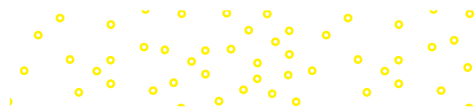# COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Fourth Edition

KORY FLOYD

University of Arizona

Mc
Graw
Hill

DEDICATION

Most books are dedicated to people, but I wish to dedicate this one to a principle. To compassion, wherever it is needed and no matter how well it may be hidden.

Dear Readers:

I can still recall how my family reacted when I said I wanted to study communication. *You already know how to communicate,* I remember one relative saying. Communication seemed like common sense to my family members, so they weren't entirely sure why I needed a Ph.D. just to understand it.

As it turns out, my relatives are like a lot of other people in this regard. Because each of us communicates in some form nearly every day of our lives, it's hard not to think of communication as completely intuitive. What can we possibly learn from research and formal study that we don't already know from our lived experience? Aren't we all experts in communication already?

For the sake of argument, let's say we were. Why, then, do we so often misunderstand each other? Why is our divorce rate so high? How come it seems like women and men speak different languages? What accounts for the popularity of self-help books, relationship counselors, and talk shows? If we're all experts at communicating, why do we often find it so challenging? Maybe communication isn't as intuitive as we might think.

When I wrote earlier editions of *Communication Matters*, my goal was to help readers see how communication not only affects their social relationships, but also influences their happiness, career objectives, and quality of life. I wanted to guide students through their personal experience of communication, illuminate the value of engaging in a critical investigation of processes and behaviors, and help readers actively apply the course material to their own life experiences.

Our world is changing quickly these days—and so, too, are the ways we communicate. In the last few years, we've seen people use computer-mediated communication in unprecedented ways. Deployed servicemen watch the birth of their children live via Skype or FaceTime. Political protestors organize rallies with less than a day's notice on Twitter. Adults given up for adoption as infants use Facebook to find their biological parents. And despite the growth of these newer platforms, e-mail is far from dead: Most adults in a recent survey said their e-mail load either stayed the same or increased over the past year. Each new technology shrinks our world just a little more, requiring effective communicators to adapt their behaviors accordingly. This new edition of *Communication Matters* focuses on teaching the adaptability skills students need in an ever-changing communication world.

An ideal textbook not only engages and excites students; it also provides relevant, contemporary, and high-quality support for instructors. *Communication Matters*, Fourth Edition, offers Connect, a flexible, groundbreaking, online learning platform that features SmartBook, a personalized learning system; hands-on learning activities; quizzes; and a fully integrated e-book. Connect enables instructors to better tailor class time to student needs and gives students more opportunities than ever for communication skills practice and assessment. I hope you will find this new edition of *Communication Matters* and its extensive instructional support to comprise a well-integrated package of engaging and contemporary materials for the introductory course.

Courtesy of Michael Chansley

Name: Kory Floyd

Education: I got my undergraduate degree from Western Washington University, my Master's degree from the University of Washington, and my PhD from the University of Arizona

Current jobs: Professor, book writer

Favorite job growing up: Singing busboy

Worst childhood memory: Getting sent to the principal's office in third grade. [It's possible I haven't told my parents about that.]

Best childhood memory: The birth of my sister and brother

Hobbies: Playing piano, singing, reading, traveling

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Favorite recent book: Talking to Strangers, by Malcolm Gladwell

Favorite TV show: The Big Bang Theory

Places I love: Iceland, Starbucks, my brother's house

BRIEF CONTENTS

These three chapters are available exclusively through McGraw Hill Create, where you can customize your version of *Communication Matters.* Talk to your McGraw Hill representative or visit www.mcgrawhillcreate.com for more information.

CONTENTS

Three chapters, written by Kory Floyd for Communication Matters, *are available exclusively through McGraw Hill's Create customization site:*

BOXES

SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

THE COMPETENT COMMUNICATOR

PUTTING COMMUNICATION TO WORK

McGraw Hill Connect: An Overview

McGraw Hill Connect offers full-semester access to comprehensive, reliable content and learning resources for the Introduction to Communication course. Connect's deep integration with most learning management systems (LMS), including Blackboard and Desire2Learn (D2L), offers single sign-on and gradebook synchronization. Data from Assignment Results reports synchronize directly with many LMS, allowing scores to flow automatically from Connect into school-specific grade books, if required.

Instructor's Guide to Connect for *Communication Matters*

When you assign **Connect**, you can be confident—and have data to demonstrate—that the learners in your courses, however diverse, are acquiring the skills, principles, and critical processes that constitute effective communication. This leaves you to focus on your highest course expectations.

TAILORED TO YOU. Connect offers on-demand, single sign-on access to learners—wherever they are and whenever they have time. With a single, one-time registration, learners receive access to McGraw Hill's trusted content. Learners also have a courtesy trial period during registration.

EASY TO USE. Connect seamlessly supports all major learning management systems with content, assignments, performance data, and SmartBook, the leading adaptive learning system. With these tools, you can quickly make assignments, produce reports, focus discussions, intervene on problem topics, and help at-risk learners—as you need to and when you need to.

Communication Matters SmartBook 2.0

A PERSONALIZED AND ADAPTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH SMARTBOOK 2.0. Boost learner success with McGraw Hill's adaptive reading and study experience. The *Communication Matters* SmartBook 2.0 highlights the most impactful communication concepts the learner needs to study at that moment in time. The learning path continuously adapts and, based on what the individual learner knows and does not know, provides focused help through targeted assessments and Learning Resources.

