

Developing Effective Communication Skills:

A Reflective Journal

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COM 120: Introduction Interpersonal Communication

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Journal #1

Prompt:

Upon completing the Communication Competence Scale, a statement I identified as a strength is that I find it easy to get along with others. I get along with people of different ages and ethnic backgrounds. With my work experiences, I have worked with diverse populations. I have gotten along with these people, and we worked well together. Besides my work experiences, I also get along with others in my personal life such as my family members, church family, friends, and new people that I meet. I believe that I am approachable by others. Sometimes people find it easy to engage in conversations with me. Most importantly, I treat others how I want to be treated and I believe this makes a difference.

My Response:

A statement I identified as a weakness or as an area of improvement is that I am not relaxed and comfortable when speaking especially with public speaking. I feel that I lack self-confidence.

When I get nervous, I feel that I might not use the right words or grammar when speaking. I have noticed that I will stutter and try to find the right words to say. Sometimes this can cause me to lose focus on the conversation with the other person or a group of people.

I asked my wife for her feedback on the two statements that I had identified as my strength and weakness. My wife agrees with my self-perception because she knows me best. My wife is very observant. She sees that I get along with other people regardless of their ages or ethnic backgrounds. My wife says I am likable and easy to get along with others. She can tell when I am nervous and when I am trying to find the right words to say when I am communicating with other people. She had shared with me that I have a habit of biting my index finger when I am nervous. I realized she is right because this is a habit that I do.

I am currently a full-time student at Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC). I am also currently working full-time. I am learning to balance these two areas of my life. I enjoy spending time with my wife, listening and playing worship music, watching football, and most importantly, going fishing at the lake. After I graduate from CVCC, I plan to attend the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) and pursue my bachelor's degree in computer science.

I am in this class because I want to learn ways to develop my confidence in improving my communication skills and writing skills. I hope to apply the skills that I learn in this class to both my personal and professional life. As I had stated above, I plan to pursue my bachelor's degree in computer science with a concentration in software engineering. With this kind of career, communication is an important characteristic for success. I will need to be able to express my ideas through public speaking. This career involves working with the employer communicating with operations, sales, product management, peers and supervisors, etc. Writing is a working progress for me. I noticed that we will be writing a lot in this class and I hope it will help me grow confidence with my writing skills as well.

A way for this class to help me achieve my personal and professional goals is for my professor to provide me with helpful feedback. I believe this is a learning opportunity that will help me to do better. I have had some professors who would me a grade on my school assignments but did not provide any feedback for future growth. I strongly believe in maintaining communication with my professors should any questions arise.

Journal #2

Prompt:

One of the most important processes to understand in our course is the Transactional Model of Communication. It lays the foundation for future exploration into communication by describing what actually happens when people communicate. It's so much more than just talking!!

To help you better understand this model and connect this process to your own life, your assignment is to share a detailed, TRUE example from your past experience that illustrates all parts of the Transactional Model. Make sure to read Ch. 1 before writing this journal and take a look at this image below.

Your example should illustrate how communicators send and receive messages simultaneously (both verbal and nonverbal) to create meaning, the process of encoding and decoding messages, the presence of noise (physical, psychological, physiological), and the importance of context (social, cultural, relational, physical and psychological).

My Response:

An example from my life would be the time my father sat me down and talk to me about the importance of not dating my brother Max's ex-girlfriend. This happened during my high school years. A few months after Max broke up with his girlfriend, I befriended her in the hope to date her in the future. Somehow in my mind, I thought it was right to do this and did not realize the consequences.

I still remember very clearly what happened. My father sat me down one evening and began to yell at me for acting so foolishly. He communicated loud and clearly what was on his heart and mind. He explained that culturally it was wrong to date my brother's previous girlfriend and that it would bring shame to our family. But as a young naïve teenager, I responded back negatively. I pounded my hands on the table and told him that it was unfair for him to yelled at me since my brother and his ex-girlfriend are not even dating anymore. I should mention that my other siblings were in the same room we were in. This embarrassed me more. We argued for an hour

and eventually, I ran out of the house to cool down. I never went through with it. After that night, I stopped communicating with the girl.

Regarding the transaction model of communication, this is how I saw it played out. My father communicated and encoded his concerns and thoughts to me by yelling at me and telling me to stop talking to the girl. I decoded, perceived, and received it the wrong way and reacted the way I did. At that time in my life, I was very concerned and worry about being single going into adulthood. Culturally, I should have been married by the time I was sixteen years of age. My father and his grandfather all married early on. There was a lot of pressure on me. You can say these are the “noises” that were in my head and it contributed to the way I responded. When my father lashed out in angry, he did it in front of my other siblings. This was the social context of where the incident took place. It embarrassed me and I felt that I needed to defend myself.

