

**M1D1: What Makes an Ideal Interpersonal Communicator**

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COM115: Interpersonal Communication

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## **Abstract**

### **Overview**

Have you considered what makes an ideal interpersonal communicator? This is different than what makes a great public speaker! Remember, interpersonal communication is one-on-one communication rather than communication that reaches a broader group.

Before you can evaluate your own interpersonal abilities, it's essential that you identify good communicators and their skills.

In the movie clip appearing within the topic titled, "Self-Concept and Perception", which is accessible within the "Read/View" topic of Module 1 Content, the actor portraying President Roosevelt demonstrates several effective interpersonal communication skills. For example, while speaking to the actor portraying King George, he demonstrates his own difficulties with how people perceive him by moving around the room without the aid of his wheelchair.

What do you think makes an ideal interpersonal communicator? In this activity, we will explore this question in depth.

You should spend approximately 4 hours on this assignment.

**M1D1: What Makes an Ideal Interpersonal Communicator****Initial Post****Instructions**

1. In addition to your research, think of two people who you believe to be great interpersonal communicators: one in your personal life (a family member, friend, or loved one) and one in your professional life (a work or church colleague, professor, or customer). Also, think about the other skills the actor portraying President Roosevelt demonstrated in the movie clip.
2. Create a list of effective interpersonal communication skills, and post them on this discussion board. Include both skills you found in your readings and research and skills you have seen displayed by good communicators. **Include five (5) interpersonal communication skills with your list. Include a minimum of 2 → 3 sentences of explanation about each interpersonal communication skill and why the skill is important.**
3. **At the end of your Main Post, add a minimum of three resources which are correctly formatted in accordance with either APA Style or MLA Style (your choice).**
4. Read and Comment on the Main post submitted by at least two classmates who identified one or more interpersonal communication skills which are either the same as or different from yours. Did their research result in a change to your list? Why or why not?

**Qualities of an Ideal Interpersonal Communicator.** I believe that the ideal “interpersonal communicator”, if such a being exists, has qualities that make someone who one would *want* to go to for advice. Many times, people are afraid of asking for help or advice. More often than not, I feel most people are generally afraid of even describing experience or a situation to others for fear of judgement or someone coming out of the conversation feeling less intelligent or “smaller” as a person. The ideal communicator is one who someone can express what they are really thinking and believe with one another in a civilized manner and come out of the conversation with more knowledge than they had when beginning the interaction.

**Think of two people you consider to be good interpersonal communicators and explain why each one was chosen.** It is actually surprisingly difficult for me to think of one, let alone two examples of people I believe to be even half-way decent at the “art” of communication. Most everyone I know has not yet mastered this life-skill. In the video, it is clear listening is the priority for President Roosevelt throughout the conversation. He does, however, break some of the “Rules” described by Celeste Headlee in the Ted Talk shown in this module’s exploration component. In that video, she described the act of expressing your pain or relating your own situation to theirs. I find that *most, if not all* people (including myself) do this. After the King’s stuttering, the President showed how confident he is with his disability and how little it matters in how the public’s **perception** of you changes. In some instances this could be seen as comforting, but in others could be seen as a rude comparison or as putting off a more “look at me” attitude.

**Detailed List of Interpersonal Communication Skills.** There are many skills utilized by effective communicators depending on the nature of their interaction with the other individuals in question.

1. *A Strong Hold on Psychological Context*

- **Psychological Context** is maybe not so much an interpersonal communication “skill”, but rather it is an important concept for one to grasp in order to effectively communicate any message. Interpersonal communication deals with incredibly personal relationships and as such the environment’s context needs to be taken into

account in order to not prevent the delivery of your message due to the other party being unnerved or too stressed out to effectively understand what you are trying to convey (*Communication in the Real World*, 2013). Because interpersonal communication concerns all intimate and personal relationships, it is important that the speakers show an understanding of how one-another communicates and adjusts how they speak to best fit the situation.

2. *Enter Every Conversation with the intention to understand, rather than with the intention to reply*

- This skill is important and was described to us in Module 1's "exploration" content. The reason this is important is because, as noted in the next item, *listening* is **the** most important skill within the realm of interpersonal communication (Headlee, 2015). If one person is already conjuring their retort to what the other individual is saying, at that point they have stopped listening. If you are not listening, you cannot understand.

3. Effectively Utilize Silence

- Silence can be situational in its "*appropriateness*" within a conversation. In some situations, it can help bond the two individuals who are speaking whereas in others it can drive each other away (Gerd Antos & Eija Ventola, 2008, pp. 600). When appropriate, silence can even be an intimate and comfortable experience, rather than both a repulsive and anxiety-inducing one.

