

**M1D2: Who Do You See in the Mirror**

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COM115: Interpersonal Communication

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## **Abstract**

### **Overview**

Identifying our flaws and weaknesses can be hard. Ultimately though, we can never improve unless we first figure out what we are doing wrong.

Earlier this module, you researched effective interpersonal communication and created a list of important skills.

Now, you will analyze your own communication abilities and use this information to create a plan to work on the areas in which you need to improve. For example, reflect upon King George in the movie clip referenced in Module 1 Discussion 1. He is very aware of his stutter, which is the first step toward solving the problem.

This is your opportunity to be honest and open with yourself so you can identify interpersonal skills you want to improve and practice improving your interpersonal skills throughout the course. You know what they say: practice makes perfect!

You should spend approximately 3.5 hours on this assignment.

**M1D2: Who Do You See in the Mirror****Initial Post****Instructions**

1. Using the list of skills of effective interpersonal communicators that you developed in Module 1 Discussion 1, rank your current ability on each skill.
2. Use this ranking system to rank your current ability:
  - (a) I never use this skill/I am poor at this skill
  - (b) Rarely
  - (c) Sometimes
  - (d) Most of the time
  - (e) Always
3. Consider the items you ranked as 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. How important are those traits in your life? Why are they important or unimportant?
4. Be honest with yourself! Only you will see your personal rankings; therefore, do not share your rankings in the Main post.
5. In your Main post, list two (2) interpersonal communication skills you will commit to work on improving during the length of our class (and beyond). Explain why you have chosen these two interpersonal communication skills, using information from your rankings and your subjective determination of their importance to you. Include some preliminary ideas for how you will improve these traits, both in your personal life and professional life (if applicable).
6. Next, read and comment on the Main post of two classmates. What suggestions can you make to help them achieve their goals?

- Remember that these feedback posts should contain useful and friendly suggestions using a positive communication tone; you are not attempting to “fix” anything for your classmates.
  - Use “I” statements rather than “You” statements. For example: “I have found that talking in a calm voice is essential to resolving conflict”.
  - Be respectful! Follow the Golden Rule by treating others the way you would like to be treated.
  - Remember to read and fully comply with the Netiquette Guide found in the Syllabus section.
7. Now, go out and have fun while practicing improvement of the two interpersonal communication skills you chose to improve. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** It is very important to keep track of what you practice, when you practice (time and date), who you practiced with, what strategies you used when you practice, and the outcome of that practice. Keep track in a Word document. Why? Next week you will begin adding your practice results, saved in a Word document, as an attachment to the Main Post of Discussion 2 Assignments. I enthusiastically look forward to reviewing your practice results appearing in the Word document. Appearing below is a link to a sample of how to format and enter entries in a practice log. The practice will be updated each week!

**How I rank Myself With Previously Mentioned Interpersonal communication skills**

In the last discussion I had trouble coming up with five interpersonal communication skills, and thus I only had three. Below is how I would rank myself against these three skills as described by the discussion prompt.

1. *A Strong Hold on Psychological Context*

- ☒ I never use this skill/I am poor at this skill
- ☒ Rarely
- ☒ Sometimes
- ☒ Most of the time
- ☒ Always

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

- ☒ I never use this skill/I am poor at this skill
- ☒ Rarely
- ☒ Sometimes
- ☒ Most of the time
- ☒ Always

3. *Effectively Utilize Silence*

- ☒ I never use this skill/I am poor at this skill
- ☒ Rarely
- ☒ Sometimes
- ☒ Most of the time
- ☒ Always

**Personally Selected Skills for Improvement**

I chose to work on the skills involving a stronger hold on psychological context as well as listening with more of an intent to understand, rather than with the intent to respond. I believe these are both very important skills I tend to lack more-often-than-not. I also am fully aware that I tend to try to seem more like an expert on everything I talk about, rather than trying to learn instead. I think it's because rather than viewing the conversation as an educational opportunity I would view it in a more "business-connection" focused sense. I also tend to say more than is needed, whereas the Ted Talks we viewed described the preference of being more concise.

I feel the best way to improve these skills in which I lack would be to simply *talk less*. This also goes as far as to stop immediately thinking of how what someone is telling me relates to my own life and ask questions even if I already have the prior knowledge as someone may have some that I do not.

## Responses

### Response 1

The two interpersonal communication skills that I would like to improve are assertive self-expression, and being able to adapt my messages to account for the unique perspective of the other person.

