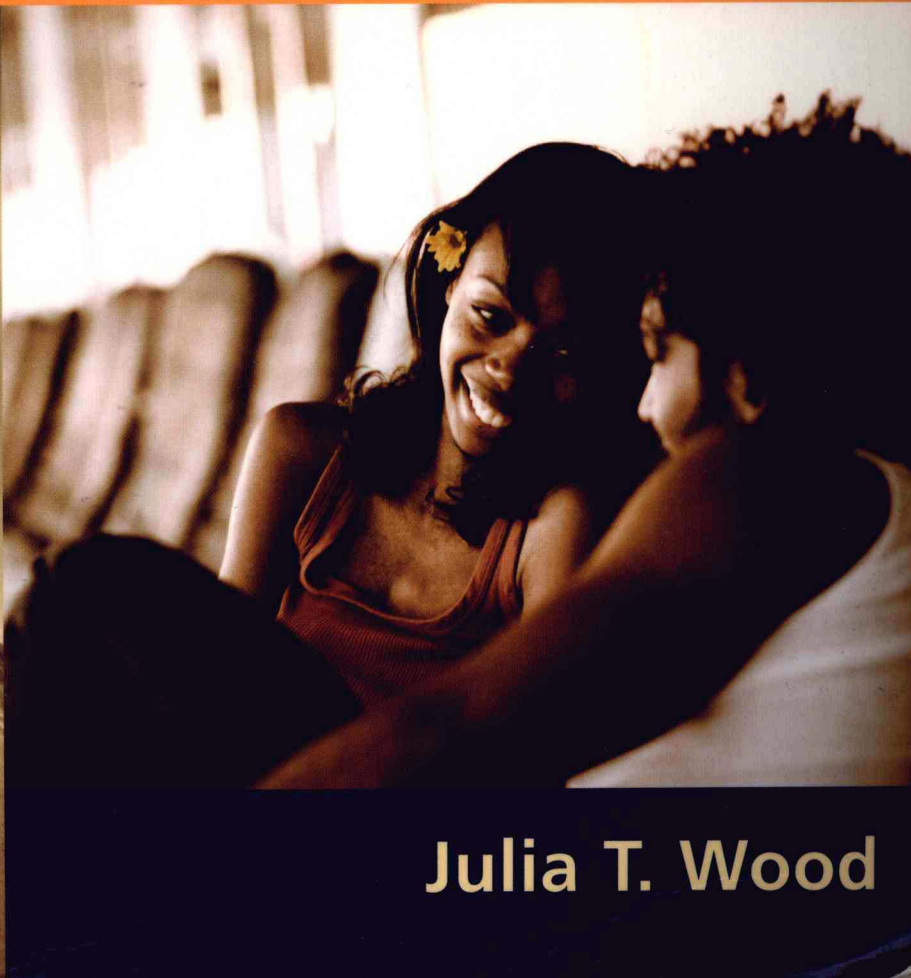
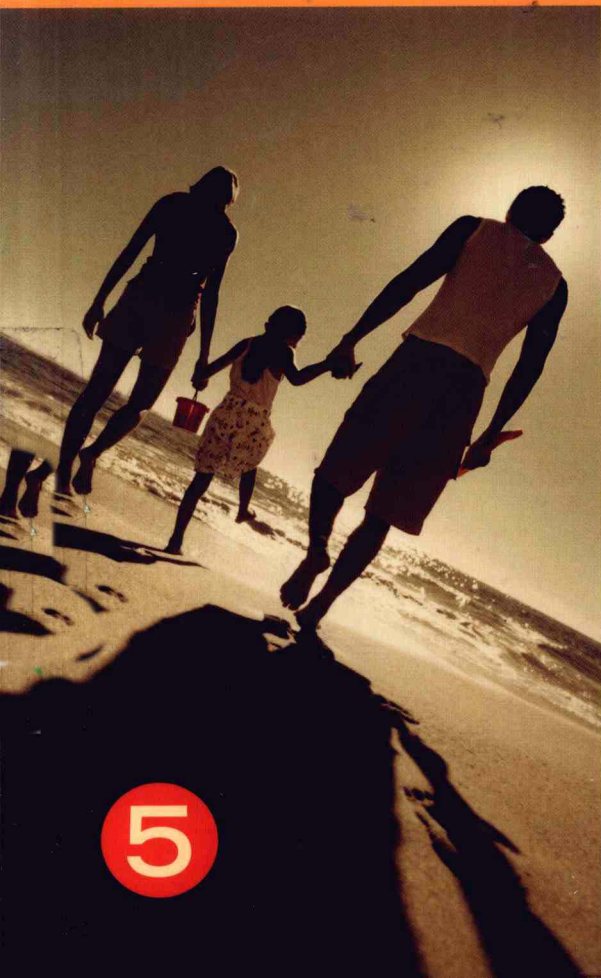


# Interpersonal | everyday encounters Communication



Julia T. Wood

5



# Interpersonal Communication

EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS

Edition 5

Julia T. Wood

*Lineberger Distinguished Professor  
of Humanities*

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH

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# Preface

*Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* offers a distinct approach to the introductory course in interpersonal communication. First, this book integrates theories, research, and practical skills from the field of communication and supplements them with scholarship from other fields. A second distinguishing feature is an attention to significant trends that affect interpersonal communication in the 21st century: social diversity, the increasing number of long-distance relationships, and the influence of technology on interpersonal interaction. Third, this book offers unique pedagogical features that encourage students to engage theories and concepts and apply them to their lives.

