforward whereas others hint diplomatically. One way to learn new, effective ways of communicating is by observing models, but don't try to copy others, as it won't reflect your own style or values.

Competence Is Situational

Communication that is competent in one setting might be a colossal blunder in another. The insulting jokes you trade with friends might be offensive to family members or co-workers.

Because competent communication behaviour varies so much from one situation and person to another, it's more accurate to talk about *degrees* or *areas* of competence.[63] For example, you might deal quite skilfully with peers but feel clumsy interacting with people who are older, wealthier, or more educated than you are. Your competence level with one person may even vary from situation to situation. So, rather than think that you are a terrible communicator in general, it's more accurate to say that you handle some situations better than others.

Competence Can Be Learned

To some degree, biology is destiny when it comes to communication style.[64] Studies of identical and fraternal twins suggest that sociability, anger, and relaxation seem to be a partial function of our genetic makeup. However, biology isn't the only factor that shapes how we communicate. Because communication involves a set of skills that anyone can learn, skill training has been found to help people in a variety of professions.[65] Further, university and college students typically become more competent communicators over the course of their studies.[66] In other words, just like there are things you can do to improve your golf swing, so too can you improve your communication competence level through education and training. Even reading this book will help you become more competent.[67]

Characteristics of Competent Communicators

Even though competent communication varies from one situation to another, scholars have identified several common denominators that characterize effective communication.

A Wide Range of Behaviours

Effective communicators possess a wide range of behaviours.[68] To understand the importance of having a large communication repertoire, imagine that someone

When it comes to communication competence, TV character Dr. Sheldon Cooper (played by Jim Parsons) clearly lacked interpersonal communication skills. He did, however, demonstrate professional competencies.

Communication competence

The ability to accomplish one's personal goals in a manner that maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs.

Ability to Choose the Most Appropriate Behaviour

Simply possessing a large range of communication skills is no guarantee of success; you have to know when to use which skill. To help make this decision, consider the following three factors: context, goal, and knowledge of the person.

The communication *context*—time and place—will almost always influence how you act. For example, the sombre, low-key communication style one finds at a funeral would be out of place at a graduation party.

Your *goal* will also shape the approach you take. Inviting a new neighbour over for a cup of tea or coffee would be the right approach if you want to encourage a friendship. If you want to maintain your privacy, it would be wiser to be polite but cool.

Your *knowledge of the other person* should shape your approach. If, for instance, a person was very sensitive or insecure, your response might be supportive and cautious. With an old, trusted friend, you could be blunt. The social niche of the other party can also influence your communication. You would probably act differently around the president of your institution than you would toward a classmate, even in identical circumstances.

Skill at Performing Behaviours

There is a big difference between knowing *about* a skill and being able to put it into practice. It is necessary to perform the required skill effectively.[70] Like any other skills—playing a musical instrument or learning a sport, for example—you will pass through four stages on your road to communication competence.[71] See the **Skill Builder** called "Stages in Learning Communication Skills."

Cognitive Complexity

Social scientists use the term **cognitive complexity** to describe the ability to construct a variety of frameworks for viewing an issue.[72] To understand how cognitive complexity can increase competence, imagine that a longtime friend seems angry with you. One possible explanation is that your friend is offended by something you've done. Another possibility is that something upsetting has happened to your friend. Or perhaps nothing is wrong; you're just being overly sensitive. Considering the issue from several angles might prevent you from over-reacting or misunderstanding the situation and thus increase the odds of resolving the problem constructively.

Do you think the individuals in this photo are competent communicators?

you know repeatedly tells jokes—perhaps racist, sexist, or ageist ones—that you find offensive. You could respond in a number of ways. You could

- say nothing, figuring that the risks of bringing the subject up would be greater than the benefits.
- ask a third party to say something to the jokester about the offensiveness of the stories.
- hint at your discomfort, hoping your friend will get the point.
- joke about your friend's insensitivity, counting on humour to soften the blow of your criticism.
- express your discomfort in a straightforward way, asking your friend to stop telling the offensive jokes, at least around you.
- demand that your friend stop.

With this choice of responses, you could pick the one that has the best chance of success. But if you were able to use only one or two of these responses, say always keeping quiet or always hinting, your chances of success would be greatly reduced. Poor communicators are easy to spot because of their limited range of responses. Some are chronic jokers, others are always belligerent, and still others are quiet in almost every situation. Like a chef who can prepare only a few dishes, these people are forced to rely on a small range of responses again and again, whether or not they are successful.

Having a repertoire of options available to manage unwanted offers of help is something many people with disabilities have learned.[69] Some options include performing a task quickly, before anyone has the chance to intervene; pretending not to hear the offer; accepting in order not to seem rude or ungrateful; using humour to deflect the person; declining the offer with thanks; and assertively refusing help from those who won't take no for an answer.

Cognitive complexity

The ability to construct a variety of frameworks for viewing an issue.

SKILL BUILDER

Stages in Learning Communication Skills

Learning any new skill requires moving through several levels of competence.

1. Beginning Awareness

The first step is becoming aware of a new and better way of behaving. Just as a tennis player learns a new serve that can improve power and accuracy, so should reading bring you new information about *communication competence*.

2. Awkwardness

Just as you were awkward when you first tried to ride a bicycle or drive a car, so may your initial attempts at communicating in new ways also be awkward. As the saying goes, "You have to be willing to look bad if you want to get good."

3. Skilfulness

If you keep working at your new skill, you'll reach a point where you can do it but it won't be natural to you. You'll still need to think about what you're doing. As an interpersonal communicator, you can expect this stage of skilfulness to be marked by a great deal of thinking and planning. But you'll find that you're getting increasingly good results.

4. Integration

Integration occurs when you're able to perform well without thinking about it. The behaviour becomes automatic, a part of your repertoire.

Now that you understand how to learn a new communication skill, practice by selecting a skill that you would like to incorporate into your repertoire. You may want to stop texting or checking your phone in some context, or you may want to become more open minded to another way of thinking. Once you decide on a skill you would like to attain, write out what your behaviour would look like in each of the four steps. Finally, begin to practice with real people.

FIGURE 1.3
Stages in Learning Communication Skills

© Cengage Learning
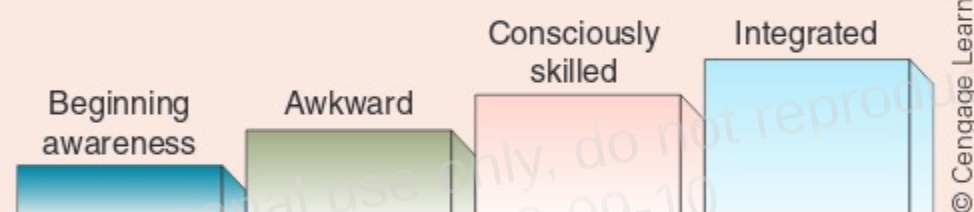
Empathy

Empathy involves feeling and experiencing another person's situation almost as they do. This ability is so important that some researchers have labelled empathy the most important aspect of communication competence.[73] Look at this photo of the man and woman in a hospice. What do you think is going on here in terms of empathy?

Getting a feel for how others view the world is a useful and important way to become a more effective communicator.

Steve Dunwell/age fotostock/Getty Images

> **Empathy**
> The ability to project oneself into another person's point of view, so as to experience the other's thoughts and feelings.