ENHANCED FOR THE NEW EDITION! With a suite of new Learning Resources and adaptive assessments, as well as highlights of key chapter concepts, SmartBook 2.0's intuitive technology optimizes learner study time by creating a personalized learning path for improved course performance and overall learner success.

HUNDREDS OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING RESOURCES. Presented in a range of interactive styles, *Communication Matters* Learning Resources support learners who may be struggling to master, or simply wish to review, the most important communication concepts. Designed to reinforce the most important chapter concepts—from competent online self-disclosure and nonverbal communication channels to detecting deceptive communication and managing relationships—every Learning Resource is presented at the precise moment of need. Whether a video, audio clip, or interactive mini-lesson, each of the 200-plus Learning Resources was created for the new edition and was designed to give learners a lifelong foundation in strong communication skills.

The Connection Between Relationships and Communication

Do you expect your relationships with family members to fill the same needs as your relationships with friends? Why or why not?

In addition to physical needs, every person has **relational needs**, the essential elements we look for in our relationships with other people.

Communication scholar Rebecca Rubin and her colleagues have identified several relational needs:

Ariel Skelley/Blend Images LLC

- Companionship
- Affection
- The ability to relax and escape our problems

MORE THAN 1,000 TARGETED ASSESSMENTS. Class-tested at colleges and universities nationwide, a treasury of engaging adaptive assessments—new and revised, more than 1,000 in all—gives learners the information on communication they need to know, at every stage of the learning process, in order to thrive in the course. Designed to gauge learners' comprehension of the most important *Communication Matters* chapter concepts, and presented in a variety of interactive styles to facilitate learner engagement, targeted assessments give learners immediate feedback on their understanding of the material. Each question identifies a learner's familiarity with the instruction and points to areas where additional review is needed.

A SUITE OF APPLICATION-BASED ACTIVITIES. At the higher level of Bloom's, McGraw Hill's Application-Based Activities are highly interactive, automatically graded, online learn-by-doing exercises that provide students a safe space to apply their knowledge and problem-solving skills to real-world scenarios. Each scenario addresses key concepts that students must use to work through to solve communication problems, resulting in improved critical thinking and development of relevant skills.

RESEARCH-BASED. We all communicate, all the time. Consequently, many of us believe we're experts, and that good communication is based on personal instincts. *Communication Matters* became one of the most successful new offerings in introductory communication because it debunks that myth, using sound and relevant research to help students think critically about the communication they take part in every day.

- **Updated with more than 60 percent new scholarly references,** the fourth edition of *Communication Matters* continues to emphasize communication as a discipline of study and ensures that students are exposed to the most recent and pertinent research.
- ***Fact or Fiction*** boxes invite learners to challenge their own assumptions about human communication, and to rethink seemingly self-evident communication

questions in light of what the scholarship reveals. New and revised topics include how texting does (or doesn't) affect language (language chapter) and how group support can aid in quitting smoking (small groups chapter).

- *Dark Side* features in each chapter offer an in-depth, well-researched look at a specific dark side topic and promote discussion of mature, effective ways of dealing with its challenges. New and revised topics include hurtful communication, such as bullying and cyberbullying (introductory chapter), a new evidence-based strategy for reducing collective blame (communication and culture chapter), and the relationship between power and coercion (decision-making and leadership chapter).

REAL-WORLD BACKED. *Communication Matters* doesn't just offer research—it shows, clearly and consistently, why the research is important. Whether students are reading a chapter, working through a SmartBook 2.0 assignment, or reviewing key concepts in a Learning Resource, their every instructional moment is rooted in the real world. McGraw Hill research shows that high-quality examples reinforce academic theory throughout the course. Relevant examples and practical scenarios—reflecting interactions in school, the workplace, and beyond—demonstrate how effective communication informs and enhances students' lives and careers.

- **Relevant, timely chapter opening examples.** In addition to fresh examples integrated throughout, each chapter in *Communication Matters* opens with a familiar and provocative example that primes students for what's to come. New topics include an inspiring public art project spanning the border between Mexico and the U.S. (culture chapter), the use of nonverbal behaviors to protest social inequity (nonverbal chapter), the "chosen family" working relationship between comedians Tina Fey and Amy Poehler (intimate relationships chapter), the life-or-death consequences of small group communication among surgery team members (small groups chapter), the climate activism of Greta Thunberg (research chapter), and the effects of disinformation on public health (informative speaking chapter).
- **EXPANDED coverage of the power of language.** It is perhaps more urgent than ever for students to appreciate the power of language, including understanding what qualifies as hate speech and developing skills for practicing civil discourse. The fourth edition of *Communication Matters* incorporates this coverage and emphasizes the effects of language on individuals and on culture. Inclusive language is explained and used throughout, with new coverage reflecting current cultural conventions for applying gender-neutral pronouns.
- **UPDATED guidance on finding and evaluating sources for a speech.** *Communication Matters* meets students where they are, emphasizing the importance of evaluating critically the information they find online. This new edition includes expanded coverage of "fake news" and the spread of disinformation, as well as additional guidance on using sources responsibly.

SKILLS-FOCUSED. *Communication Matters* stakes research and relevance a step further, providing learners with clear takeaways that integrate into their everyday lives. In every chapter, learners are introduced to research-based strategies for improving communication skills and applying those skills to a variety of real-life situations, making *Communication Matters* a real tool for real life.

