

COMM 121X

JOURNAL

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Your Journal is a semester-long endeavor

PART 1: For the first two weeks of the term, observe your behaviors in significant interpersonal relationships. Identify 3 issues which you feel may be improved by learning new communication behaviors. Reflect on which set of behaviors you are most comfortable working on during the term. **Select one communicative difficulty to work on.** After deciding which you want to focus your attention on, complete the following steps:

PART II:

Step I. This step is important to provide behavioral descriptions of the communicative difficulty.

- a. Who are the people involved in your difficulty?
- b. What are the circumstances in which the problem occurs?
- c. What is the problem behavior -- specifically?

EXAMPLE:

- a. The people involved: My wife.
- b. The circumstances: When I am upset with something she has done or said; when I strongly disagree with something she suggests or advocates; or when I feel she is mistreating me.
- c. The behavior: Instead of saying that I am upset or angry and explaining why, I tend to sulk or hint about my emotional state. I wait for her to infer what I am angry or upset about and get more disturbed when she fails to understand my indirect communication.

Step II. This step is important for beginning to identify the behaviors you would like to use in place of those you currently use to communicate.

- a. Someone who communicates in ways you want to learn.
- b. The specific communication behaviors the model uses which you would like to master.

EXAMPLE:

- a. Susan
- b. Her behavior: When she is upset or angry with Harry, she tells him what it was that offended her and how she feels. She does not raise her voice, she does not sulk, she expresses both her feelings and the behavior which led to the feelings calmly and explicitly. This allows Harry to

respond directly, without defensiveness, and they are usually able to talk out a satisfactory resolution to the problem.

STEP III. Plan of action for improving communication behaviors.

a. Goal: What behaviors do you want to learn?

b. Plan: For reaching that goal.

EXAMPLE:

a. Goal: I want to be able to directly express both my feelings to my wife and the reasons for those feelings. I want to learn to do both without sulking or raising my voice.

b. Plan:

Step 1: Take the time to identify my feelings. (distinguish anger from hurt or embarrassment)

Step 2: Express the feeling to my wife directly.

Step 3: Explain why I feel as I do.

Step 4: Discuss with her what changes, if any, are appropriate.

PART III. Now the hard part: ***Practice-- Practice-- Practice.*** For this part of the journal, you should begin to practice the behaviors. You should not expect that you will be able to do all the parts the first time, nor that you will do each part as well as you like. Remember that you are learning new patterns of communication. It will take you time to unlearn old, unproductive behaviors and replace them with new behaviors.

Keep track, in your journal, of your efforts to learn new behaviors. Each entry should include two parts:

1. As you do that, describe the situation in which you attempted the new behavior(s), how it felt when you tried them, how the other responded to your new behavior. Evaluate your success.

2. As you work to change your communicative behaviors, note how -- as we go along --the readings and class discussions change your view of the communication difficulty, the model you are emulating, your goal and plan of action, and your practice of the behaviors.

Your journal will be evaluated on the basis of the clarity of your work and the depth of your analysis, including drawing on the resources from the class. Part III should have a **minimum of eight entries.**

Please do not wait until the week before or even the night before your journal is due to write your entries.

PLEASE USE SPELLCHECK

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Weekly Chapter Reaction Papers

GENERAL ADVICE:

1. Papers should explore **issues raised** in readings, exercises or discussions **one week prior to the paper due date**. For example, the 1st paper could cover one of the following (this is only a representative list): one of the models, axioms or characteristics of communication; an aspect of communication competence; relationships as systems; independence vs. conformity; one cognitive structure; one perceptual process, etc.. You may use any source of topic inspiration: discussion, exercises, readings (for example; you may compare and contrast your experiences to text readings -- remember, you must examine your own communication experiences to those ideas explored in classes.)

2. **Proof-read** your papers for typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors. How your work is presented affects my perception. Perhaps not ideal but real.

GRADING: Below are **general guidelines** about the kind of thinking displayed in the papers and how I'm likely to evaluate it.

1. A paper that **describes and explains** a concept which has been described /explained in the text, lectures, exercises, or discussions will probably receive a **C grade**. This kind of paper demonstrates your comprehension of the material.

2. A paper that **describes, explains and illustrates** a concept with an example from your own experience (an interaction in which you participated or which you carefully observed) will probably receive a **B grade**. This kind of paper demonstrates that you can recognize and apply the concepts to your life.

3. A paper that describes, explains and illustrates a concept and also **provides a critical analysis of the communicative behaviors** will probably receive an **A**. This kind of paper shows not only comprehension and application but also displays critical thinking about communication.

What I really want you to do is to test the concepts presented in this class against your own experience. Think about which ideas work or don't work to help you understand and interact with your world in productive ways -- AND WHY.

Course assignments and objectives may be adjusted to meet the specific needs and interests of the class.

One final note-- plagiarism of any sort results in a failing grade for the course.

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ONE WAY OF EVALUATING JOURNALS AND PAPERS

GRADE SCALE:

Lower levels of understanding and knowledge evident in:

1 Exercise incomplete, written work difficult to read, many misspellings, lack of organization, lacks conscientious presentation, does not present data in adequate manner; interpretation shows little or no understanding of the purpose of the exercise.

2 Grave doubt of student comprehension

3 Nagging doubts

4 Slight doubts

Average levels of understanding and knowledge evident in:

5 Exercise complete. Written work neat and demonstrates a conscientious effort to organize and present material. Presents ideas so a layperson could understand them.

6 Interpretation leaves no doubt that the learner understands the concepts, purposes, and generalizations present in the assignment.

Higher levels of comprehension and knowledge evident in the:

7 interpretation of the assignment, particularly ability to connect

8 the ideas and their descriptions with observations about other works/behaviors.

Highest levels of understanding and knowledge evident in the:

9 Superior work.

10 Student has gone beyond the requirements through additional documentation, examples, analysis, etc. Written work evidences a "style" of writing as well as superior organization of ideas. (Writing with an identifiable style suggests the learner is "owning" the information and so is able to discuss it in her/his own voice.) Presentation displays creativity. Interpretation demonstrates the ability to see/speak/construct relationships and patterns. Abstract ideas and ability to analyze and synthesize dominate the project.