Growing up and being taught the American culture of individualism did not help either. Instead of humbling myself and accepting my father’s harsh correction because my action could have shamed my family, I lashed back in angry. Culturally, what my father did was correct. In the culture my father was raised in, anything that can hurt your family must be deal with. It is like knowing the burglar’s plan beforehand. If you know he is coming to harm your family, you better stop him at all cost. I guess my father saw how my action may have affected the family and he responded the way he did. My great-grandfather did the same thing to my grandfather when he was out of place. My father learned from him and used the same methods on his own children. This is how the transaction model of communication played between my father and me.

Great ending though! Twenty years have passed and the relationships I have with my father and brother are awesome. Whenever my family talks about the incident, we just laugh about it and joke about how childish and immature it was. We are all happily married now with our own family. Max was the best man during my wedding. Today, he is my right-hand man. We both talk often, pray for each other often, and always do our best and tell each other we love each other after our phone conversation. Great happy ending.

Journal #3

Prompt:

Describe a time when you faced an **intercultural communication dilemma**. What co-cultures, in-groups, and/or out-groups were you and the other person members of that influenced the intercultural interaction? How did these cultural influences affect your communication both verbally and nonverbally? Refer to low/high context, power distance, and other cultural dimensions if applicable. After reading this chapter, what could you have done differently to be effective and appropriate in this situation?

My Response:

I am the second-generation child of the Hmong people in the United States of American. Being part of that generation diffidently have its challenges regarding intercultural communication.

Previously being the leader in our music ministry at church, I was very punctual and expected others in the team to do the same. I made sure to arrive fifteen minutes before the team during every rehearsal. Before coming to practice, I memorized all my music and learned all my vocal parts. Being in school helped me greatly to learn these disciplines. All the team members were either in high school or college, so they understood the importance of punctuality and studying the music before rehearsal. These were the team's co-cultures, and we were part of that in-group cultural membership.

Everything seems to be going well until an elderly man joined our music team. He had a big heart to serve but his thinking, studying habits, and punctuality were challenging to work with. On most practices, he was thirty to forty-five minutes late. The worst part, he was not even prepared for rehearsal. He had not studied the music part or even listen to the songs. You can say he was planning to “wing it”. He did not speak English or comprehend it well. Also, I could not

speak the Hmong language well enough to explain the importance of being on time and knowing your music. It seemed like He just do not understand or agree with the rules I set in the team. I was getting more frustrated with him as weeks went on. Even though I never displayed it, a lot of non-verbal communication was probably seen in my facial and body expression. Little did I knew two co-cultures were colliding. Eventually, he left the team and focused on a different area of need in the church.

Years went by and I still did not quite understand what transpired until I heard a teaching lesson about culture from a missionary. In his sermon, the missionary taught about the Hmong culture and explained how punctuality is not important. He gave an example of a time in Thailand when he was preparing for a Sunday service. The town people informed him that everyone will arrive at 3pm in the afternoon for Sunday services. No one showed up until 8pm. The missionary was there by himself for five lonely hours. He later asked someone from the town if this was a common practice. To his surprise, they said “yes” because most of the townspeople are farmers and can not leave their fields until sunset. They only told the missionary 3pm would work for them because they did not want to offend him. After quickly learning this, he adjusted to the people’s timing. The missionary also mentioned that during weddings time is not a factor. For example, the groom’s family will inform the bride’s family they will arrive at the house around 9am on the wedding day. The groom and all his friends and families will not actually arrive until later that evening. Why? So that it will give all the bride’s family members and friends enough time to prepare and settle down before the arrival of the groom. After the sermon, I learned that all these existing co-cultures played a large factor in why the elderly man was not punctual and

was not prepared musical week in and week out. His in-group cultural membership was the opposite of the team, but not intentionally. He was just raised up like that.

Thinking back now, I believe I should have been more mindful of the different co-cultures that existed between me and the elderly man and have more knowledge in intercultural communication. When things were escalating, it would have been better for me to seek help through reading books and understand the culture the elderly grew up in instead of displaying non-verbal communication of frustration. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge in intercultural communication did not help either. These are some of the reasons I believe he left the team. But now that I learned ways to improve intercultural communication, I am eager to utilize this knowledge to better help and serve those around me and not to make the same mistake again.

Journal #4: Perception Checking Worksheet

For each scenario below, write three-part, perception-checking statements.