- *Difficult Conversations* boxes invite students to consider specific—and not uncommon—real-life situations that are uncomfortable or awkward and then provide useful strategies for managing the communication competently.

Topics include dealing with an angry customer (introductory chapter), offering condolences (language chapter), defusing political arguments on social media (perception chapter), writing a eulogy (developing and researching a topic), and making a public apology (persuasive speaking chapter).

- *The Competent Communicator* boxes in each chapter present students with a self-assessment of a particular communication skill or tendency. These boxes were designed with the underlying idea that for students to improve their communication skills and ability, they need to reflect on how they communicate now. Topics include determining whether you are a high self-monitor (introductory chapter), Googling yourself to manage your online image (perception chapter), and determining your level of extroversion (decision making and leadership chapter).
- *Sharpen Your Skills* boxes, which appear throughout each chapter, are stand-alone skill-builders comprising active-learning exercises that may be carried out in a group or individually. Activities include watching and reacting to a TED Talk (perception chapter) and examining co-cultural norms (culture chapter).

Video Capture Powered by GoReact

With just a smartphone, tablet, or webcam, students and instructors can capture video of presentations with ease. Video Capture Powered by GoReact, fully integrated in McGraw Hill's Connect platform, doesn't require any extra equipment or complicated training. Create your own custom Video Capture assignment, including in-class and online speeches and presentations, self-review, and peer review.

With our customizable rubrics, time-coded comments, and visual markers, students will see feedback at exactly the right moment, and in context, to help improve their speaking and presentation skills and confidence.

- The Video Capture tool allows instructors to easily and efficiently set up speech assignments for their course that can easily be shared and repurposed, as needed.
- Customizable rubrics and settings can be saved and shared, saving time and streamlining the speech assignment process.
- Allows both students and instructors to view videos during the assessment process. Feedback can be left within a customized rubric or as time-stamped comments within the video-playback itself.

Connect Reports

Instructor Reports allow instructors to quickly monitor learner activity, making it easy to identify which learners are struggling and to provide immediate help to ensure those learners stay enrolled in the course and improve their performance. The Instructor Reports also highlight the concepts and learning objectives that the class as a whole is having difficulty grasping. This essential information lets you know exactly which areas to target for review during your limited class time.

Some key reports include:

Progress Overview report—View learner progress for all modules, including how long learners have spent working in the module, which modules they have used outside of any that were assigned, and individual learner progress.

Missed Questions report—Identify specific assessments, organized by chapter, that are problematic for learners.

Most Challenging Learning Objectives report—Identify the specific topic areas that are challenging for your learners; these reports are organized by chapter and include specific page references. Use this information to tailor your lecture time and assignments to cover areas that require additional remediation and practice.

Metacognitive Skills report—View statistics showing how knowledgeable your learners are about their own comprehension and learning.

Classroom Preparation Tools

Whether before, during, or after class, there is a suite of products designed to help instructors plan their lessons and keep learners building upon the foundations of the course.

Instructor's Manual. Written and updated by the author, the Instructor's Manual provides a range of tools for each chapter to help structure the course and use the *Communication Matters* text effectively for particular course needs—discussion questions, assignment ideas, lecture ideas, and other resources.

Test Bank and Test Builder. The Test Bank offers multiple choice questions, true/false questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, and essay questions for each chapter. New to this edition and available within Connect, Test Builder is a cloud-based tool that enables instructors to format tests that can be printed and administered within a Learning Management System. Test Builder offers a modern, streamlined interface for easy content configuration that matches course needs, without requiring a download. Test Builder enables instructors to:

- Access all test bank content from a particular title
- Easily pinpoint the most relevant content through robust filtering options
- Manipulate the order of questions or scramble questions and/or answers
- Pin questions to a specific location within a test
- Determine the preferred treatment of algorithmic questions
- Choose the layout and spacing
- Add instructions and configure default settings

Accessible PowerPoints for each chapter created and updated by the author.

Remote Proctoring. New remote proctoring and browser-locking capabilities are seamlessly integrated within Connect to offer more control over the integrity of online assessments. Instructors can enable security options that restrict browser activity, monitor student behavior, and verify the identity of each student. Instant and detailed reporting gives instructors an at-a-glance view of potential concerns, thereby avoiding personal bias and supporting evidence-based claims.

Support to Ensure Success

Support at Every Step—McGraw Hill's Support at Every Step site offers a wealth of training and course creation guidance for instructors and learners alike. Instructor support is presented in easy-to-navigate, easy-to-complete sections. It includes the popular Connect how-to videos, step-by-step guides, and other materials that explain how to use both the Connect platform and its course-specific tools and features. https://www.mheducation.com/highered/support.html

Implementation Consultant—These specialists are dedicated to working online with instructors—one-on-one—to demonstrate how the Connect platform works and to help incorporate Connect into a customer's specific course design and syllabus. Contact your local McGraw Hill representative to learn more.

Digital Faculty Consultants—Digital Faculty Consultants are experienced instructors who use Connect in their classroom. These instructors are available to offer suggestions, advice, and training about how best to use Connect in your class. To request a Digital Faculty Consultant to speak with, please e-mail your McGraw Hill learning technology consultant.