## Focus on Communication

In writing this book, I've centered communication research and theory and complemented it with work from other fields. Interpersonal communication is a well-established intellectual area, complete with a base of knowledge, theories, and research developed by communication scholars. The maturation of interpersonal communication as an intellectual area is evident in the substantial original research published in academic journals and scholarly books. Consistent with the scholarly growth of the communication discipline, *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* features current research by communication scholars. For example, Chapter 7, which focuses on emotions, highlights research on comforting communication that has been conducted by Brant Burleson and his colleagues; Chapters 10 and 11 call attention to the importance of everyday, routine communication in friendships and romantic relationships, which is a rising focus of scholarship (Wood & Duck, 2006); and all chapters draw on communication scholars' research on the ways that cultures and social communities shape communication styles.

Scholarship in other fields can also enhance understanding of communication. For this reason, *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*

incorporates research from other fields. For example, research in psychology deepens our understanding of the role of attributions in interpersonal perception. Ongoing work in anthropology, sociology, and psychology enriches insight into differences in communication that are influenced by gender, economic class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and race.

Because interpersonal communication inevitably involves ethical challenges and choices, I've woven discussions of ethics into this book. I identify ethical issues and choices related to interpersonal communication. For example, what do we do when the value of supporting a friend seems to conflict with the value of being honest? How do we communicate when our needs are in tension with those of close friends or intimate partners? These and other ethical issues are integrated into this book. As a result, students who read it will gain an appreciation of the ethical as well as the practical nature of interpersonal communication.

## Attention to Significant Social Trends

*Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* speaks to the context of students' lives today. To do this, I have given attention to social trends, issues, and concerns that characterize the 21st century in Western culture.

**SOCIAL DIVERSITY** One clear issue of importance in today's society is social diversity. The United States, like many other countries, is enriched by a cornucopia of people, heritages, customs, and ways of interacting. *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* reflects and addresses social diversity by weaving it into the basic fabric of interpersonal communication.

Addressing diversity adequately entails more than tacking paragraphs on gender or race onto conventional coverage of topics. Rather than having a separate chapter on social diversity, I have integrated



attention to race, economic class, gender, age, and sexual orientation into the book as a whole. I think this approach allows students to understand the importance of diversity in all forms of communication and contexts of interaction. For example, in exploring self-concept, I examine race, gender, and sexual orientation as core facets of identity that shape how people communicate and interpret the communication of others. You'll also find numerous examples of ways in which diversity affects communication in the workplace, which is increasingly populated by people from different cultures and communities. Chapter 11, on romantic relationships, discusses research on interracial, gay, and lesbian romances, and Chapter 12, on family communication, includes research on a range of families, including ones that are not white, middle class, and heterosexual.

To discourage stereotyped thinking about groups of people, I rely on qualifying adjectives. For instance, when citing research about differences between Hispanic and European American communication patterns, I refer to "most Hispanics" and what is "typical of European Americans." My intent is to remind students that generalizations are limited and may not apply to all members of a group.

To further weave diversity into *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*, I have highlighted "Communication in Everyday Life" features that emphasize connections between communication and diversity.

**TECHNOLOGIES OF COMMUNICATION** A second defining feature of our era is technology, which is increasingly part of our interpersonal, social, and professional lives. Throughout the book, I've included examples of many ways in which technologies intersect with interpersonal communication. One way technology has affected interpersonal communication is by making it possible for people to meet others and form and sustain relationships online. The extent to which people today rely on technologies to build and develop relationships is evident in findings from recent surveys:

- ... More than 900 million people use the Internet; 200 million of those are North Americans (ClickZ Stats staff, 2004; Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2004).
- ... Each day, about 84 million Americans send e-mail messages to friends and family members (Baym, 2002).
- ... An increasing number of people belong to online support groups and online religious congregations (Howard & Jones, 2004).

- ... 69% of teens and college students who are online use instant messaging (Carl, 2006; Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2004).
- ... Online dating has grown in popularity; some people prefer to develop new relationships online rather than face-to-face (Silverstein & Lasky, 2004).
- ... 44 million people work in virtual offices (Telework Advisory Group, 2005).

Because many students today form and conduct relationships at least partially online, this edition of *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* integrates research on online communication into discussions of language, nonverbal communication, climate, expression of emotions, and friendships and romantic relationships. In addition, I have highlighted "Communication in Everyday Life" features that emphasize communication and technology.

