

# Part 1

## Chapter 1

# Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

### CHAPTER 1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast definitions of communication, human communication, and interpersonal communication.
2. Explain why it is useful to study interpersonal communication.
3. Describe the key components of the communication process.
4. Compare and contrast communication as action, interaction, and transaction.
5. Discuss electronically mediated communication's role in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.
6. Discuss five principles of interpersonal communication.
7. Identify strategies that can improve your communication effectiveness.

### CHAPTER 1 OUTLINE

(All **key terms** appear in **bold**)

### WHAT IS INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION?

1. **Interpersonal Communication Is a Distinctive Form of Communication**
  - a. **Communication.** The process of acting upon information.
  - b. **Human communication.** The process of making sense out of the world and attempting to share that sense with others by creating meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal messages.
  - c. **Interpersonal communication.** A distinctive, transactional form of human communication involving mutual influence, usually for the purpose of managing

relationships. Interpersonal communication is inescapable.

d. **Impersonal communication.** Communication that occurs when we treat people as objects, or when we respond to their roles rather than them as unique persons.

e. There is a continuum running between impersonal communication, which occurs when you treat people as objects or relate to them as roles, to interpersonal communication that occurs when you treat others as unique and relate to them as authentic individuals.

(1) Interpersonal communication involves an “I-Thou” relationship that is true dialogue and honest sharing.

(2) Impersonal communication involves an “I-It” relationship where you have a role to perform and there is mechanical, stilted interaction.

f. It is unrealistic to think that all communication will be interpersonal.

## 2. **Interpersonal Communication Involves Mutual Influence Between Individuals**

a. Being fully present when communicating with another person is an essential part of an “I-Thou” relationship.

b. You and your communication partner are simultaneously present and focused on each other.

c. Both you and your partner listen and respond with respect for each other.

## 3. **Interpersonal Communication Helps Us Manage Our Relationships**

a. **Relationship.** An ongoing connection made with another person through interpersonal communication.

b. **Mass communication.** Type of communication that occurs when one person issues the same message to many people at once; the creator of the message is usually not present and there is virtually no opportunity for listeners to respond to the speaker.

c. **Public communication.** Type of communication that occurs when a speaker addresses a large audience in person.

d. **Small-group communication.** Type of communication that occurs when a group of from three to fifteen people meets to interact with a common purpose and mutually influence one another.

e. **Intrapersonal communication.** Communication with oneself; thinking.

# WHY IS INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

## 1. **Improve Relationships with Family**

a. Being skilled in interpersonal communication can improve relationships with family.

b. Communicating with our family members and loved ones is the fundamental way of establishing close, personal relationships with them.

c. You can develop more options for how to respond when family communication challenges occur.

2. **Improve Relationships with Friends and Lovers**
  - a. Unmarried people have reported that developing friendships and falling in love are the top-rated sources of satisfaction and happiness.
  - b. Losing a relationship is among the most stressful experiences.
  - c. Individuals between the ages of 19 and 24 years report having already had five to six romantic relationships and to have been in love once or twice.
  - d. Studying interpersonal communication can offer insight into our behaviours in friendship, romance, and love.
  
3. **Improve Relationships with Classmates and Colleagues**
  - a. Colleagues at work are like family members.
  - b. Relationships with peers have a significant impact on student success at the postsecondary level.
  - c. Understanding how relationships develop at work can help you avoid conflict and stress and increase your sense of satisfaction.
  - d. Success and promotions often hinge upon how well we relate with supervisors and peers.
  - e. The ability to listen to others, manage conflict, develop quality interpersonal relationships with others, and the ability to relate and communicate as a team are skills that the Conference Board of Canada identifies employers are seeking.
  
4. **Improve Your Physical and Emotional Health**
  - a. Research has shown that the lack or loss of a relationship can lead to ill health and even death.
  - b. Establishing a quality social support system can be a major factor in improving and maintaining your health.
  - c. Widowed and divorced individuals are more likely to experience mental illness than those in ongoing relationships. **Depression** is the most commonly diagnosed mental illness.
  - d. Connectedness heals. Support from people who care about us helps us become well adjusted to adversity in life.
  - e. The stress of loneliness can make us sick, but support from people who care about us, can help one adjust to life's challenges and surprises.

## THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

1. a. **Source** – the originator of a thought or emotion, who puts it into a code that can be understood by a receiver.
  - (1) **Encode** – to translate ideas, thoughts, and feelings into a code.
  - (2) **Decode** – to interpret ideas, feelings, and thoughts that have been translated into a code.
- b. **Message** – written spoken and unspoken elements of communication to which people assign meaning.
- c. **Channel** – the pathway through which messages are sent.
- d. **Receiver** – person who decodes the message and attempts to make sense of what the source has encoded.

- e. **Noise** – the interferences that keeps a message from being understood and achieving its intended effect.
  - (1) **Literal** (external) noise can be actual noise like the roar of a plane.
  - (2) **Psychological** noise can be internal such as distracting thoughts that keep you from concentrating on the message.
- f. Noise needs to be minimized for accurate communication to occur.
- g. This model is simple and straightforward, but overlooks the complexities of real life human communication.
- h. **Feedback** is the response to the message.
  - i. Could be verbal or non-verbal.
  - ii. Could be intended or unintended.
- i. **Context** emphasizes the importance of the particular environment within which the communication takes place.
  - i. All communication takes place within a context.
  - ii. Context encompasses the physical environment, the number of people present, the relationship between communicators, the communication goal, and the impact of culture.

## MODELS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

1. **Communication as Action: Message Transfer model**
  - a. Shows communication as action, or a transferring of meaning. Communication takes place when a message is sent and received.
2. **Communication as Interaction: Message Exchange model**
  - a. Emphasizes human communication as interaction.
  - b. Adds two elements to the action model: feedback and context.
  - c. This model is more realistic because of the addition of feedback and context. The model is limited because it characterizes communication as a linear, step-by-step sequence rather than a simultaneous process.
3. **Communication as Transaction: Message Creation model**
  - a. Emphasizes communication as mutual transaction.
  - b. Most scholars view this as the most realistic model for interpersonal communication.
  - c. It employs the same components as the other models and adds the notion of simultaneous interaction of components.
  - d. As we talk, we also interpret verbal and non-verbal responses.
  - e. Transactional approach to communication is based on **systems theory**. A system is a set of interconnected elements in which a change in one element affects all of the other elements. Key elements include:
    - i. inputs: All of the variables that go into the system.
    - ii. throughputs: All of the things that make communication a process.
    - iii. outputs: What the system produces.
  - f. From a transactional communication perspective, a change in any aspect of the communication system potentially influences all the other elements of the system.

g. From a systems theory perspective, each element of communication is connected to all other elements of communication.

## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

1. **Electronically Mediated Communication (EMC)**
  - a. Is not face to face, but rather is sent via a medium such as a cell phone or the Internet.
2. **Comparing Electronically Mediated Communication with Face-to-Face Communication**
  - a. **Seven key differences**
    - (1) **Time:** Greater control over the timing and pacing of the messages you send and receive. Your interaction with others can be **asynchronous**—messages are not necessarily read, heard, or seen at the time you send them or **synchronous**—at the same time which creates **social presence**, which is the feeling we have when we act and think as if we're involved in an unmediated, FtF conversation. It also takes longer to create a message.
    - (2) **Anonymity:** You may not always know precisely with whom you are communicating when you receive an e-mail or other electronic message.
    - (3) **Potential for Deception:** It is easy to create accounts that do not reveal who a person really is. In order to detect deception as friendships develop over the Internet, people come to depend on personal knowledge and impressions of their partners acquired over the course of their correspondence.
    - (4) **Non-Verbal Cues:** Words and graphics become more important because they carry non-verbal messages. Emotion is added by use of bolding, capitalization and inserting emoticons.
    - (5) **Writing Style:** As a sender of written messages, you have more control over what you say and the impression you create; as the receiver of written messages, you no doubt realize that the other person has had the chance to shape his or her message carefully for its greatest impact on you. Your written messages provide insights to others about your personality, skills, sense of humour, and even your values.
    - (6) **Distance:** Typically greater physical distance between people who are communicating online. When using the Internet or a cell phone, we can just as easily send a text or a video message to someone on the other side of the globe as we can to someone who is at the other side of the room.
    - (7) **Permanence:** Provides a record of the communication, which the sender could come to regret in the future. EMC messages are not private and confidential so exercise caution before you send.
  - b. Increasingly, people use EMC forums not to substitute completely for FtF contact, but to enrich it.
  - c. You can develop rich, satisfying interpersonal relationships with people online as well as during face-to-face conversations over time.
  - d. Even if you cannot see or hear the person, you can detect relationship cues.
  - e. **Hyperpersonal relationships:** A relationship formed primarily through