CONTACT OUR CUSTOMER SUPPORT TEAM

McGraw Hill is dedicated to supporting instructors and learners. To contact our customer support team, please call us at 800-331-5094 or visit us online at http://mpss.mhhe.com/contact.php

Chapter-by-Chapter Changes to the Fourth Edition

Communication: A First Look New chapter-opening example looking at the challenges of communicating online; new example of digital communication reflecting the #MeToo movement; new discussion about the frequency of loneliness among younger Americans; new research on marital benefits to health; new Dark Side box on the effects of hurtful communication, such as bullying and cyberbullying; updated table of most-sought qualities for employees; greatly expanded section on online communication competence.

Communication and Culture New chapter-opening example illustrates cross-cultural exchange using a public art project; updated Dark Side box with new evidence-based strategy for reducing collective blame; updated discussion of immigration conflicts; new section on cultural universals.

Perceiving Ourselves and Others New chapter-opening example on the variety of public opinions surrounding the case of actor Jussie Smollett; new explanation on the science of stereotyping; new material on online image management and Instagram envy.

How We Use Language Updated examples of loaded language, defamation, and the effects of such language on individuals and on culture; expanded and updated coverage of separating opinions from factual claims; greatly expanded

coverage of hate speech and a new section on practicing civil dialogue.

Communicating Nonverbally New chapter-opening example on nonverbal behaviors used for social protest; new sections on situational and cultural awareness, with attention to groups of nonverbal behaviors; expanded guidance on improving nonverbal communication skills.

Listening Effectively New chapter-opening example on listening on a suicide support hotline; revised discussion of listening styles including updated Competent Communicator box; new example of misunderstood listening; updated data on information overload, as well as tips for managing it online; new section on effective listening online.

Communicating in Social and Professional Relationships Revised discussion of celebrity privacy invasions; updated research on online and offline relationships, and new discussion of niche dating apps; new discussion of parasocial relationships; new coverage of romantic relationships in the workplace and workplace bullying; added section on "Friendships are usually platonic," including coverage of friends-with-benefits relationships.

Communicating in Intimate Relationships New section on relational repair and forgiveness; new

coverage of online behaviors such as ghosting, orbiting, and catfishing; updated discussion of arranged marriage and cultural expectations for love, as well as added discussion of polyamory; new table on social media and relationships.

Communicating in Small Groups New chapter-opening example on the life-and-death consequences of communication in a surgery team; updated discussion of social networking and social media; new Fact or Fiction? box on how group support can help people quit smoking.

Decision Making and Leadership in Groups Updated examples of groupthink and community decision-making; new discussion of the leadership strengths of introverts; new Dark Side box on the relationship between power and coercion.

Choosing, Developing, and Researching a Topic New chapter-opening example featuring climate activist Greta Thunberg; new examples of contemporary speech topics; updated discussion of generational differences including a new figure on research sources; new section on conference papers; new example of speech of introduction.

Organizing and Finding Support for Your Speech Expanded treatment helps students distinguish between their specific speech purpose and their thesis; updated coverage of copyright infringement and fair use; table on bibliography entries includes new citation models and updated APA and MLA style guidelines; new coverage of "fake news" and expanded coverage of objectivity.

Presenting a Speech Confidently and Competently New chapter-opening example looking at a commencement speech delivered by author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; new material on virtual reality apps for managing public speaking anxiety.

Speaking Informatively New chapter-opening story on the effects of inaccurate health news; updated examples of speech topics throughout.

Speaking Persuasively New persuasive speech example; new Dark Side box about how persuasion that misleads is damaging to a speaker's credibility; updated examples of speech topics throughout.

Appendix: Workplace Communication and Interviewing Updated example of lawmaker communication; updated statistics on workplace internet use and new suggestions for online job searches, including tips for drafting compelling cover letters.

CREATE YOUR OWN CUSTOMIZED COMMUNICATION MATTERS AT WWW.MCGRAWHILLCREATE.COM.

The following are available exclusively through McGraw Hill's Create customization site:

Communication in Organizations Added section on workplace romances, and new examples throughout.

Communication and Media Thoroughly updated, with updated statistics and examples throughout.

Communication and Health Updated claims about empathy during medical education and refreshed example of sensationalistic health news.

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I am very grateful to the thoughtful, astute instructors across the country who offered insights and suggestions that improved and enhanced Communication Matters*, Fourth Edition:*

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Few endeavors of any significance are achieved in isolation. There are always others who help us rise to—and exceed—our potential in nearly everything we do. I am delighted to acknowledge and thank those whose contributions and support are responsible for the book you are now reading.

This was the second book I wrote with McGraw Hill, and I could not ask for a better team of editors, managers, and publishers to work with. I am indebted to Sarah Remington, Kelly Ross, Dawn Groundwater, Lisa Bruflodt, David Patterson, and Mike Ryan for their consistent, professional support. I'm also grateful for the excellent contributions of Meghan Campbell and George Theofanopoulos to the digital components available for the book in Connect.

Elizabeth Murphy is a development editor *par excellence*. She made nearly every word of this book more interesting, more relevant, and more compelling than it was when I wrote it. I have been exceedingly grateful for her insights, her humor, and her patience throughout this revision process.

Special thanks go out to the team behind the scenes who built and continue to maintain speech assignment/video submission assignment functionality on Connect: Irina Blokh-Reznik, Vijay Kapu, Swathi Malathi, Rishi Mehta, Bob Myers, Bhumi Patel, Dan Roenstch, Ayeesha Shaik, Kapil Shrivastava, and Udaya Teegavarapu.

