

SEVENTH EDITION



# BRIDGES NOT WALLS

*A Book about Interpersonal Communication*

EDITED BY JOHN STEWART

# *Bridges Not Walls*

## *A Book about Interpersonal Communication*

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SEVENTH EDITION

*Edited by*  
*John Stewart*  
*University of Washington*



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Bridges, Not Walls:  
A Book about Interpersonal Communication

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# Preface

This edition of *Bridges Not Walls* maintains the approach and basic format of the previous six editions. It also offers an updated account of verbal and nonverbal communicating, a new chapter on hurtful and negative communicating, a state-of-the-art discussion of gender similarities and differences, a new approach to interpersonal communication by psychologist Ruthellen Josselson, and 23 readings that either replace or supplement materials used before. The book is still designed primarily for college students enrolled in interpersonal communication classes. But the materials discuss topics also included in humanities, social work, counseling, and sociology courses. Chapters treat the standard topics covered in most interpersonal communication classes, and a majority of the readings are authored by communication scholars and teachers. There are also materials from authors in a range of disciplines, including organizational development, education, clinical and social psychology, and philosophy.

Since the first edition of *Bridges* in 1973, the approach to communication that has guided this selection of readings has been a relational one, focusing on the quality of contact that people create *together*. In other words, as the first two chapters explain, *communication* is understood basically as the term humans use for their collaborative processes of meaning-making. To say that humans are "social animals" is to say that we make sense of things *with others*, and "communication" is the general label for these processes. The term *collaborative* obviously does not mean that humans always agree as we make meanings together, but only that we "co-labor" in response to one another. All this implies that communication is not simply an activity that one person performs or does "to" another, but is a process that happens *between* people.

*Interpersonal* communication is a subset of this process, a type or kind of contact that happens when the people involved talk and listen in ways that maximize the presence of the personal. This approach emphasizes the prominence of culture in all communicating and highlights the ways communication affects social and personal identities. In other words, although it is certainly true that communication is often expressive and instrumental, this approach emphasizes that it is also

person-building, which is to say that *who humans are* gets worked out in our verbal/nonverbal contact. Virtually all the authors represented here acknowledge these features of communication, and many comment directly on them.

This is a book for people who want practical suggestions and skills that will help them communicate more effectively with their friends, partners, spouses, family, and co-workers. Unlike much of the self-help literature, however, *Bridges* resists the tendency to gloss over conceptual issues and to reduce interpersonal effectiveness to techniques or formulas. The authors represented here recognize that there is much more to effective communication than simply being “open and honest.” Included are thought-provoking discussions of the nature of interpersonal contact, connections between verbal and nonverbal cues, person perception and social intelligence, listening, deception and betrayal, identity management, interpersonal ethics, types of love, transformational conflict management, and diversity. In addition, four philosophies of communication are developed at the end of the book in Chapters 15 through 18. *Bridges* also includes systematic treatments of dialogue, self-awareness, self-expression, communication spirals, friendship, family relationships, and defensiveness, but no reading claims to offer the definitive “six steps” or “12 easy techniques” for guaranteed success. The authors emphasize that the unique situation, the constancy of change, and especially, the element of human choice all make it impossible to design and execute a purely technical approach to *human* relationships.

This point is rooted in the book’s definition of its subject matter, which I’ve already sketched. *Bridges Not Walls* does not define interpersonal communication as something that happens only in face-to-face settings, during discussions of weighty topics, or in long-term intimate relationships. Instead, the term *interpersonal* designates a quality of contact that emerges between people whenever they are able to highlight in their speaking and listening, aspects of what makes them human. The editor’s introductions in Chapters 1 and 2 explain this definition, and subsequent readings extend and develop it. Throughout the book the point is made that different qualities of contact are possible or appropriate in different situations. “More” interpersonal communicating is not *always* “better.” There’s much more to it than that, as the readings, in Chapters 8, 13, and 14, especially, demonstrate. At the same time, materials in the first two chapters and the four approaches at the end clarify how most people’s personal, educational, and work lives could profit from increased interpersonal contact.

Readings in Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17, and 18 also emphasize the point made earlier that communication is more than just a way to get things done, because it affects who we are. I introduce this idea at the beginning of the book; James Lynch, Harold Barrett, John Welwood, Carole Logan and I, and Ken Cissna and Evelyn Sieburg develop and extend the early discussions, and the person-building dimension of communication is discussed in detail by Martin Buber in Chapter 18.