electronically mediated communication that becomes more personal than an equivalent face-to-face relationship.

### 3. **Understanding Electronically Mediated Communication**

Three theories have been developed to further explain and predict how EMC works.

(1) **Cues-filtered-out theory**. Suggests that communication of emotions is restricted when people send messages to others via e-mail because nonverbal cues such as facial expression and tone of voice are filtered out. People are less likely to use EMC to manage relationships because of its limited ability to carry emotional and relational information.

(2) **Media richness theory**. Identified the richness of a communication channel using four criteria: (a) the amount of feedback that the communicators can receive, (b) the number of cues that the channel can convey and that can be interpreted by a receiver, (c) the variety of language that communicators use, and (d) the potential for expressing emotions and feelings. A continuum channel developed ranges from communication-rich to communication-lean.

(3) **Social information-processing theory**. Emotional and relationship messages can be expressed via electronic means, although such messages take longer to be communicated without the immediacy of nonverbal cues.

## **PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION**

### 1. **Interpersonal Communication Connects Us to Others**

- a. Interpersonal communication with others is inescapable since it occurs even when you are not conscious of what you are doing.
- b. We affect and are affected by other human beings.
- c. The quality of interpersonal relationships stems from the quality of communication with others.

### 2. **Interpersonal Communication Is Irreversible**

- a. People judge you by your behaviour, not your intent.
- b. Once created, communication can't be uncreated.
- c. It continues to be shaped by the events, experiences, and thoughts of the communication partners.
- d. With EMC the record of communication remains and can be reread and scrutinized over and over.

### 3. **Interpersonal Communication Is Complicated**

- a. Whenever you communicate with someone, there are at least six “people” involved.
  - (1) Who you think you are;
  - (2) Who you think the other person is;
  - (3) Who you think the other person thinks you are;
  - (4) Who the other person thinks he or she is;
  - (5) Who the other person thinks you are; and

- (6) Who the other person thinks you think he or she is.
  - b. Humans interpret information from others as symbols.
    - i. **Symbols:** A representation of something else.
    - c. Messages are not always interpreted as we intend them.
4. **Interpersonal Communication Is Governed by Rules**
- a. **Rules** are a prescription that one follows and which indicates what behaviour is obligated, preferred, or prohibited in certain communication situations or contexts.
    - i. Rules may be explicit or implicit.
    - ii. We learn communication rules from experience, by observing and interacting with others.
  - b. There are four general rules for relationship development and maintenance (Argyle, M., et al.).
    - 1) Respect each other's privacy.
    - 2) Do not reveal each other's secrets.
    - 3) Look the other person in the eye during conversation.
    - 4) Do not criticize the other person publicly.
5. **Interpersonal Communication Involves Content, Relationship Dimensions**
- a. **Content** refers to new information, ideas, and suggested actions the speaker wishes to share: it is what is said.
  - b. The **relationship dimension** of the message is more implied and offers cues about the emotion, attitudes, and amount of power and control the speaker feels: it is how the message is communicated.
  - c. **Metacommunication:** Verbal or nonverbal communication about communication.