- 1.) Describe the behavior or event in detail (first-order reality)*
- 2.) Offer at least two possible interpretations for that behavior or event (second-order reality)*
- 3.) Ask for clarification*

Scenario

Shakira and Dan have been friends for 5 years. Shakira has romantic feelings for Dan. When watching a movie at a friend's house last weekend, Dan sat close to Shakira on the couch and put his hand on her leg for half of the movie. Shakira wants to know if she should perceive Dan's actions as evidence that he too has romantic feelings toward her. What should she say?

Perception-Checking

In this scenario, Shakira and Dan have a five-year friendship. Shakira has some sort of feelings towards Dan. We can say that she likes him. It appears that she does not know whether Dan feels the same way towards her. As they watch a movie together, Dan sits very close to her. He even places his hand on her leg for half of the movie. This probably got her into thinking that Dan does like her, but she is not a hundred percent sure about it.

There are two possible interpretations of this behavior from Dan. First off, it could be that Dan does indeed like Shakira, and perhaps he is gesturing this feeling by placing his hand on her lap. The second could be that Dan is really into the movie and accidentally places his hand on her lap for half of the movie, not realizing his action.

For clarity, Shakira should have a face-to-face talk with Dan about the incident. Shakira should ask him what his attention was that night without informing him of her own personal feelings.

Maybe he does like her and is displaying the same affection towards her by placing his hand on her lap, or it could be a gesture of a good friendship.

Shakira should ask Dan this:

“Hey Dan, the other night when we were watching the movie together at Robert’s (I’m just making up a name here) house, I noticed you sat next to me. Not only that but you also placed your hand on my lap for half the movie. With that, I wanted to ask what your attention was. Were you trying to communicate with me that you like me and have some sort of feelings towards me, or did you accidentally placed your hand on my lap without realizing it for half the movie?”

Communication dilemma from my own personal life

During my high-school years, I really liked a close friend of mine, but I never shared with her my feelings. During Valentine’s Day, she gave me a card and some candy during class. She smiled and told me “Happy Valentine’s Day”. Base on this, I really wanted to know if perhaps she felt the same way towards me also.

Perception-Checking

After years of romantic feelings towards a close friend of mine, I was not sure if I should tell my friend how I felt about her. Years had gone by and high school is almost done, and I still have not mustered up enough courage to speak with her. We talk a lot over the phone. Sometimes we will talk for hours. I am afraid that if I do not make my move soon someone else will. But what if I did try and she does not feel the same way, it will ruin our friendship forever. During Valentine’s Day, she got me a card with some candy. She smiled and told me “Happy

Valentine's Day" and walk off. Now I am conflicted on whether I should ask if she felt the same way towards me because she gave me a valentine's card.

There are two possible interpretations for this behavior on that day. The first is that she does like me and has been waiting on me for years, but I have not expressed my feelings towards her. She gave me the card and told me "Happy Valentine Day" as a few clues of her feelings towards me. Another is that she is just a really good friend and since she is giving cards to all her friends, she decided to give me one as well.

I finally caught up with her a few days later and asked her this:

"Hey Kimberly, I know we have been friends throughout our high school years. We talk often over the phone on a weekly basis and always sit together during lunch. The other day when you gave me that Valentine's Card, it felt different. I was wondering if you were trying to tell me you like me, or perhaps you were being a good friend and wanted to give me a card like how you gave all your other friends a card."

Journal #5: Language Lessons

1.) Powerful and Powerless Speech

You work at a restaurant. Two weeks ago, you talked with your boss and put in a request for Saturdays off, which she approved. However, you see now that you are scheduled to work the next two Saturdays in a row. You need to confront your boss to correct this mistake. *What do you say? Write a statement using either powerless language, powerful language, polite language, or a combination of those.*

An example of a powerful language response to say is, “Hi. I noticed that I am scheduled to work the next two Saturdays. However, we had talked about two weeks ago with me taking off on Saturdays which you had approved.”

An example of a polite language response to say is, “Hi. I’m sorry to bother you, but I wanted to remind you that we had talked two weeks ago about me taking off on Saturdays. However, I noticed that I’m scheduled to work the next two Saturdays. Will you please check on this?”

2.) Inclusive Language

A woman you supervise has shown up late for work three days in a row. You know that she is going through a difficult divorce and has four children, all under her care. However, you feel that you must remind her of the company’s policy on tardiness, and you cannot give her preferential treatment. *What do you say? Write a statement using inclusive language. Avoid language that discriminates based on sex or gender.*

An example of an inclusive language statement is, “I understand that you are going through some difficult things right now and you’re doing the best you can with balancing between your family and work. We want to remind you that we encourage our employees to have a good work ethic with arriving to work on time.”