These theoretical and conceptual commitments are complemented by my commitment to make the book as readable as possible. This is the main reason why there are few research articles from scholarly journals. As in all earlier editions, I have tried to select materials that speak directly to the student reader. I

continue to favor authors who “write with their ears,” or *talk* with their readers. Selections from past editions by Gerald Corey and Marianne Schneider-Corey, Virginia Satir, Carl Rogers, Hugh and Gayle Prather, and C. Roland Christensen continue to be in this edition partly because the authors do this so well. I have also found this accessibility in some new authors, especially William Isaacs, Julia Wood, and Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, and Patrick Fanning.

## New Features

As I noted, one significant addition is the new Chapter 8, “Hurtful and Negative Communicating.” For more than a decade, some scholars have been calling attention to the therapeutic bias and emphasis on intimacy that has characterized much of the writing about interpersonal communication. Real relationships are not always therapeutic or supportive, these scholars have argued, and textbooks should equip student readers to understand and cope with deception, hurtful messages, aggression, and harassment. Chapter 8 acknowledges this important insight and provides excerpts from three discussions of what is sometimes called “the dark side” of interpersonal communication. The first is taken from Anita Vangelisti’s classic “Messages That Hurt,” a discussion of hurtful communicating which cites almost three dozen studies of this topic. The second is a treatment by therapist John Welwood of how to turn relational “lead” into “gold,” by distinguishing between what he calls “discernment and condemnation,” using “emotional judo,” and being willing and able to be each other’s teacher. The chapter closes with another communication research–based discussion of deception, betrayal, and aggression from the 1998 edition of Carole Logan’s and my book *Together: Communicating Interpersonally*.

A second new feature is the combined treatment of verbal and nonverbal communicating in Chapter 3. Especially over the last decade, communication scholars in a variety of disciplines have been arguing against the historical pattern of separating the two. One main reason is that people experience verbal and nonverbal cues together, so that discussions emphasizing their differences can distort as much as they clarify. The first reading in Chapter 3 outlines both some distinctions and some important connections. Then, primarily because there are still only a few combined discussions in the literature accessible to students, subsequent readings in this chapter focus either on words—Virginia Satir’s “Paying Attention to Words” and Amy Tan’s “The Language of Discretion”—or on what Ted Grove calls “Nonverbal Elements of Interaction.” Taken as a whole, this chapter should enable instructors to emphasize both the benefits of separate treatments and the necessity of considering verbal and nonverbal elements together.

Chapter 16, psychologist Ruthellen Josselson’s approach to interpersonal communication, is also new to this edition. The chapter is made up of excerpts from the beginning and the end of Josselson’s 1996 book, *The Space Between Us*. In the introduction she outlines eight developmental stages that are the ways each human overcomes the space between people. The first stage is *holding*, being cradled in strong arms. Subsequent stages include *attachment*, *passionate experience*, *eye-to-eye validation*, *mutuality*, and *tending and care*. Healthy and

complete development moves through all eight stages, and aspects of the need for each kind of contact continue as parts of our experience. The second part of Chapter 16 is taken from the final chapter of Josselson's book, "Notes on Love," where she uses these eight dimensions to explain what is for most people the most important and sometimes the most baffling interpersonal phenomenon of all—loving. As I note in the introduction to Chapter 16, there is gentle wisdom on these pages.

A fourth important change in this edition emerges in the discussions of gender and communication, especially in Chapter 12. Earlier treatments of gender in *Bridges* followed the research that emphasized differences. In the past few years, some feminist authors have been arguing against the essentializing tendencies of much of this research and the distorting oversimplifications that have been popularized, for example, in John Gray's "Mars and Venus" publications. In 1997, three communication scholars summarized some of the arguments against essentializing and oversimplification in *Sex and Gender Differences in Personal Relationships*, and Chapter 12 begins with excerpts from this book. The two other readings in this chapter address the practical questions that much gender communication research tries to respond to—"How can I develop a close relationship with somebody who seems so different from me?" But they do so without relying on questionable overgeneralizations about "male" and "female" communication patterns.