## IMPROVING YOUR OWN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

- 1. The **communibiological approach** to communication suggests people's communication behaviour can be predicted based on personal traits and characteristics that result from their genetic or biological background.
  - a. **Social learning theory** suggests we can learn how to adapt and adjust our behaviour toward others; how we behave is not solely dependent on our genetic makeup.
  - b. Competent communication should be effective.
    - i. Your message is understood.
    - ii. Your message achieves its intended effect.
  - c. Competent communication should be appropriate.
    - i. Your message should consider time, place, and the overall context of your message.
    - ii. Your message should be sensitive to the feelings and attitudes of the listener.

2. The authors suggest a six-part strategy for becoming a more competent communicator.
  - (1) **Become Knowledgeable:** You must know how interpersonal communication works by learning theories, principles, concepts, and rules.
  - (2) **Become Skilled:** You must translate that knowledge into social skills.
    - i. Learning skills requires breaking it down into sub-skills you can learn and practice; Four steps: Hear it, see it, do it, and correct it.
    - ii. Skills require practice.
  - (3) **Become Motivated:** You must want to use your information and skill. You must want to improve.
  - (4) **Become Adaptable:** You must assess each unique situation and adapt your behaviour to achieve the desired outcome.
  - (5) **Become Ethical:** You must become sensitive to the needs of others and offer choices for their behaviour.
    - i. **Ethics** are the beliefs, values, and moral principles by which people determine what is right or wrong.
    - ii. Ethical communicators seek to establish trust and reduce interpersonal barriers.
  - (6) **Become Other-Oriented:** You must consider the thoughts, needs, experiences, personality, feelings, motives, desires, culture, and goals of your communication partner.
    - i. People today are increasingly more narcissistic (self-focused) than they have been in previous generations. (J. Twenge).
    - ii. Speaking without thinking may occur when we need to purge ourselves or to confirm our sense of self-importance.
      - It may undermine our relationships with others.
      - We can adapt by asking questions, finding topics of mutual interest, selecting meaningful examples, and avoiding topics that are uncomfortable for our communication partner.
      - Adaptation does not mean we only tell others what they want to hear: this is unethical.
    - iii. Other-oriented communication suggests that you:
      - Consider the needs, interests, values, and behaviours of others.
      - Remain true to your own principles and ethical credo.
    - iv. Other-orientation is a collection of essential communication skills.
      - Knowledge of communication as a transactive process
      - Motivation to be other-oriented.
      - Skill to be competent in your communication.
    - v. Cultural differences can lead to misinterpretation and unintended errors. One example is the differences in the translations of words from one language to another.

## **CHAPTER 1 ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

### **ICEBREAKERS**

Search the web using the term “icebreakers” or conduct some research at your library. Introduce an activity for the class that will help all of you learn something about each other in an enjoyable and memorable manner. Activity 1.0 is a good example of an Icebreaker that focuses on communication skills.

#### **ACTIVITY 1.0: THREE PART, FOUR STEP INTERVIEW**

To encourage initial interaction with a group while focusing on communication skills, have students interview each other and prepare an introduction of a person whose interview you observed.

They will interview one person in a triad. (name, background, goals, other); be interviewed by another person; observe an interview; prepare to introduce the person that you did not interview (your observation); introduce one other person to the rest of the large group.

Participants debrief by answering the questions: What did you learn about your partners? About interviewing?

#### **ACTIVITY 1.1: DISCUSSION/JOURNAL QUESTIONS**

Use the following ideas and questions to help students enhance their understanding.

Ask your students how many have taken a communication course in the past. Invite them to assist you in distinguishing types of interpersonal communication. Note that interpersonal communication can be differentiated by action, interaction, and transaction.

If yours is a humanities course, be sure to give your students a sense of the non-communication that the scholars referenced in the text. Illustrate the collaborative nature of the field of interpersonal research and study. For instance, you might explain that Martin Buber taught philosophy from 1938 to 1951 at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is probably best known for his work on dialogical or “I-Thou” philosophy.

Have students keep a personal learning journal in which they will write about their learning on a class by class basis. This writing might start with the following questions. List new terms you have encountered. Specify how the use of these terms has increased your knowledge and understanding of human behaviour. Which ideas do you understand best? How have these ideas influenced your understanding of yourself and others?