Another impact of technology on interpersonal interaction is the ease with which we can now learn about and interact with others who live in different parts of the world and in vastly different social, material, and personal circumstances. The Internet, the web, and interactive technologies have truly shrunk the distance between people and cultures. Whether or not your campus is culturally diverse, all of us today have the ability to interact with people from diverse backgrounds.

To be effective in today's world, students need not only to learn about diversity but also to gain competence in the technologies that are making interaction among members of different cultures and social groups more common. This edition of *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* meets that need by connecting the content in the textbook with technologies that enhance students' learning.

Along with the textbook, students are able to use dynamic technological resources, including website InfoTrac® College Edition and an interactive book companion website. They're part of the overall learning package that makes up this edition.

In addition to the technological resources just mentioned, I've integrated technology into the text itself. I suggest a number of websites and online sources for students who want to learn more about particular topics and online resources they may consult to answer end-of-chapter questions and to respond to the case studies that conclude each chapter.

#### **ENHANCED COVERAGE OF TIMELY TOPICS**

This edition also features expanded coverage of topics and issues that have increased importance in this



era. There is a full chapter on friendships because so many of my students tell me that friendships are increasingly important to them in the face of the growing number of broken marriages and geographically dispersed families. The chapter notes the use of technology in keeping friends in touch across the distances that separate them. The chapter on romantic relationships addresses abuse and violence between intimates, and it discusses using communication to negotiate safer sex in an era shadowed by sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-AIDS. I also include a discussion of communication in long-distance relationships, which are part of the lives of many of us.

## Pedagogical Features

In addition to this book's distinct conceptual emphases, there are pedagogical features specifically designed to make the book engaging and useful to contemporary students.

First, I've adopted a **conversational tone** to invite students to engage ideas in this book. I use contractions, as people do in everyday conversations. Also, I include examples of everyday interactions so that abstract ideas are clarified in practical ways. In my writing, I share with students some of the communication challenges and encounters that have surfaced in my life. The conversational writing style is intended to invite students to interact personally with the concepts, principles, and skills presented in this book.

My voice is not the only one students will encounter in this book. All chapters are enhanced by **student commentaries** that were written by students in interpersonal communication classes at my university and other colleges and universities around the nation. The experiences, insights, and concerns expressed by these students broaden the conversation to include a wide range of perspectives.

This edition of *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* features an **interactive pedagogical toolkit** that is designed to maximize the instructional potential of technologies and to connect book content and students to our larger, wired world. Pedagogical features—in text and online—promote development of interpersonal communication skills. If you order **1pass** packaged with the text, your students will have access to this interactive toolkit; 1pass provides your students with one-stop access to the *Everyday Encounters* premium book companion website and InfoTrac College Edition.

The **password-protected Everyday Connections premium website** consists of a number of integrated components. The first is a link to **InfoTrac College Edition**, a world-class online library students can use to learn more about subjects covered in chapters and to conduct research. The second component is **chapter-by-chapter online resources**, including hotlinks, quizzes, glossary terms, and interactive activities. Students can complete activities and quizzes online and, if requested, submit them to their instructors electronically. Finally, cases from the text are presented as **visual and audio scenarios**. This feature allows students to read, watch, listen to, critique, and analyze actual communication encounters.

**Please note:** If you want your students to have access to the premium online resources, please be sure to order this option for your course. If you do not order this option, your students will not have access to this online content. Use **ISBN: 0-495-16240-X** to bundle this content, at no additional charge to your students, with every new copy of the text. Access to 1pass can also be purchased separately by visiting **[http://communication.wadsworth.com/wood\\_interpersonal5](http://communication.wadsworth.com/wood_interpersonal5)** and clicking on “Purchase 1pass Now!” on the left-hand navigation bar. *Contact your local Thomson sales representative for more details.*

Pedagogical features are also woven into the text itself. Each chapter includes **“Everyday Applications,” exercises** that encourage students to apply concepts and principles discussed in the text to their own lives. As mentioned earlier, many of these are also available online at the Everyday Connections premium website. Each chapter also includes a number of **“Communication in Everyday Life” features**, which highlight interesting research and examples of interpersonal communication. To call students' attention to interpersonal communication in relation to the workplace, technology, and social diversity, I highlight relevant features with the designations *“Work,” “Technology,”* and *“Diversity.”*

A third pedagogical feature is **“Continuing the Conversation.”** Before each chapter summary, you will find a short case study that continues the conversation of the chapter by allowing students to see how theories and principles they have read about show up in everyday life. The “Continuing the Conversation” cases can be elaborated through interactive videos available on the Everyday Connections website. Finally, I've written **questions that invite students to engage in further reflection and discussion** of ideas covered in each chapter. Some questions focus specifically on ethical issues in interpersonal communication, and some call for research using InfoTrac College Edition.