This feature of *Bridges* may well be controversial. I realize that many communication scholars and teachers, including some feminists, still believe strongly in the importance of gender-based differences and the value of a gendered standpoint in the negotiation of interpersonal relationships. As a male, teacher, husband, and scholar, I am not yet ready to deny the extent to which parts of Deborah Tannen's and even John Gray's writings resonate with my own experience. But I am impressed by the empirical insignificance of differences due only to gender that Canary, Emmers-Sommer, and Faulkner explain in the first reading in Chapter 12. More importantly, I believe in the efficacy of dialogue, as it is explained in Chapters 2, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, and 18. And while gender undoubtedly figures in the emergence of meaning (*dia-logos*) between people, I do not believe that the flesh-and-blood selves who negotiate actual relationships can best be thought of as "essentially" male or female. My sense is that, in a couple of decades, the research and writing that emphasized gender differences will be seen as one stage in the development of a more nuanced, context-sensitive, and dialogic understanding of human contact.

There are also two new readings in the self-awareness chapter (Chapter 4), "Maintaining the Self in Communication," by rhetorician Harold Barrett, and "In Search of the Genuine, Powerful Male and Female," by therapist John Welwood. Chapter 5, "Awareness of Others," is anchored by the most recent edition of Sarah Trenholm and Arthur Jensen's discussion of person perception, and fleshed out by Julia Wood's comments about stereotyping, an explanation of social intelligence from Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, and a discussion of collective thought by physicist David Bohm.

Chapter 6 includes a new treatment of creative listening, and communication scholar and teacher Steve Duck explains “Expressing Meaning to Others” in Chapter 7. Chapter 9, “Negotiating Relationships,” includes Bill Wilmot’s recent discussion of spirals, paradoxes, and conundrums, and the familiar and useful article on confirmation and disconfirmation by Cissna and Sieburg. Julia Wood’s 1998 discussion of families updates Chapter 11, and two similarly recent readings strengthen the treatment of conflict in Chapter 13. Chapter 14, “Bridging Cultures,” is anchored with Letty Cottin Pogrebin’s discussion of “Crossing Boundaries of Color, Culture, Sexual Preference, Disability, and Age.” Included also are two new readings. The first is a practical description of how to build relationships with diverse others, by social psychologist David Johnson. And the second is Donal Carbaugh’s detailed examination of how Soviet and American cultures were mediated in a televised “spacebridge” featuring Phil Donohue.

## Plan of the Book

This edition maintains the basic structure of the last one, starting with “basic ingredients,” treating the “inhaling” dimensions of communication separately from the “exhaling” dimensions—even as the breathing metaphor underscores their inseparability—discussing relationships and bridging differences, and then concluding with four overall “approaches.” This structure makes the materials easy to adapt to each instructor’s approach. Although it makes sense to me to assign readings in the order they are presented, both the sections and the individual chapters are self-contained enough to be read in whatever sequence works best.

My introduction tries to show that *Bridges Not Walls* is a little different from the standard, faceless, “objective” text. I want readers to consider the potential for, and the limits of, interpersonal-quality communicating between writer and reader. I also want them to remember that a book or essay is always somebody’s point of view. I’d like readers to respond to what’s here not as “true because it’s printed in black and white,” but as the thoughtful speech of a person addressing them. In the introduction I introduce myself, give a rationale for the way the book is put together, and argue for the link between quality of communication and quality of life. I also preview the book.

Chapter 2 of the “Basic Ingredients” section introduces the book’s approach to communication, and three readings develop this approach. Then Chapter 3 focuses on verbal and nonverbal communicating.

The introduction to Part Two, “Openness as Inhaling,” explains the two metaphors that are used to help organize this section of the book: “openness” and “inhaling/exhaling.” As I explain, the first term is fruitfully ambiguous, because it can mean both “open to receive” and “willing to disclose,” and the allusion to breathing underscores the organic interconnectedness of the receiving and sending aspects of communication. Chapter 4, “Self Awareness,” begins with a discussion of personal meaning and values by Gerald Corey and Marianne



Schneider-Corey, followed by two selections that develop this focus. Chapter 5 shifts focus to person perception via Trenholm and Jensen's outline of "interpretive competence," Julia Wood's comments on stereotyping, Daniel Goleman's description of the rudiments of social intelligence, and David Bohm's discussion of collective thought. Chapter 6 concludes Part Two with four selections on listening. One new reading in this chapter by John Sanford highlights the creative parts of listening, and in the other new reading, Carole Logan and I describe and illustrate the move from empathic to dialogic listening.

