THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Chapter 1

Reaching Out
To be alive is to reach out to others -> relationships are at the core of our existence.

We are conceived within relationships, are born into relationships, and live our lives embedded in relationships. We are dependent on other people
- For the realization of life itself
- For survival during the longest developmental period in the animal kingdom
- For food, shelter, aid, and comfort throughout our lives
- For the love and education necessary for healthy development
- For guidance in learning all the skills necessary to survive
- For fun, excitement, comfort, love, fulfillment

Whether relationships begin, continue, or end, depends largely on our

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
Interpersonal Effectiveness

- Have you ever had a misunderstanding with someone? Give an example ... How did you find out about it? How did you manage to resolve it?
- Interpersonal effectiveness: the degree of match between
  - your communicative intention (what you want to express) and
  - What your listener perceives your intention to be
The Road To Interpersonal Effectiveness

1. Interact with others
2. Assess the consequences of the interaction and/or get feedback from others
3. Reflect and decide how good the match is between what you wanted to communicate and what your partner thought your intention was
4. Any need for modification?
5. Repeat these steps – practice, practice, practice!
Do your relationships result in identifying and developing your talents and abilities to the fullest extent possible?

The quality of your relationship is important - in relationships you discover your talents.

Two components:
- time-competence – live in the present
- Autonomy – internalize appropriate values
Your Interpersonal Skills

- Are necessary to initiate, build, and maintain constructive relationships. As your relationships constantly change, you always need to improve your interpersonal skills.
- In this course, you are invited to
  - Develop an understanding of interpersonal skills
  - Increase your ability to perform the interpersonal skills required to build and maintain effective and fulfilling relationships.
Describing A Relationship

1. Number of people involved (from a dyadic to a large group)
2. Formality of the situation
3. Quality – where it is on the continuum from impersonal to personal
4. “I, it” --- “I, thou” (Martin Buber)
Personal Versus Impersonal Relationships

- Dimensions:
  1. Integration into identity
  2. Openness
  3. Distinctive
  4. Replaceability
  5. Motivation to continue relationship
Interpersonal Relationships Are NOT A Luxury! They Are A NECESSITY!!

- They are the key to
  - Being human
  - Living a healthy life
  - Living a happy, fulfilling life
  - Coping constructively with stress and adversity
  - Personal development and personal identity
  - Having a successful career
  - Having a high quality of life
  - And the list could go on
Difficulties In Forming Relationships

- Not always easy to initiate, develop and maintain positive relationships - takes work and considerable skills
- The three major reasons for difficulties:
  1. Relationships are complex and constantly changing! New situations emerge, people change, etc.
  2. Positive feelings and impressions take a long time to build
  3. Relationships are fragile!
Positive perceptions of and feelings toward another person are hard to acquire but easy to lose;

Negative perceptions of and feelings toward another person are easy to acquire but hard to lose.

Think of an example for both from your life/observations
Loneliness pushes us to overcome these difficulties and try to build constructive relationships.

What is loneliness? A state of dejection, grief caused by feeling alone. Results from
- Social isolation (lack of friends, of a community) OR
- Emotional isolation (lack of deep personal relationships, attachments)
Contemporary Social Changes Have Made Loneliness Even Worse ...

- Nomadic lifestyle (not living in the same community for generations). The average American moves 14 times in a lifetime!! Starting anew every time. What effect do you think that has on the extended family, on friendship patterns? On interaction patterns in general?

- Energy and time available for building relationships decreased! Why?
  - Self-entertainment devices
  - We are overcommitted and busy
- **Impersonality of life.** Do you know your neighbors? Disappearance of neighborhood support system

- **Faulty attributions** of causes of problems. Some of us believe the causes are unchangeable – they will **not** initiate new and meaningful relationships and thus perpetuate their loneliness.

- Lonely people may **lack interpersonal competence/skills**
## Attributions

### LOCUS OF CAUSALITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stability</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>I am lonely because I have all these faults and problems that just won’t ever go away</td>
<td>Other people are cold and impersonal. They already have their friends, and so they are closed to new people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>I am lonely now, just because my interpersonal skills are not highly developed yet. But I will work on them, and then I will have friends.</td>
<td>The first year in college is the worst for everyone. Once you survive that, it is easy to make friends with all these nice people on campus</td>
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The bear was about to seize a goat when the lion leaped from another direction on the same prey. The bear and the lion fought furiously for the goat until they received so many wounds that they both sank down unable to continue the battle. Just then the fox dashed up, seized the goat and made off with it as fast as he could, while the lion and the bear looked on it in helpless rage. “How much better it would have been,” they said, “to have shared in a friendly spirit.”
Learning From Experience – Action Theory (AT)

1. Experience
2. Reflection
3. Learning from it – (re)formulating an action theory: “if .... then ....”

In a given situation, if we do X, then Y will result.
Experiential learning:
1. Take action on the basis of your current action theory
2. Assess consequences and feedback
3. Reflect on how effective your AT was. If necessary, reformulate/refine your AT
4. Implement/test the new AT (start all over)
5. Over and over again
Goal: continuous improvement of the action theory and your skills till expertise is achieved
Now You Understand That

- Interpersonal skills are essential for building constructive relationships.
- Constructive relationships are crucial for meaningful human life.
- There are difficulties in forming constructive relationships BUT
- There are specific procedures to master interpersonal skills.
You Are Invited

- This course will help you acquire and develop those interpersonal skills.
- This is your invitation to increase your interpersonal skills and explore further ....