## Changes in the Fifth Edition

*Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* has evolved in response to feedback from instructors and students as well as new research in communication and kindred disciplines. Eight significant changes mark this edition.

- ... First, in response to instructors' suggestions, I have added a full chapter on communication in families. I believe this addition allows the book to cover more fully the range of contexts in which interpersonal communication takes place.
- ... Second, I have strengthened attention to the workplace. Many students and instructors who used previous editions encouraged me to give stronger coverage to the role of interpersonal communication in professional contexts. In response, I've integrated discussion of communication on the job into discussions of concepts and principles presented throughout the book.
- ... Third, I have included findings from more than 150 new research references that reflect the latest scholarship related to interpersonal communication.
- ... Fourth, this edition gives more attention to online communication because that is so much a part of many students' lives and their interpersonal relationships.
- ... Fifth, in response to reviewers' suggestions, I have reorganized Chapter 2 to more clearly explain how we develop selves through communicating with particular others and the generalized other. I have also enlarged coverage of ways we can use communication to promote self growth.
- ... Sixth, in Chapter 11 I have expanded discussion of safer sex to include STDs other than HIV-AIDS and to address common and dangerous misconceptions many students hold.
- ... Seventh, throughout the book I have increased in-text and student voice examples of parent-child, teacher-student, and boss-employee interactions and communication by older people.
- ... Finally, in revising this edition, I have worked to avoid the tendency for books to grow longer with each new edition. I've tightened discussions and removed outdated material. As a result, this edition includes new information in all chapters, as well as a new chapter, without having become substantially longer than previous editions.

## Additional Resources for Instructors

Accompanying *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* are many instructional resources. An extensive *Instructor's Resource Manual*, coauthored by Narissra Carter of Texas Tech University and me, supplements the textbook. The manual discusses philosophical and pragmatic considerations involved in teaching the introductory course in interpersonal communication. It also includes suggestions for course emphases, sample syllabi, exercises and films appropriate for each chapter, journal items, panel ideas, and a bank of test items.

The *Student Companion*, coauthored by Debi Iba of Texas Christian University and me, includes interactive content outlines, vocabulary terms for key concepts, activities, Internet addresses, and self-test questions for each chapter.

A third resource for instructors is the *Multimedia Manager/Instructor's Resource CD-ROM*, which includes an electronic version of the Instructor's Resource Manual, *ExamView*® Computerized Testing, and the *Multimedia Manager* predesigned Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations. This resource is available to qualified adopters. Please consult your local sales representative for details.

## Acknowledgments

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January 2006



# Brief Contents

Detailed Contents	ix
Preface	xv
Introduction	1

## Part One *The Fabric of Interpersonal Communication*

---

Chapter 1	
A First Look at Interpersonal Communication	9
2	
Communication and the Creation of Self	43
3	
Perception and Communication	72
4	
The World of Words	101
5	
The World Beyond Words	131
6	
Mindful Listening	158

## Part Two *Weaving Communication into Relationships*

---

Chapter 7	
Emotions and Communication	185
8	
Communication Climate: The Foundation of Personal Relationships	213
9	
Managing Conflict in Relationships	240
10	
Friendships in Our Lives	272
11	
Committed Romantic Relationships	297
12	
Communication in Families	321
Epilogue: Continuing the Conversation	349
Glossary	353
References	359
Index	385



# Detailed Contents

Preface	xv	Principle 5: Metacommunication Affects Meanings	31
Introduction	1	<i>Everyday Application: Improving Your Metacommunication</i>	33
<b>Part One <i>The Fabric of Interpersonal Communication</i></b>		Principle 6: Interpersonal Communication Develops and Sustains Relationships	34
<b>Chapter 1</b>		Principle 7: Interpersonal Communication Is Not a Panacea	34
<b>A First Look at Interpersonal Communication</b>	9	Principle 8: Interpersonal Communication Effectiveness Can Be Learned	35
<b>The Interpersonal Imperative</b>	10	<b>Guidelines for Interpersonal Communication Competence</b>	35
Physical Needs	11	Develop a Range of Skills	35
Safety Needs	11	Adapt Communication Appropriately	36
Belonging Needs	12	Engage in Dual Perspective	37
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Missing Socialization</i>	13	<i>Everyday Application: Developing Dual Perspective</i>	38
Self-Esteem Needs	13	Monitor Your Communication	38
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Interpersonal Communication on the Job</i>	14	Commit to Effective and Ethical Communication	39
Self-Actualization Needs	14	<i>Everyday Application: Improving Communication Competence</i>	39
<b>Participating Effectively in a Diverse Society</b>	16	Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	40
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Communicating in a Multicultural World</i>	16	Chapter Summary	41
<i>Everyday Application: Communication and Your Needs</i>	17	Everyday Connections Online	41
<b>Models of Interpersonal Communication</b>	17	Key Concepts	42
Linear Models	18	For Further Thought and Discussion	42
Interactive Models	18		
Transactional Models	19		
<b>Defining Interpersonal Communication</b>	20	<b>Chapter 2</b>	
A Communication Continuum	20	<b>Communication and the Creation of Self</b>	43
<i>Everyday Application: Communicating in Your Relationships</i>	22	<b>What Is the Self?</b>	44
Features of Interpersonal Communication	22	The Self Arises in Communication with Others	44
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Poor Interpersonal Communication as the Number One Cause of Divorce</i>	23	<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: What Is the Self?</i>	45
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Pillow Talk</i>	28	Particular Others	45
<i>Everyday Application: Levels of Meaning</i>	28	<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: The Role of Fathers in Socializing Children</i>	48
<b>Principles of Interpersonal Communication</b>	29	<i>Everyday Application: Reflecting on Reflected Appraisals</i>	49
Principle 1: We Cannot Not Communicate	29	<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Internalizing Racial Stereotypes</i>	49
Principle 2: Interpersonal Communication Is Irreversible	29	<i>Everyday Application: Reflecting on Your Identity Scripts</i>	51
Principle 3: Interpersonal Communication Involves Ethical Choices	30	<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Attachment Styles and Relationships with Television Characters</i>	53
Principle 4: People Construct Meanings in Interpersonal Communication	30	The Generalized Other	53
		<i>Everyday Application: Identifying Social Values in Media</i>	53
		<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: The Construction of Race</i>	54
		<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: A GLAAD Self-Concept</i>	55
		<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Bruce, Brenda, and David</i>	56



Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Caste Counts	57
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Language and Class	58
The Self Is Multidimensional	58
Everyday Application: Reviewing Your Social Comparisons	59
The Self Is a Process	59
Social Perspectives Are Subject to Change	60
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: A Cross-Cultural Look at Sexual Identity	61
<b>Guidelines for Improving Self-Concept</b>	<b>62</b>
Make a Firm Commitment to Personal Growth	62
Gain and Use Knowledge to Support Personal Growth	63
Set Goals That Are Realistic and Fair	65
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: If at First You Don't Succeed	66
Seek Contexts That Support Personal Change	66
Everyday Application: Improving Your Self-Concept	68
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	68
Chapter Summary	70
Everyday Connections Online	70
Key Concepts	70
For Further Thought and Discussion	71

## Chapter 3

### Perception and Communication 72

#### The Process of Human Perception 73

Selection	73
Organization	75
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: I'm Cablinasian!	76
Everyday Application: Changing Constructs, Changing Perceptions	77
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: "I can't understand the teacher's accent."	78
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: A Script for Romance	79
Everyday Application: Sizing Up Others	79
Interpretation	80
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Self-Serving Attributions and Sports	81
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Thinking Your Way to a Good Relationship	82

#### Influences on Perception 83

Physiology	83
Age	83
Culture	84
Everyday Application: Cultural Values	85
Roles	87
Cognitive Abilities	87
Self	89
Everyday Application: Discovering Your Implicit Personality Theories	90

#### Guidelines for Improving Perception and Communication 90

Recognize That All Perceptions Are Partial and Subjective	90
Avoid Mind Reading	91
Check Perceptions with Others	92
Everyday Application: Checking Perceptions	92
Distinguish between Facts and Inferences	93
Guard against the Self-Serving Bias	93
Everyday Application: Using Tentative Language	93
Guard against the Fundamental Attribution Error	94
Monitor Labels	94
Everyday Application: Guarding against the Fundamental Attribution Error	95
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth	96
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	97
Chapter Summary	99
Everyday Connections Online	99
Key Concepts	100
For Further Thought and Discussion	100

## Chapter 4

### The World of Words 101

#### The Symbolic Nature of Language 102

Language Is Arbitrary	102
Language Is Ambiguous	103
Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: Technospeak	103
Language Is Abstract	104
Everyday Application: Communicating Clearly	104

#### Principles of Verbal Communication 105

Language and Culture Reflect Each Other	105
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Our Multicultural Language	105
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: The Whorf-Sapir View of Language	106
The Meanings of Language Are Subjective	107
Language Use Is Rule Guided	108
Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: Chat Room Etiquette	108
Everyday Application: Communication Rules	109
Punctuation Shapes Meaning	110
Everyday Application: Punctuating Interaction	110

#### Symbolic Abilities 111

Language Defines	111
Language Evaluates	112
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: The First Jewish Candidate for Vice President	113
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Reappropriating Language	114
Language Organizes Perceptions	114
Language Allows Hypothetical Thought	115
Language Allows Self-Reflection	116



## Speech Communities

### Gender Speech Communities

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Which Blacks’ Black English?*

## Guidelines for Improving Verbal Communication

### Engage in Dual Perspective

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Missing the Boat*

### Own Your Feelings and Thoughts

- Everyday Application: Using I Language*

### Respect What Others Say about Their Feelings and Thoughts

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Respecting Others’ Experiences*