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Finally, I am eternally grateful for the love and support of my family and my lifelong friends. One needn't be an expert on communication to understand how important close personal relationships are—but the more I learn about communication, the more appreciative I become of the people who play those roles in my life. You know who you are, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

COMMUNICATION MATTERS

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Bloomicon/Shutterstock

COMMUNICATION: A FIRST LOOK

#misinterpreted

We've probably all had the experience of being misunder-stood. Others don't always take our words to mean what we intend for them to mean, and that risk is magnified when we communicate via social media. When we speak to people in person, we can usually tell by their facial expressions and tone of voice whether they are joking or being serious. Without these cues to guide us, however, we can more easily misinterpret what someone says in an e-mail, text message, or tweet. In 2017, Alex McDaniel tweeted about a funny conversation with her 3-year-old son, then jokingly offered to sell her son for $12. An anonymous caller reported her tweet to Mississippi's Child Protective Services, who then investigated McDaniel for suspected human traf-ficking. Although the case against her was eventually dropped, McDaniel's ordeal underscores the point that what we *mean* isn't always what people *interpret*.[1] Even as social media has greatly expanded our opportunities for interaction, McDaniel's experience demonstrates just how challenging human communication can be.

As You READ

- What needs does communication help us meet?
- How does communication work, and what misconceptions do we have about it?
- What particular skills characterize competent communicators?

Why We Communicate

Scarcely a day goes by when we don't communicate for one purpose or another. For example, we communicate to form personal relationships, to maintain them, and to end them. We communicate to order dinner at a restaurant, negotiate a car loan, and buy music online. Through communication behaviors, teachers instruct us, advertisers persuade us, and actors entertain us. In truth, very little about our everyday lives isn't influenced by the way we communicate.

Because communication affects so many aspects of our existence, learning how to communicate effectively helps improve our lives in multiple ways. As you will see, effective communication depends not only on having the right message but also on shaping that message to meet the needs of your audience. Alex McDaniel knew that her tweet was meant to be a joke, but she failed to consider how others—having only the text of her message to go on—might react. To **adapt** means to modify your behavior to accommodate what others are doing. This course will help you develop the tools you need to understand the communication process and the skills you need to adapt your communication behavior to others.

Communication is the process by which we use signs, symbols, and behaviors to exchange information and create meaning.[2] Digital technologies such as Twitter and Instagram give us unprecedented communication abilities. In the wake of widespread sexual misconduct allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017, actress Alyssa Milano tweeted the phrase #MeToo to show solidarity with sexual assault victims. Civil rights activist Tarana Burke had initiated the phrase MeToo 11 years earlier to raise awareness of sexual abuse and assault. Within 24 hours of Milano's text, the hashtag had appeared more than 500,000 times on Twitter and more than 4.7 million times on Facebook. Tens of thousands of people—including many high-profile celebrities—shared their own stories of sexual assault, and a social movement was born. Several spin-off movements emerged, such as MeTooMilitary for service members and MeTooK12 for primary and secondary schoolchildren. Despite concerns that some men and women may be falsely accused, the MeToo hashtag has trended in at least 85 countries and the movement has attracted millions of dollars in corporate support. By encouraging victims to share their stories—and by reminding them that they are not alone—the MeToo movement has empowered women and men across the globe to stand up for their rights.

Never before has it been so easy to communicate with others—but what draws us to do so? *Why* do we communicate? As you will see in this section, communication is vital to many different aspects of life, from meeting physical and practical needs to experiencing relationships, spirituality, and identity.

• **adapt** To modify one's behavior to accommodate what others are doing.

• **communication** The process by which people use signs, symbols, and behaviors to exchange information and create meaning.

Andrew Burton/Getty Images

COMMUNICATION ADDRESSES PHYSICAL NEEDS

We humans are such social beings that when we are denied the opportunity for interaction, our mental and physical health can suffer. That is a major reason solitary confinement is considered such a harsh punishment. Several studies have shown that when people are prevented from having contact with others for an extended period, their health can quickly deteriorate.[3] One study even showed that feeling rejected reduces the rate at which a person's heart beats.[4] Similarly, individuals who feel socially isolated because of poverty, homelessness, mental illness, or other stigmatizing situations can suffer emotional distress and even physical pain owing to their lack of interaction with others.[5]

We literally cannot survive without human communication, as shown in a bizarre experiment in the thirteenth century. Frederick II, emperor of Germany, wanted to know what language humans would speak naturally if they weren't taught any particular language. To find out, he placed 50 newborns in the care of nurses who were instructed only to feed and bathe the babies, but not to speak to or hold them. The emperor never discovered the answer to his question, however, because all the infants died.[6] Frederick's experiment was clearly unethical by modern standards, meaning that it did not follow established guidelines for right and wrong. Such an experiment would not be repeated today. However, more recent studies in orphanages and adoption centers, conducted in an ethical manner, have convincingly shown that human interaction—especially touch—is critical for infants' survival and healthy development.[7]

Positive social interaction keeps adults healthy, too. Research shows that people without strong social ties, such as close friendships and family relationships, are more likely to suffer major ailments (such as heart disease and high blood pressure) and to die prematurely than are people who have close, satisfying relationships.[8] They are also more likely to suffer basic ailments, such as colds, and they often take longer to recover from illnesses and injuries.[9] Communication researchers Chris Segrin and Stacey Passalacqua have even found that loneliness is related to sleep disturbances and stress.[10] That connection matters to many college students, as young adults ages 18 to 22 report higher levels of loneliness than any other age group.[11] Although we can't say for sure why social interaction and health are related, it is clear that communication plays an important role in keeping us healthy, both physically and mentally.