Improving my assertive self-expression is important to me because I am not really able to express my needs during a one-on-one conversation. I tend to think more about the other person and their feelings, rather than my own. I have a really hard time saying “no”, making requests, and sharing my negative feelings. For those reasons, I do end up getting walked all over, in some cases. This is especially prevalent in my work life, as I always let people leave before me and end up staying there very late. All in all, I am just bad at being honest with my co-workers and boss, and expressing my true feelings. I want to be able to stick up for myself when I need to. In both my personal and work life I plan on gradually adjusting the way I phrase things and how I display them. I will practice saying no, rehearsing what it is I want to say, using body language, and starting small and working my way up. I know this skill is going to take me a while to get good at, so I will have to begin using the ideas mentioned before, and start incorporating them in my daily life.

Being able to adapt my messages for each unique individual is something I am keen on working on, because it will allow for my message to be interpreted as intended. I want to be able to read the person I am conversing with, so I can accommodate to their experiences and perspectives, to further the discussion. I don't think I am the worst at doing this, but it is definitely something I want to improve on. Some preliminary ideas I have about honing in on this skill is to first get to know the person. Understanding where people come from and how they came to be who they are today, is the key to having a deep and meaningful conversation. Analyzing everyone's personality will also help me, there are different approaches to interaction when someone is, let's say, more serious

versus some who is more laid back. Improving on both these skills is going to be something that is essential in not only my personal life, but my work life, and my future as well.

**This is a response to Kristyna Sekera on Post ID 43177567.** I definitely see how it is difficult to assert your own beliefs with the fear of how others will see you once said. It is much easier just to “smile and nod”, so to speak. I saw this everyday when I was still in a customer facing role in my industry, where female budtenders where subjugated to rude, sexist, and more-often-than-not vulgar, comments. In the face of this situation usually another team member on the sales floor would find some sort of excuse to remove her from the situation and take over the sale, banning customers who failed to comply after some arbitrary rule the Human Resources department made up. I believe that if more of us were to master this skill we would have a brighter perception of our personal quality of life and relationships since not every conversation will include “settling” without expressing one’s own opinion.



## Response Posts

### Response 2

In my opinion, the five traits that are extremely crucial in being an effective interpersonal communicator include active listening, presenting good body language, utilizing problem-solving skills, displaying empathy and maintaining a positive attitude. The two skills that I struggle with the most are displaying empathy and being able to maintain a positive outlook. As a registered behavioral technician, a fundamental skill that I have learned to acquire is the ability to listen, observe and be more emotionally aware of my client's struggles, in order to better deliver individualized, behavioral therapy.

One client that I work with is a 4-year-old girl, G.G., who is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as Rett syndrome. G.G. is nonverbal and will most likely never learn how to speak or independently take care of herself. These harsh facts weigh heavy on my heart and therefore I feel responsible for teaching her skills that can potentially improve her quality of life. I work several times a week with G.G. teaching her alternative ways to communicate her wants and needs, by incorporating pictures of items she desires or through a communication device. G.G. still has a long road ahead before she is capable of properly utilizing an alternative communication method. She has good days, when it appears she is utilizing the communication methods I have taught her and consequently will be in good spirits. On these days, I praise her and feel overjoyed by her accomplishment in overcoming one of her greatest obstacles. I know that I am making progress with her because she makes eye contact with me. She acknowledges my verbal cues and responds to me with joy. Contrastingly, she also experiences bad days, when she lashes out in frustration because she is incapable of communicating what she needs in that moment. On G.G.'s worst days, witnessing her struggle weighs heavy on me and it is difficult for me to maintain a positive attitude when I am trying to engage with her. I have to be able to take all of the visual and non-verbal information from our interactions to

understand how to respond to her. At times, she can read my negative, closed off body language and as a result, GG becomes more anxious.

Communication is a vital skill that is often taken for granted. The key to good communication is to first listen and seek to understand. I can never truly empathize with how G.G. feels not being able to speak nor to be heard. However, by attempting to gain understanding of G.G.'s world, I have begun to help her confront her communication limitations. This skill in turn allows me to better understand her and to be a better educator.

**This is a response to Daniella Maduro with Post ID 43200009.** I feel it is very important to have someone's perspective on interpersonal communication as behavioral therapy technician. I also can understand the difficulty in presenting a comforting appearance when attempting to communicate with *anybody* having one of their "bad days". When you had mentioned that during GG's bad days, she can sometimes become more anxious if she can sense your own anxiety or fear when face without knowledge of how to handle a certain situation I was wondering if you happened to have yet found a good way to remain in a "good light", so to speak, during difficult interactions.