3.) Specific Language

You and Sam have been close friends for 5 years. You’ve begun to develop romantic feelings for your friend and you want to know if they feel the same way. Last night, at a football game, Sam threw a blanket over both of you and snuggled in closely. Sam also rubbed your back to make you warm and Sam’s hand stayed on your shoulders and back long after the back rub was over. You’ve also caught Sam looking at you for long periods of time in what you perceive to be a romantic way. You’re ready to tell Sam how you feel and ask about if they feel the same way. *What do you say? Write a statement using specific, descriptive language. Avoid ambiguity!*

An example of using specific, descriptive language is: “Sam, I noticed that at yesterday’s football game, you had a blanket over both of us and we had snuggled closely. I also noticed that you had rubbed my back and your hand was on my shoulders and back after the back rub was

over. I saw that you were looking at me in a way that looked romantic. I was wondering if all of these behaviors meant more than just being friends to you or not.”

4.) You, I, and We Language

Your roommate lost his job two weeks ago and has been unable to find another one despite his best efforts. Now he seems to have lost interest in normal hobbies. You asked him to join you for disc golf and he said no. You asked him to join you at the movies, and he said no. You also notice he isn’t eating more than one meal a day, his complexion looks gray, and he seems to have a frown most of the time. Yesterday, you think you heard crying coming from his room. You want to show him that you are concerned and ask him if he needs help. *What do you say? Write a statement that uses “You” language, “I” language, “We” language, or a combination of those.*

A statement that uses “I” language is, “I noticed that you have lost interest in some of your hobbies like disc golf and going to the movies because when I invited you, you did not want to participate.”

A statement that uses “You” language is, “You are doing the best you can to find a job. You are a hard worker and you will find a job.”

Journal #6

Prompt:

This talk has connections to verbal expression of emotion (saying what we WANT to happen), the riskiness of self-disclosure, and the importance of openness and forgiveness in strengthening relationships. Reflect on the video. Is this a problem in your relationships? Why is saying thanks so important? Is there a relationship in your life where thanks is needed? Remember to write 200 words. Looking forward to reading your journals!

Praise, admiration, and thank you (Having it be specific and genuine)

My Response:

I would say that this is not an issue or struggle in my life, but it is something I am improving on daily. Holding down full-time employment and full-time schooling have its challenges. Both my wife and I know what we must do for me to succeed in school. After getting home from work I immediately start my schoolwork while my wife prepares dinner for the evening and lunch for the next day. Even as I am writing this journal, she is in the kitchen preparing dinner and tomorrow's lunch. I had mentioned to her that packing peanut butter and jelly sandwich should be good enough for lunch, but she disagrees because she wants me to have a decent meal for work. With that, she puts in lots of effort to make a good lunch for me. There have been times when I rushed into all my schoolwork without telling her how thankful I am for her support. Though she does not demand any gratitude from me, when I did mention my thankfulness to her, it encouraged her and put a big smile on her face. I noticed afterward that there are a lot of positive marital results. Whatever those outcomes may be, I believe this is the reason why it is so important to say "thank you" to my wife, regularly. There is a quote on beautybitten.com that goes like this, "Whatever you give a woman, she's going to multiply. If you give her sperm, she'll give you a baby. If you give her a house, she'll give you a home. If you give her a grocery, she'll

give you a meal. If you give her love, she'll give you her heart. She multiplies and enlarges what is given to her". In a very real way, giving my appreciation and gratitude to my wife for supporting me as a full-time worker and student have the same result. The more I do this the better our relationship becomes and the more we grow intimately with each other. We have only been married for half a year and I cannot wait to see how our marriage will be like as we continue this trend of expressing gratitude and thankfulness for acts of kindness we do for one another.

Journal #7

In this journal, you will practice your emotional expression using verbal communication. Your job is to use **at least three** of the following language strategies in each of the four scenarios:

1. Using single words
2. Use metaphorical language
3. Describing what you'd like to happen
4. Giving your emotion context
5. Sharing multiple feelings
6. Using I-Language

Scenario #1: You just found out that your partner is cheating on you. (Alternatively, you may choose to write a response for a different type of relationship. For example, your best friend betrayed your trust and revealed information you told them in secret.)

Example response: I feel betrayed, livid, heartbroken. I want you to tell me why you did this. I want to stay together, but I need your word this will never happen again. If you betray my trust again, I will leave you for good. I feel like an atomic bomb just went off in my heart.