COMMUNICATION MEETS RELATIONAL NEEDS

Besides our physical needs, each of us also has **relational needs**—the essential elements we look for in our relationships with other people. As communication scholar Narissra Punyanunt-Carter and her colleagues have found, relational needs include companionship, affection, and the ability to relax and get away from our problems.[12] We don't necessarily have the same needs in all our relationships—you probably value your friends for somewhat different reasons than you value your relatives, for instance. The bottom line, though, is that we need relationships in our lives, and communication is a large part of how we establish and maintain these relationships.[13]

Many features of our day-to-day lives are designed to promote the development of human relationships. Neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, malls, theaters, and restaurants are all social settings in which we regularly interact with others in some way. Technology is also an avenue for promoting our relationships. Smartphones let us call or exchange text messages with virtually anyone at the touch of a button. The Internet offers multiple ways of connecting with others, and many people have met new friends or romantic partners online.[14] Table 1 provides an idea of how much of our lives are spent communicating in electronically mediated ways. Just imagine how challenging it would be to form and maintain strong social relationships if you did not have the ability to communicate with others. The lack of communication opportunity is a common experience for many immigrants, who often struggle to adapt to their new culture and to learn its language—and who may feel lonely or ignored in the process.[15]

Some scholars believe our need for relationships is so fundamental that we can hardly get by without them.[16] For example, research has shown that having an active social life is one of the most powerful predictors of a person's

• **relational needs** The essential elements people seek in their relationships with others.

Communication technology connects us in unprecedented ways. Social networking sites and chat apps make it easy for us to maintain close relationships, regardless of physical distance.

Oliver Rossi/Getty Images

TABLE 1		
COMMUNICATING ELECTRONICALLY	1.9	Average number of e-mail accounts per U.S. e-mail user
	74	Percentage of Facebook users who check their account at least once per day
	83	Percentage of U.S. teenagers who sleep with, or next to, their cell phone
	338	Number of friends the average Facebook user has
	4,900,000	Number of Skype users per day
	118,000,000	Number of users following Barack Obama (@barackobama), the most followed account on Twitter
	360,000,000	Number of active blogs on Tumblr
	246,500,000,000	Average number of e-mail messages sent worldwide per day

HOW DO YOU COMPARE? ▶ **Take note of how you compare to these averages. Do you have more e-mail accounts or Facebook friends than average, or fewer? Do you sleep next to your cell phone? Are you an average communicator in these ways, or do you differ from the averages?**

overall happiness.[17] In fact, the single most important predictor of happiness in life—by far—is the degree to which an individual has a happy marriage.[18] Marital happiness is more important than income, job status, education, leisure time, or anything else in accounting for how happy people are with their lives. On the negative side, people in distressed marriages are much more likely to suffer from major depression, and they even report being in worse physical health than their happily married counterparts.[19]

The cause-and-effect relationship between marriage and happiness isn't a simple one. It may be that strong marriages promote happiness and well-being, or it may be that happy, healthy people are more likely than others to be happily married. Whatever the reason, personal relationships clearly play an important role in our lives, and communication helps us form and maintain them.

People's relational needs were challenged in 2020 when the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) infected millions around the world. Every U.S. state imposed requirements for quarantine that forced many to work or go to school entirely online and prevented people from spending time with friends or loved ones in person. Even when people were around one another in public, obligations to practice *social distancing* kept many from shaking hands, hugging, or interacting in close proximity. As a result, feelings of loneliness and isolation were common during the coronavirus pandemic.

Research indicates that the strongest predictor of happiness in life is the degree to which an individual has a happy marriage.

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COMMUNICATION FILLS IDENTITY NEEDS

Are you curious? Laid-back? Caring? Impatient? Each of us can probably come up with a long list of adjectives to describe ourselves, but here's the critical question: How do you *know* you are those things? In other words, how do you form an identity?

The ways we communicate with others—and the ways others communicate with us—play a major role in

shaping how we see ourselves.[20] As we'll consider in the chapter on perceiving ourselves and others, people form their identities partly by comparing themselves to others. If you consider yourself intelligent, for instance, what that really means is that you see yourself as more intelligent than most other people. If you think you're shy, you see most other people as more outgoing than you are.

One way we learn how we compare to others is by communicating with those around us. If people treat you as intelligent or shy, you may begin to believe that you have those characteristics. In other words, those qualities will become part of your self-image. As you will see in the perceiving chapter, identity develops over the course of life, and communication plays a critical role in driving that process. Good communicators also have the ability to emphasize different aspects of their identities in different situations. For example, at work it might be important for you to portray your organized, efficient side, whereas at a pool party you might choose to project your fun-loving nature and sense of humor.