## Responses

### Response 1

“An understanding is the best thing in the world” is what my dad would say often (Hart, 1980). He meant for you to be clear with your words so that others understand you. Even with him saying that to my seven siblings and me, I have not always used his advice, but I know this is the beginning to an ideal interpersonal communicator. A coworker, Carla, has a great way with requesting things. She is clear, direct, and asks for feedback as suggested by a good communicator (Stobierski, 2019). As an example, she may ask me if I would go get a catheter, and if I know where it is. The question forces me to answer yes or no to retrieving the catheter, and to answer if I know where it is. She is also an attentive listener. I’m usually always walking and doing four things at once or multitasking, but, when I ask her for a something, she stops, faces me, and acknowledges me (Headlee, 2016). Carla also uses a calm tone of voice. She gets loud when she laughs or when conversations are funny, but Carla has a calm tone. She is in control and not much can go array without her handling it. My brother, Jerry, uses particular body language when he talks to me, and I feel he is really listening to me when he does this. For instance, he stands straight. His hands are either to his side or behind him, and he faces you. His eyes are slightly squinted as if he is focused only on you. Both Carla and Jerry used an interaction model of communication where we had to talk to each other, verbally and non-verbally, about a request (Jones, 2013).

**This is a response to Diata Hart on Post ID 43184821.** I really enjoy the quote from your father, as it illustrates a problem many have in terms of communicating with each other. I find that even if one may *not* be understood when speaking to someone, the other party may not make it very clear if that is the case. Not many people enjoy admitting to the fact they we may not know *everything*.

I, too, am envious that you were able to pick someone out of your workplace

environment to illustrate the personification of an ideal interpersonal communicator. It tends to be rare that most of us get along with coworkers (in the working environment, not personally). Individuals whom are able to accept feedback and criticism with grace are a rarity in today's world.

**Response 2**

One person in my life that is very good at interpersonal communication is my dad. He works as a hotel broker and also has his own nonprofit business. He is a business man so interpersonal communication is a huge part of his job. He's constantly on the phone talking to customers and partners in the hopes of making deals. I've seen over the years that most of his customers end up becoming close friends of his. This is part of why I see him as such a good interpersonal communicator. He works hard to get to know everyone he speaks to whether it's for his work or just in life. Every time I go out in public with him, I make the joke that he has more friends than me because he's able to have personal conversations with everyone he sees. Part of what makes my dad such a good communicator is that he is extremely kind. This makes him easy to talk to and more trustworthy allowing others to open up to him. A person in my professional life who is a good interpersonal communicator is my boss. She's been very successful at forming relationships with everyone who works there that shows she's there for us and cares, but is also clear that she is our boss, not our friend. This is important because we are able to easily communicate with her whenever we have problems or concerns about something while also professionally speaking to her about our position.

There are many things that make a good interpersonal communicator. Some important factors are empathy, listening, clarity in speech, managing emotions, and nonverbal communication. The journal, *Effective Interpersonal Communication: A Practical Guide to Improve Your Life*, talks about the importance of interpersonal communication within nurses and their patients. They explain that good interpersonal communication reduces stress, promotes wellness, and overall improves their patients quality of life. One of the key variables they say makes a good interpersonal communicator is empathy. Empathy is extremely important because it helps someone to understand another and relate to their emotions. Understanding emotions is so important in communication because



otherwise there are no connections made. Empathy is why my dad is such a good communicator. Another important factor in good interpersonal communication is actually silence, and within silence, listening. The journal, Human Communication and Effective Interpersonal Relationships: An Analysis of Client Counseling and Emotional Stability, talks about interpersonal communication within counselors and their patients. They explain that silence is actually a very important part of communication because the act of not speaking and listening to the person they are communicating shows that they find what the other person is saying is important to them. One important part of this is to actually listen and the facial expressions that they show is important to show this. Without listening to the other person, communication doesn't go very far. Although both these articles are talking about nurses and therapists with clients, they are still essential with daily interpersonal communications. Another important factor is clarity in speech. If you aren't clear about what you're communicating it won't go very far. Without getting the point across, there's not a huge point in communication. Without clear points, it tends to be more of a ramble or a rant. Sometimes people aren't able to speak clearly because their emotions are too overwhelming. It's important in communication to manage emotions in order to have an effective conversation. This is very common when people are struggling with anger or sadness. Sometimes their emotions make it too difficult to effectively communicate. Finally, nonverbal communication is very important in interpersonal communication. Things like facial expressions, posture, and gesture show your attitude towards the conversation. The article, Listening and Interpersonal Skills Review, explains these nonverbal communications and how they are apart of communication. For example, they explain that gestures can replace words by signaling whether the conversation has come to an end or not. These can show whether or not you're actually paying attention or if you show any interest in what the other person is communicating. Nonverbal communication can make or break a conversation. It's very important to pay attention to these because

sometimes nonverbal communication can happen unintentionally, but they make a huge difference in how the other person views your position in the conversation. These are all factors that both my dad and boss use in order to properly communicate. Without using these skills, interpersonal communication isn't very effective.

**This is a response to Julayne Kilcullen on Post ID 43148692.** I really enjoyed reading your incredibly thorough post and I noticed a skills which you have listed that not many other people did which is a nice change-of-pace!

Being an "empath" (i.e. someone with a high degree of empathy towards others) also seems to be difficult sometimes, especially when it comes to controlling one's emotions. Many empaths have not been doing well recently with the animosity in politics all over social media as well as the fires hurting our wildlife, not to mention the COVID-19 pandemic. I wonder what can be done to cope with situations like this when sometimes even simply leaving social media is not enough.

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