### Strive for Accuracy and Clarity

- Everyday Application: Using Concrete Language*

### Case Study: Continuing the Conversation

### Chapter Summary

### Everyday Connections Online

### Key Concepts

### For Further Thought and Discussion

## Chapter 5

### The World Beyond Words

### Defining Nonverbal Communication

#### Similarities between Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

#### Differences between Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

### Principles of Nonverbal Communication

#### Nonverbal Communication May Supplement or Replace Verbal Communication

#### Nonverbal Communication May Regulate Interaction

#### Nonverbal Communication Often Establishes Relationship-Level Meanings

#### Nonverbal Communication Reflects and Expresses Cultural Values

- Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: “I’ll Move When I’m Ready and Not Before!”*

- Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: Multitasking Time*

### Types of Nonverbal Communication

#### Kinesics

- Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Cultural Differences in Workplace Nonverbal Communication*

- Everyday Application: Communicating Closeness*

- Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Kinesics to Discourage Assault*

#### Haptics

#### Physical Appearance

- Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Help with Eating Disorders*

- Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Beauty for Sale*

117

118

121

121

121

122

122

123

124

125

125

127

128

129

129

129

131

132

132

134

135

135

135

135

135

135

138

138

138

139

140

140

140

141

141

142

142

142

143

143

144

144

### Artifacts

- Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Identity Symbols in Military Life*

### Environmental Factors

- Everyday Application: Artifacts and Identity*

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Kwanzaa*

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Environmental Racism*

### Proxemics and Personal Space

- Everyday Application: What Does Your Space Say?*

### Chronemics

- Communication in Everyday Life—Work: The Time Bind*

### Paralanguage

- Everyday Application: Paralinguistic Cues*

### Silence

## Guidelines for Improving

### Nonverbal Communication

#### Monitor Your Nonverbal Communication

#### Interpret Others’ Nonverbal Communication Tentatively

- Everyday Application: Using I Language about Nonverbal Behaviors*

#### Case Study: Continuing the Conversation

#### Chapter Summary

#### Everyday Connections Online

#### Key Concepts

#### For Further Thought and Discussion

## Chapter 6

### Mindful Listening

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: “The spirit catches you, and you fall down.”*

### The Listening Process

#### Mindfulness

#### Physically Receiving Messages

- Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Good Listening = Career Advancement*

- Everyday Application: Being Mindful*

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Signing as a Foreign Language*

#### Selecting and Organizing Material

#### Interpreting Communication

#### Responding

- Everyday Application: Responsive Listening*

#### Remembering

### Obstacles to Mindful Listening

#### External Obstacles

- Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: Technological Overload*

#### Internal Obstacles

- Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Listening in a World Dominated by Sight*



<b>Forms of Nonlistening</b>	<b>170</b>
Pseudolistening	171
Monopolizing	171
Selective Listening	173
Defensive Listening	173
Ambushing	173
Literal Listening	174
<i>Everyday Application: Identifying Your Nonlistening Habits</i>	174
<b>Adapting Listening to Communication Goals</b>	<b>175</b>
Listening for Pleasure	175
Listening for Information	175
<i>Everyday Application: Improving Your Retention</i>	176
Listening to Support Others	177
<i>Everyday Application: Learning to Paraphrase</i>	178
<i>Everyday Application: Using Minimal Encouragers</i>	179
<b>Guidelines for Effective Listening</b>	<b>180</b>
Be Mindful	180
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: More on Developing</i>	
Listening Skills	180
Adapt Listening Appropriately	180
Listen Actively	181
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	181
Chapter Summary	183
Everyday Connections Online	183
Key Concepts	184
For Further Thought and Discussion	184

## Part Two *Weaving Communication into Relationships*

### Chapter 7

<b>Emotions and Communication</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>187</b>
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Emotional Intelligence</i>	
on the Job	187
<b>Understanding Emotions</b>	<b>188</b>
<i>Everyday Application: What's Your EQ?</i>	188
Physiological Influences on Emotions	190
Perceptual Influences on Emotions	191
Social Influences on Emotions	193
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: The Social</i>	
Shaping of Grief	194
<i>Everyday Application: Religions and Feeling Rules</i>	194
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Cultural</i>	
Codes for Anger	195
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Faking It</i>	196
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: The Gift of Fear</i>	197

<b>Obstacles to the Effective Communication of Emotions</b>	<b>198</b>
Reasons We May Not Express Emotions	198
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Sugar and Spice</i>	
and Bullying!	199
The Ineffective Expression of Emotions	201
<i>Everyday Application: Enlarging Your Emotional Vocabulary</i>	202
<b>Guidelines for Communicating Emotions Effectively</b>	<b>203</b>
<i>Everyday Application: Avoiding Counterfeit Emotional Language</i>	203
Identify Your Emotions	204
Choose How to Express Emotions	204
Own Your Feelings	205
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: Virtual Emotions</i>	206
Monitor Your Self-Talk	206
Adopt a Rational–Emotive Approach to Feelings	206
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Work: Talking Yourself into—</i>	
or out of—a Job	208
Respond Sensitively When Others Communicate Emotions	208
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Albert Ellis in Action</i>	208
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Managing Anger</i>	209
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	210
Chapter Summary	211
Everyday Connections Online	212
Key Concepts	212
For Further Thought and Discussion	212