My response: I am really hurt but what you did. I really trusted in you, and I shared something that was not to be shared with others, but you did always. I do not know if I can trust you again. However, we have been best friends since childhood, and I want to maintain that relationship. It will take time to build that trust again with you.

Scenario #2: You have the whole weekend off from work and no homework.

Example response: I am a kite flying in a warm breeze. I'm happy as a kid on Christmas. I am ecstatic, excited, hopeful, at peace. I feel like a balloon about to pop full of anticipation.

My response: With the whole weekend off from work and no homework, I feel as free as a skydiver who is free-falling from the sky. I am not held down like an inmate in prison. My level of joy and happiness is compared to a kid on Christmas. Excitement and joy are about to explode like a volcano.

Scenario #3: You just found out you didn't get the job you really wanted.

My response: I was really hoping the interview would go well. However, a lack of preparation on my part contributes to their decision not to hire me. I am very disappointed in myself, and I am extremely heartbroken. I feel like a broken record. I was really hoping to finally land this employment opportunity after so many months of job searching. I feel like I was the right person

for them. I could have utilized my experiences and education for the good of the company if I got the job.

My response: I was really hoping the interview would go well. However, a lack of preparation on my part contribute to their decision on not hiring me. I am very disappointed at myself, and I am extremely heartbroken. I feel like a broken record. I was really hoping to finally land this employment opportunity after so many months job searching. I feel like I was the right person for them. I could had utilized my experiences and education for the good of the company.

Scenario #4: You just got into the college of your dreams with a full scholarship.

Example response: I am ecstatic, joyful, shocked. I feel so proud of myself because I've worked really hard, sacrificing time with friends and family in order to study more and commit to my education. It paid off! I am an eagle about to take flight!

This journal is due Sunday, Oct. 31st at midnight!

My response: This is the best day ever! I work so hard these last couple of years to finally get to this point. Now that I got accepted into college with a full scholarship, I planned to be the best in everything I do. I won't settle for anything less than an A. I'm going to do so well that it will be an easy transition from undergrads school to graduate school. I'm going to make my family so proud.

Journal #8

After watching “This Talk”, there are three lessons that I learned. First of all, I learned what civility and incivility is. Civility is defined as formal politeness or courtesy in behavior or speech. Incivility is the opposite. It is disrespect or rudeness in behavior or speech. An example of civility is to pay attention to someone who is talking to you. This includes maintaining eye contact, actively listening, and being present in the moment. Some examples of incivility include telling offensive jokes, teasing people, name calling, being disrespectful, and bullying. Based on these different examples of civility and incivility, it paints a picture of how people are perceived by others.

Secondly, I learned the importance of civility versus incivility. Civility promotes relationships, communication, and cooperation. At my previous job as a lead, I was required to maintain regular communication with my team members in order to effectively get the job done. I believe I treated my team members with respect and praised them for their hard work. Personally, these are things that I would like to receive from others as well. As human beings, we want to be respected and know that we matter whether it is at home, school, work, or in the community. It was stated in the video *“those that were seen as civil were twice as likely to be viewed as leaders and they performed significantly better.”* As stated in the video, *“Incivility is a bug. It is contagious and people can become carriers of it just by being around it.”* For example, if we are around people who tease others or tell offensive jokes, we may find ourselves mimicking these same behaviors. If we do not have self-control or remove ourselves from these kinds of situations, it may start to affect our daily interactions with people around us. If we are uncivil to others, they will turn their backs on us leaving us alone.

Finally, I learned that civility pays at the end. Some examples of how to be civil includes smiling, saying hello, and listening fully when someone is speaking to you. There will be times when we disagree with each other. It is okay to disagree as long as you are being respectful. We want to lift people up and let them know they are appreciated. I believe we should treat others how we want to be treated in return.

Journal #9

1) What is your COM Talk about?

My COM Talk will be about the five love languages and their usage regarding communication.

2) What type of presentational aid will you be using? (slideshow, videos, images, graphs or charts, questionnaire)

I am planning to utilize the five love languages book as one of my visual aid. I might also add some questionnaires to solidify the idea as well. Lastly, I am thinking about some charts of statistics too.

3) Have you found any outside sources to incorporate? (articles, videos, books, web sites)

The book itself is a great source. Some other sources I will use will be the author's websites and other video teachings of the five love languages.

4) How do you plan to involve and/or engage the audience? Even though this is an online class, you should present the talk as if you are speaking to an audience of your peers.

To involve and engage the audience I will be providing questionnaires. I will ask the audience to figure out what their five love languages may be.

5) What questions do you have for me? How can I help you prepare?

After reading this, do you feel there is anything else I should add to make this COM Talk go well?