*Objective 1: Students will be able to compare and contrast definitions of communication, human communication, and interpersonal communication.*

## **ACTIVITY 1.2: THE CONTINUUM OF COMMUNICATION**

Begin a discussion in class by asking students to list the number of people with whom they come in contact with daily with whom they communicate. Many may leave out those with whom they only engage in impersonal communication. Bring to their attention the number of these encounters they have daily. What would happen if they had to have “interpersonal communication” with each of these people?

*Objective 2: Students will be able to explain why it is useful to study interpersonal communication.*

## **ACTIVITY 1.3: PEOPLE SKILLS**

Robert Bolton, author of *People Skills*, asserts that “80% of the people who fail at work do so for one reason: they do not relate well to other people.” (Simon & Schuster, 1986, p. 7.) Ask students to comment. This could include their personal experiences and the observations of others.

## **ACTIVITY 1.4: IMPERSONAL VS. INTERPERSONAL**

Ask students to form buzz groups (3-5 people) and complete exercise #1, in the Critical Thinking Questions section at the end of this chapter on creating a relationship scale. To minimize students’ discomfort with disclosure, suggest that they refrain from using proper names, suggesting that instead they use general terms, including classmate, dentist, cashier, mother, or neighbour.

Following the exercise, note that our more intimate relationships require greater amounts of time and trust to develop and maintain.

*Objective 3: Students will be able to compare and contrast communication as action, interaction, and transaction*

## **ACTIVITY 1.5: THE MODELS OF COMMUNICATION**

Models of human communication are complex. Often, students must learn new definitions for terms for which they had pre-existing definitions, and the components can seem overwhelmingly abstract. Illustrating the models visually can help students to comprehend and remember the components.

The linear model: Bring in any ball to demonstrate how a message/ball is transferred from one communicator to another. A two-toned Nerf football makes a good model of a communication message.

- Explain that the colours denote verbal and non-verbal codes/cues. Discuss how the message is encoded, and transmitted to a receiver.
- Explain further that all communication messages contain a non-verbal element but that not all contain verbal codes.
- Ask students to think of examples of communication working in a linear model. This may include television, telegraph, etc.

The interaction model:

- Have students toss the message/ball back and forth to demonstrate this model of communication.
- Discuss how the roles of sender and receiver change.
- Ask students how they have to “adapt” in order to catch the “message.”
- Ask students to identify examples of the interaction model. This may include fax, Email or mail.

The transactional model:

- Ask students to create their own model for this perspective. Have them use materials found in the classroom for this part of the exercise.

How would they represent examples of noise and channel?

***Objective 4: Students will be able to compare and contrast communication as action, interaction, and transaction.***

## **ACTIVITY 1.6: PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION**

Reflect on your day to day interactions with others over the past week. Choose one example each of action, interaction, and transactional communication that you have experienced. Create a table that compares (similarities) and contrasts (differences) what you have experienced.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Interaction</b>	<b>Transaction</b>


Be prepared to discuss this with a partner in class.

*Objective 5: Student will be able to discuss electronically mediated communication's role in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.*

### **ACTIVITY 1.7: ELECTRONICALLY MEDIATED COMMUNICATION: NORMS AND RULES**

Have a debate about the value of cell phones, text messaging, and various forms of social media in public places and private transportation. Ask students to prepare a list of advantages and disadvantages of using technology to communicate interpersonally in public forums.

Encourage students to e-mail you with their questions, reflections, or class concerns. You might agree to send students summaries of class lectures and/or class handouts as well. Use an electronic learning management system (LMS) to support or conduct part of the class.

Stress to students that people cannot have transactional meaning with objects. Computers offer interactions but not transactions. It is how they are used by humans that allows for transactions.

Ask students whether and why they think that e-mail or text messaging can be used to engage in interpersonal communication. Is the interaction simultaneous? Does it affect mutual influence?