### Chapter 8

<b>Communication Climate: The Foundation of Personal Relationships</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>Features of Satisfying Personal Relationships</b>	<b>214</b>
Investment	215
<i>Everyday Application: Your Investment in Relationships</i>	215
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: What Keeps</i>	
Relationships Together?	216
Commitment	216
Trust	216
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Dialogue and Doing:</i>	
Alternate Paths to Closeness	218
Comfort with Relational Dialectics	219
<i>Everyday Application: Applying Relational Dialectics</i>	221
<b>Confirming and Disconfirming Climates</b>	<b>222</b>
Levels of Confirmation and Disconfirmation	222
<i>Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Guidelines for</i>	
Communicating with People with Disabilities	224
Defensive and Supportive Climates	224
<i>Everyday Application: Analyzing Your Relationships</i>	225
<i>Everyday Application: Using Descriptive Language</i>	226
<i>Everyday Application: Assessing Communication Climates</i>	230



## Guidelines for Creating and Sustaining Healthy Climates

Actively Use Communication to Build Confirming Climates	230
Accept and Confirm Others	231
Affirm and Assert Yourself	231
Respect Diversity in Relationships	232
<i>Everyday Application: Communicating Assertively</i>	233
Respond Constructively to Criticism	234
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	235
Chapter Summary	237
Everyday Connections Online	238
Key Concepts	238
For Further Thought and Discussion	238

## Chapter 9

### Managing Conflict in Relationships 240

#### Defining Interpersonal Conflict 242

Expressed Disagreement	243
Interdependence	243
The Felt Need for Resolution	243

#### Principles of Conflict 243

Principle 1: Conflict Is Natural in Relationships	244
Principle 2: Conflict May Be Overt or Covert	244
<i>Everyday Application: Understanding Your Conflict Script</i>	245
Principle 3: Social Groups Shape the Meaning of Conflict Behaviors	246
<i>Everyday Application: Identifying Games in Your Communication</i>	246
Principle 4: Conflict Can Be Managed Well or Poorly	248
Principle 5: Conflict Can Be Good for Individuals and Relationships	249

#### Orientations to Conflict 250

Lose-Lose	250
Win-Lose	251
<i>Communication in Everyday Life-Diversity: Japanese and American Styles of Negotiation</i>	252
Win-Win	252

#### Responses to Conflict 252

<i>Everyday Application: Identifying Your Conflict Orientations</i>	253
The Exit Response	253
The Neglect Response	254
The Loyalty Response	254
The Voice Response	255

#### Communication Patterns during Conflict 255

<i>Everyday Application: Enlarging Your Repertoire of Responses to Conflict</i>	255
Unproductive Conflict Communication	256
Constructive Conflict Communication	258
Conflict Management Skills	261

## Guidelines for Effective Communication during Conflict

Focus on the Overall Communication System	263
Time Conflict Purposefully	264
Aim for Win-Win Conflict	265
Honor Yourself, Your Partner, and the Relationship	265
Show Grace When Appropriate	266
<i>Communication in Everyday Life-Insight: The Communication of Forgiveness</i>	267
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	268
Chapter Summary	269
Everyday Connections Online	270
Key Concepts	270
For Further Thought and Discussion	270

## Chapter 10

### Friendships in Our Lives 272

#### The Nature of Friendship 273

Willingness to Invest	273
<i>Everyday Application: Your Style of Friendship</i>	274
Emotional Closeness	274
<i>Everyday Application: Appreciating Talking and Doing in Friendships</i>	276
Acceptance	277
Trust	278
Support	278

#### The Development of Friendship 280

Role-limited Interaction	281
Friendly Relations	281
Moving toward Friendship	281
Nascent Friendship	281
Stabilized Friendship	282
<i>Communication in Everyday Life-Insight: Maintaining Friendships</i>	282
Waning Friendship	283
<i>Communication in Everyday Life-Diversity: Friendships around the World</i>	284

#### Pressures on Friendships 284

Internal Tensions	284
<i>Communication in Everyday Life-Insight: Just Friends?</i>	286
External Pressures	286
<i>Communication in Everyday Life-Diversity: Friendships across the Life Span</i>	287
<i>Everyday Application: Maintaining Friendship over Distance</i>	288

#### Guidelines for Communication between Friends 289

Engage in Dual Perspective	290
Communicate Honestly	290
<i>Everyday Application: Communicating Needs Clearly</i>	291
Grow from Differences	292
Don't Sweat the Small Stuff	292



Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: A Both–And Approach to Relationships	293
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	293
Chapter Summary	295
Everyday Connections Online	295
Key Concepts	295
For Further Thought and Discussion	296