COMMUNICATION MEETS SPIRITUAL NEEDS

An important aspect of identity for many people is their spirituality. Spirituality includes the principles someone values in life ("I value loyalty" or "I value equal treatment for all people"). It also encompasses a person's *morals*, or notions about right and wrong ("It's never okay to steal, no matter what the circumstances" or "I would lie to save a life, because life is more important than honesty"). Finally, spirituality includes beliefs about the meaning of life, such as personal philosophies, awe of nature, belief in a higher purpose, and religious faith and practices ("I trust in God" or "I believe I will reap what I sow in life").

One survey of college students around the United States found that many consider some form of spirituality to be an important part of their identity.[21] Almost half said they consider integrating spirituality into their lives to be essential or very important. For those in the study, spirituality didn't necessarily include formal religion; over 70 percent of students who considered themselves to be spiritual said people can have good values and morals without being religious. For people who include spirituality as a part of their identity, communication provides a means of expressing and sharing spiritual ideas and practices with one another.

Communication lets people express their faith and spirituality.

Melba Photo Agency/Alamy Stock Photo

COMMUNICATION SERVES INSTRUMENTAL NEEDS

Finally, people communicate to meet their practical, everyday needs, which researchers call **instrumental needs**. Some instrumental needs have short-term objectives, such as ordering a drink in a bar, scheduling a haircut on the telephone, filling out a rebate card, and raising your hand when you want to speak in class. Others encompass longer-term goals, such as getting a job and earning a promotion. The communicative behaviors entailed in serving instrumental needs may not always contribute directly to our health, relationships, identity, or spirituality. Each behavior is valuable, however, because it serves a need that helps us get through daily life.

Meeting instrumental needs may not seem as interesting as forging new relationships or as meaningful as expressing spiritual beliefs, but it is important for two reasons. The first reason is simply that we have many instrumental needs. In fact, most of the communication we engage in on a day-to-day basis is probably mundane and routine—not heavy, emotionally charged conversations but instrumental

• **instrumental needs**
Practical, everyday needs.

interactions such as talking to professors about assignments and taking customers' orders at work. The second reason instrumental needs are important is that many of them—such as buying food at the store and ordering clothes online—have to be met before other needs—for example, maintaining high-quality relationships and finding career fulfillment—can be satisfied.[22]

The Nature and Types of Communication

When 14-year-old Santiago Ventura left his home in the Mexican state of Oaxaca for farm work in Oregon, he had no way of foreseeing the tragedy that would befall him. After the fatal stabbing of a fellow farm worker at a party, Ventura was questioned by a Spanish-speaking police officer. Ventura spoke neither Spanish nor English, however, but only the native language of the Mixtec Indians. During questioning, he never made eye contact with the officer, because Mixtec Indians believe that it is rude to look people directly in the eye. Due to his poor grasp of Spanish, Ventura simply answered "yes" to all the officer's questions, leading the officer to presume his guilt. After a trial in which his lawyer forbade him to testify because of his English-language limitations, Ventura was convicted of murder and sentenced to 10 years to life in prison. Only after 5 years of protests by immigration advocates and jurors who were unconvinced of Ventura's guilt did another judge set aside the verdict, freeing Ventura from his wrongful imprisonment.

Had we been involved in Ventura's case, many of us would have interpreted his words and behaviors the same way the arresting officer did. If they asked Ventura whether he had committed a crime and he replied "yes" while also avoiding eye contact, most reasonable people would conclude that he was guilty. As his story illustrates, however, it is easy to misunderstand others when we don't adapt to their communication styles. Even seemingly straightforward communication behaviors can easily be misinterpreted, sometimes with tragic consequences. Ventura's problems began when the officer interpreted his words and behaviors incorrectly. How do people express and interpret meaning accurately? What accounts for our ability to communicate in the first place?

We begin this section by examining different ways to understand the communication process. Next, we look at some important characteristics of communication and consider various approaches to thinking about communication in social interaction. Finally, we explore five types of communication in which humans engage. Even though you communicate all the time, you will find there is still much to learn about communication's central role in life.

VARIOUS MODELS EXPLAIN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

How would you describe the process of communicating? Even researchers have answered that question in different ways over the years. A formal description of a process such as communication is called a **model**. In this section we look at three different models that communication scholars have developed over the years: the action, interaction, and transaction models. The action model was developed first, then the interaction model, and finally the transaction model. In that sense, those models demonstrate how communication researchers have defined and described communication over time.

• **model** A formal description of a process.

Communication as Action In the **action model**, we think of communication as a one-way process.[23] To illustrate, let's say that you need to leave work early next Tuesday to pick up a friend from the airport, and you're getting ready to ask your

• **action model** A model describing communication as a one-way process.

supervisor for permission. The action model starts with the **source**—the individual who has a thought that he or she wishes to communicate. In our example, the source is *you.* To convey the idea that you'd like to leave early, you must **encode** it, which means to put your idea in the form of language or a gesture that your supervisor can understand. Through that process, you create a **message**, which consists of the verbal and/or nonverbal elements of communication to which people give meaning.[24] In this example, your message might be the question, "Would it be alright if I left work a couple of hours early next Tuesday?"

According to the action model, you would then send your message through a communication **channel**, which is a type of pathway for conveying messages. For example, you can pose your question to your supervisor face-to-face, or you can send it by e-mail or through a text message. Selecting the most appropriate channel is a matter of adapting to the communication context. You adapt to a context when you identify your goals, consider the options available to you at the time, and make a strategic decision about how to communicate. If your message is brief and unambiguous—such as an announcement about a meeting location—you might choose to send that message by e-mail or text message in order to be efficient and save time. When asking if you can leave work early, however, you realize that your supervisor may have questions about who will cover for you during that time. A face-to-face or telephone conversation might let you address your supervisor's questions better than a text message or e-mail would, and may also allow you to pay attention to your supervisor's facial expressions or tone of voice, to make sure he or she understands you.