Assign students the tasks of e-mailing you or posting to a forum on a LMS, giving you a paragraph about their reasons for taking the course and their first impressions of the course. Be sure to respond to the e-mail promptly!

Require that each student stop by your office to speak with you briefly about his or her first impressions for the course. This can be a follow-up to the email or a first step in introducing themselves to you personally. In addition, have a give-away ready for them at your office. This might be a piece of candy or an article about the value of taking an interpersonal course.

After a week, when more students have completed the exercise, have a discussion in class about the value of electronically mediated communication as it compares to face-to-face communication.

## **ACTIVITY 1.8: CONSIDER THE EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social Media, such as, Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com>), Twitter (<http://twitter.com>), Instagram (<http://instagram.com>), Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/>), Tumblr (<https://www.tumblr.com/>), Reddit (<http://www.reddit.com/>), Facebook (<http://facebook.com>), WhatsApp (<https://www.whatsapp.com/>), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/>), YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/>) and many others are examples of the potential for transactional communication. Do an internet search and find examples that interest you. Many do require you to create an account to read. Others you can visit and read/watch postings easily. See which ones are which.

Spend a half hour finding examples of transactions on any of these social media sites. If you have an account, consider specifically how you are transactional. Pick examples that you can share with your classmates of aspects that appeal or repel you.

During your class discussion, share your examples and listen to others. Compare and contrast how the various sites promote or inhibit transactional communication.

## **ACTIVITY 1.9: USING AN ELECTRONIC FORUM**

Interpersonal communication is governed by rules, and these rules can be extended to social media as well. It is particularly prevalent in electronic Forums where rules are made explicit to maintain integrity and safety for their users.

Have the students brainstorm the elements of a forum environment and the social rules that they might find on one. This should include their observations and rationale for each rule proposed.

Set up a forum and have the students log on and enter a conversation. This is best set up as a discussion on a particular topic of interest to the class.

Give different students one of the social rules that have been identified. After some time, the student should create an opportunity to break the rule they have been given and observe the reaction from the others. Each student will make their own observations.

Have students debrief and discuss their observations with the rest of the class.

Help students make clear what the rule was that they broke, whether it was explicit or implicit, whether the reaction, if any, was explicit or implicit, and what, if any, punishing behaviours were evident.

Point out that rules are developmental, socially constructed, and enforced with both explicit and implicit messages of approval/disapproval.

***Objective 6: Students will be able to discuss five principles of interpersonal communication.***

## **ACTIVITY 1.10: ANALYZING THE PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Communication connects us to others.**

Ask students to discuss the following question: If we spend 80-90% of our time with people communicating, when are we not communicating?

What does and does not count as communication?

Can a person send an “unconscious” message? If so, what happens to the encoding process?

Ask students to talk or journal about a time when they were judged on their behaviour rather than their intent. What might they have done differently to change the outcome?

### **2. Interpersonal communication is irreversible.**

Begin a discussion or journal entry about “taking back” something you have said. Can this happen? If so, how? If not, why not?

Ask students to discuss or journal about a friend who will offer a comment or joke and then try and say they “really didn’t mean it.” How does that influence the way they feel about that person?

### **3. Interpersonal communication is complicated.**

Ask students to describe some common examples of external and psychological noise they encounter during class. Then discuss ways to minimize interfering stimuli.

Point out that, unlike the ping-pong game, communication messages are being sent and received simultaneously and multi-dimensionally.

Several balls are being played at once and from many planes.

Ask students to identify the “balls” in your classroom at a given moment. (For example, the posture of the teacher, the dress of a classmate, the arrangement of the desks...)

According to the text, when you are communicating with one person, you are actually communicating with six.

Explain how this works.

Ask students their impressions and experiences with this concept.

#### **4. Interpersonal communication is governed by rules.**

Divide students into groups and have them develop a list of classroom rules.

Offer some suggestions including using Standard Canadian English, requiring students to shake hands with group members before starting a discussion, calling you by your formal title or by your person name, turning off cell-phones, etc.

Ask students to reveal some of the rules that govern interactions in their own family. How can they tell when these rules have been broken?