Part Three, "Openness as Exhaling," consists of two chapters. Chapter 7, "Expressing Yourself," treats disclosure as a part of the interpersonal process, and Chapter 8, as I have already noted, overviews some of the hurtful and negative parts of communicative expressions.

Part Four is a four-chapter section focused on relationships. Chapter 9 outlines the general processes by which relationships are negotiated in three readings. The first is called "Co-constructing Selves"; the second is Bill Wilmot's discussion of communication spirals, paradoxes, and conundrums; and the third is Cissna and Sieburg's account of confirmation and disconfirmation. The next chapter offers two explorations of friendship, and it is followed by a two-reading chapter focused on families. The final chapter of this section examines intimate partnering.

Part Five, "Bridging Differences," begins with a chapter on conflict and concludes with a chapter on intercultural communication. Chapter 13 is introduced by a fairly comprehensive, recent overview of interpersonal conflict by Folger, Poole, and Stutman. This is followed by Jack Gibb's classic "Defensive Communication," and profound pieces of advice from Hugh and Gayle Prather. Then the chapter's focus broadens as Jeffrey Kottler argues against the blaming that characterizes most conflict, and, finally, Barnett Pearce and Stephen Littlejohn outline a transformational approach to conflict management in an essay called "New Forms of Eloquence."

Chapter 14 starts with David Johnson's suggestions about how to build relationships with diverse others. This is followed by Pogrebin's "The Same and Different" article and Carbaugh's discussion of Soviet and American contact on Phil Donohue's television show.

The book ends with four approaches to interpersonal communication, statements by noted writers that summarize their views of being-in-relation. Chapter 15 presents a teacher's approach; Chapter 16, a psychologist's approach; Chapter 17, a counselor's approach; and Chapter 18, a philosopher's approach. C. Roland Christensen is the teacher, Ruthellen Josselson is the psychologist, Carl Rogers is the counselor, and Martin Buber is the philosopher. Each time *Bridges* is reviewed, I hear some complaints that the final reading by Buber is "too confusing," "too hard to read," and "too heavy." Happily, I also hear and see what happens when students in my classes—and in classes taught by teaching assistants—actually begin to connect with Buber and his ideas. When teacher and student readers are patient and diligent, they often begin to appreciate through Buber the depth and importance of interpersonal communication. Frequently, this motivates them to apply these ideas, even in the face of hard-

ships and challenges. All this continues to make teaching Buber rewarding for me and many of the people I work with. I agree that it is not easy to make Buber accessible to the basic course student, but the introduction to his essay goes a considerable distance in this direction. I believe in the value of high expectations, and I continue to be surprised and delighted by the majority of my students' understanding of his ideas.

## Other Features

Two sets of questions follow each reading. The first, "Review Questions," are designed to prompt the reader's recall of key ideas. If the student can respond to the review questions, there is some clear indication that he or she understands what's in the reading. Then "Probes" ask the reader to take some additional steps by extending, criticizing, or applying the author's ideas. Some probes also explore links between readings in various chapters.

Many of the readings include extensive reference lists or bibliographies. There are lengthy lists of additional sources, for example, accompanying the readings that discuss the book's approach, verbal and nonverbal dimensions of talk, nonverbal elements of interaction, maintaining the self, person perception, listening, hurtful messages, deception, co-constructing selves, gender stereotyping, transformative conflict management, and intercultural communication. A detailed index also locates and provides cross-references to authors and key ideas.

As before, I want to remind readers that this book *about* interpersonal communication cannot substitute for direct contact between persons in the concrete, everyday world. This is why I've once again begun the book with Buber's comment "Books and People" and ended with Hugh Prather's reflections on the world of ideas and the world of "messy mortals."

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Two things that have not changed through all seven editions of *Bridges Not Walls* are my awareness of the difficulty and the necessity of interpersonal communicating and my excitement about the challenge of working toward achieving it. I hope some of this excitement will rub off on you.

John Stewart

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PART ONE

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# *The Basic Ingredients*