## Chapter 11

### Committed Romantic Relationships 297

#### Committed Romantic Relationships 298

Dimensions of Romantic Relationships	298
Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: The Rise of Online Romance	299
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: The Prototype of Love	300
Styles of Loving	300
Everyday Application: Measuring Love and Commitment	302

#### The Development of Romantic Relationships 303

Growth Stages	304
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Development of Interracial Relationships	305
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: The Real Valentine’s Day	306
Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: E-Crushes	307
Navigating	308
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: The Chemistry of Love	308
Deterioration Stages	309
Everyday Application: Measuring the Strength of Your Relationship	309

#### Guidelines for Communicating in Romantic Relationships 311

Engage in Dual Perspective	311
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Facts about Sexually Transmitted Diseases	312
Practice Safer Sex	312
Manage Conflict Constructively	314
Adapt Communication to Maintain Long-Distance Relationships	315
Communication in Everyday Life—Technology: Coping with Geographic Separation	316
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	317
Chapter Summary	319
Everyday Connections Online	320
Key Concepts	320
For Further Thought and Discussion	320

## Chapter 12

### Communication in Families 321

#### Diversity in Family Life 322

Diverse Forms of Families	323
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Color between the Lines	323
Diverse Goals for Families	324
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Love and Marriage Go Together Like . . .	324
Cultural Diversity of Family Forms	325
Diversity of Paths to Commitment	326

### Long-Term Commitments 327

Cohabitation	327
Marriage	328
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Same-Sex Commitments around the World	329
Relationship Types	329
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: “I do. I REALLY do.”	329
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Marital Types	330
Everyday Application: Identifying Marital Types	330
Communication and Satisfaction in Long-Term Commitments	331

### The Family Life Cycle 332

Stage 1: Establishing a Family	332
Stage 2: Enlarging a Family	333
Everyday Application: Bundles of Joy and Change	334
Stage 3: Developing a Family	334
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Fathering	335
Communication in Everyday Life—Diversity: Ethnicity and Parenting	335
Stage 4: Encouraging Independence	335
Stage 5: Launching Children	336
Stage 6: Postlaunching of Children	337
Everyday Application: Your Parents’ Stage in Family Life	337
Stage 7: Retirement	338
Everyday Application: Mapping Your Family’s Life Cycle	338

### Guidelines for Effective Communication in Families 339

Maintain Equity in Family Relationships	339
Communication in Everyday Life—Work: The Second Shift	340
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: What Makes a Good Marriage?	341
Make Daily Choices That Enhance Intimacy	341
Show Respect and Consideration	342
Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff	343
Communication in Everyday Life—Insight: Love as a Package Deal	343
Case Study: Continuing the Conversation	344
Chapter Summary	347
Everyday Connections Online	347
Key Concepts	347
For Further Thought and Discussion	347

### Epilogue: Continuing the Conversation 349

#### Glossary 353

#### References 359

#### Index 385

# Introduction

**“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.”**

**Martin Luther King Jr.**



## Starting the Conversation

When I was 20 years old, something happened that profoundly changed the rest of my life: I took my first interpersonal communication class. A new world of meaning opened up for me as I learned about the power of communication to enhance or harm personal, social, and professional relationships. The more courses I took, the more fascinated I became, so I decided to make a career of studying and teaching interpersonal communication. I wrote *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* because I wanted to awaken you to the wonder of interpersonal communication as my first course awakened me.

In the opening pages of this book, I'll introduce you to the field of interpersonal communication, to myself, and to some of the special concerns and issues that surround interpersonal communication in this era.

## The Field of Communication

The field of communication has a long and distinguished intellectual history. It dates back to ancient Greece, where great philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato taught rhetoric, or public speaking, as a necessary skill for participation in civic life. In the 2,000 years since the communication field originated, it has expanded to encompass many kinds of interaction, including group discussion, family communication, oral traditions, organizational communication, and interpersonal communication.

In recent years, interest in interpersonal communication has mushroomed, making it one of the largest and most vibrant areas in the discipline. Student demand for courses in interpersonal communication is rising. Scholars have responded by conducting more research and offering more classes that help students learn to interact effectively in their everyday interpersonal encounters.

Reflecting the intellectual maturity of the field, communication theory and research offer rich insight into the impact of interpersonal communication on individual identity and personal, social, and professional relationships. In the chapters that follow, we'll learn what scholars have discovered about the effects of communication on our self-concepts and our relationships with others. We'll also discover how communication creates defensive or supportive climates and how it shapes constructive or unproductive ways of expressing feelings, listening, managing conflict, and building relationships.

Because interpersonal communication in its many forms is central to personal, social, and professional life, its concerns intersect with other disciplines that study human behavior. Thus, research in communication contributes to and draws from work in such fields as psychology, business, sociology, anthropology, and counseling. The interdisciplinary mingling of ideas enriches the overall perspective on human interaction that you will find in *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*.



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