Explore some rules of Net-etiquette

See Objective 4 for your Compare and Contrast Project.

#### **5. Interpersonal communication involves both content and relational dimensions.**

Have students create and demonstrate how the same phrase can mean very different things based on the relational dimensions of the message. Experiment with scenario phrases such as “I had a really good time” at the end of a date or “I want to see you in my office” from someone on the job.

Discuss how the concept of media richness can help you choose the best medium to use when sending messages. What should you consider then choosing?

Ask students to consider the prospect someone breaking off a relationship with them via email. How might they feel? What would be their reasons for choosing this medium?

**Objective 7: Students will be able to identify strategies that can improve communication effectiveness.**

## **ACTIVITY 1.11: WHAT’S YOUR STYLE?**

1. Encourage students to discover their preferred learning style: Neil Fleming's VAK/VARK (visual, auditory, reading-writing, kinesthetic) or any combination. Other learning styles can be explored, including Anthony Gregorc and Kathleen Butler on how the mind works or Howard Gardener's study into Multiple Intelligences (verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic).

Suggest that other-oriented communicators recognize their preferences but select channels that the recipient prefers for best results. For instance, when asking a “visual” boss for a raise, showing her/him a list of reasons for this pay boost may be more effective than a simple discussion. Likewise, an “auditory” friend may prefer a phone call to a Hallmark card.

Investigate learning styles, using channel/pathway preferences. Also, see Michael Brooks’ *Instant Rapport* (Warner, 1989), or Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed. Multiple intelligences for the 21st century* (Basic Books, 1999).

## **ACTIVITY 1.12: INVESTIGATING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

### **1. Become Knowledgeable**

To learn more about the communibiological approach to communication, check out Jim McCroskey’s writing on the subject; it can be accessed at: <http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/publications/>

### **2. Become Skilled**

Ask students to write for five minutes in their journal about whether they believe there are any foolproof strategies for interacting with others. For instance, is honesty always the best policy? If you can’t say something nice, should you refrain from saying anything at all?

Invite students to consider other proverbs.

Following the writing exercise, invite students to comment on the need for flexibility in communication.

### **3. Become Motivated**

Consider the questions: “What motivates you? How do you get good at anything? What has worked for you in the past?”

Remind students that “communication is risky business,” and that the greater the need to communicate well, the harder it is to do.

Discuss the need for a commitment to change rather than a magic bullet that gives instant success.

#### **4. Become Adaptable**

For more information about students’ multiple intelligences and ways to respond to these in the classroom, check out: <http://multipleintelligencesoasis.org/> for a discussion of Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner has evidence that every skill can be improved and that all are capable of adapting.

#### **5. Become Ethical**

Talk about civility and the need for interpersonal competence. Some students who work with customers will offer excellent examples of the need for civility.

#### **6. Become Other-Oriented**

Share with students these words by John Luther:

“Natural talent, intelligence, a wonderful education – none of these guarantees success. Something else is needed: the sensitivity to understand what other people want and the willingness to give it to them. Worldly success depends on pleasing others. No one is going to win fame, recognition, or advancement just because he or she thinks it’s deserved. Someone else has to think so too.”

(From *Bits & Pieces*, The Economics Press, 1992, Vol. M, No. 1.)

### **OTHER ACTIVITIES: DEMONSTRATING CONCEPTS THROUGH MOVIES AND OTHER MEDIA**

#### ***Interpersonal Communication***

##### ***Mean Girls (2004)***

This movie provides a dramatic example of the stereotypical "mean girls" in some high schools across America. The movie shows the positives and negatives of engaging in effective or ineffective communication styles.

Other resources

[http://www.cengage.com/communication/book\\_content/049509580X\\_adler/film\\_database/ch08.html](http://www.cengage.com/communication/book_content/049509580X_adler/film_database/ch08.html)

Kelly, T. L. (1997). "Conversational Narcissism in Hyperpersonal Interaction."  
(Unpublished graduate paper, Portland State University, October 1997). Portland, OR:  
Author <http://www.q7.com/~terri/Papers/sp511.htm>