In the action model, your supervisor acts as the **receiver** of the message, the person who will **decode** or interpret it. The communication process also includes **noise**, which is anything that interferes with a receiver's ability to attend to your message. The major types of noise are *physical noise* (such as background conversation in the office or static on the telephone line), *psychological noise* (such as other concerns your supervisor is dealing with that day), and *physiological noise* (such as fatigue or hunger). Any of these could prevent your supervisor from paying full attention to your question.

You can see that the action model is linear: a source sends a message through some channel to a receiver, and noise interferes with the message somehow (Figure 1). Many of us talk and think about the communication process in that linear manner. For example, when you ask someone "Did you get my message?," you are implying that communication is a one-way process. However, human communication is usually more of a back-and-forth exchange than a one-way process—more similar to tennis than to bowling. Over time, researchers responded to that observation by creating an updated model of communication known as the interaction model.

• **source** The originator of a thought or an idea.

• **encode** To put an idea into language or gesture.

• **message** Verbal and nonverbal elements of communication to which people give meaning.

• **channel** A pathway through which messages are conveyed.

• **receiver** The party who interprets a message.

• **decode** To interpret or give meaning to a message.

• **noise** Anything that distracts people from listening to what they wish to listen to.

FIGURE 1
ACTION MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

Noise   Noise   Noise

Channel

Source encodes   **Message**   Receiver decodes

Noise   Noise   Noise
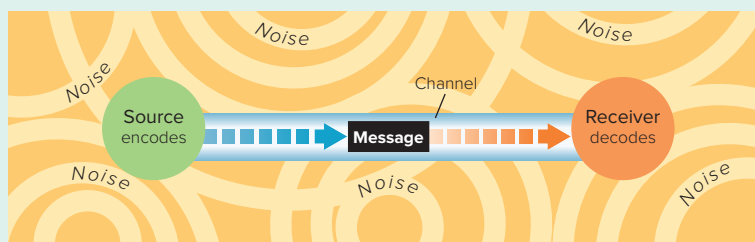
In the action model of communication, a sender encodes a message and conveys it through a communication channel for a receiver to decode.

Cathy Yeulet/123RF

FIGURE 2

INTERACTION MODEL OF COMMUNICATION
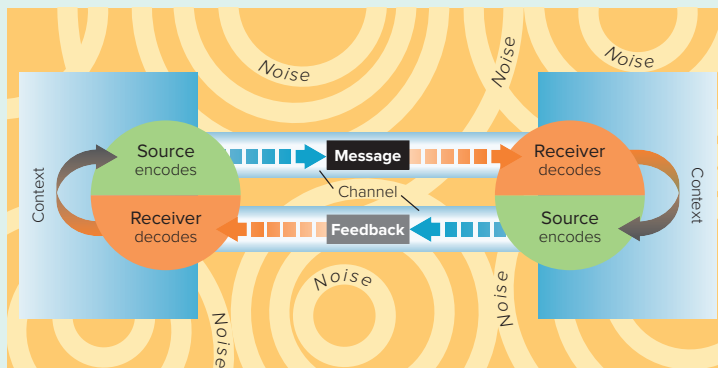
The interaction model of communication explains that our messages are shaped by the feedback we receive from others and by the context in which we interact.

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• **interaction model** A model describing communication as a process shaped by feedback and context.

• **feedback** Verbal and nonverbal responses to a message.

• **context** The physical or psychological environment in which communication occurs.

Communication as Interaction

The **interaction model** picks up where the action model leaves off. It includes all the same elements: source, message, channel, receiver, noise, encoding, and decoding, but it differs from the action model in two basic ways. First, the inter-action model recognizes that communication is a two-way process. Second, it adds two elements to the mix: feedback and context.

If you've studied physics, you know that every action has a reaction. A similar rule applies to communication. Let's say you are talking to your friend Simone about a conflict you recently had with your romantic partner. As you relate your story, Simone nods along and says "Uh-huh" to show she's listening. She might also ask you questions about what prompted the argument and how you felt afterward. In other words, Simone *reacts* to your story by giving you **feedback**, or various verbal and nonverbal responses to your message. Thus, Simone is not just a passive receiver of your message—instead, she is an active shaper of your conversation.

Now let's imagine that you are sharing your story with Simone while you are having coffee in a crowded café. Would you tell your story any differently than if the two of you were alone? What if you were in a classroom on campus? What if your parents were in the same room? All those situations are part of the **context**, or the environment you are in. Your environment includes both the physical and the psychological context. The *physical context* reflects where you are physically interacting with each other. In contrast, the *psychological context* includes factors that influence people's states of mind, such as the formality of the situation, the level of privacy, and the degree to which the situation is emotionally charged. According to the interaction model, we take context into account when we engage in conversation. That is, we realize that what is appropriate in certain contexts may be inappropriate in others, and we adapt our behaviors accordingly.

By taking account of feedback and context, the interaction model presents the communication process more realistically than the action model does. In telling Simone about your relationship conflict, for instance, your story and Simone's feedback would probably be affected by where you were speaking, how many other people could over-hear you (if any), and whether those people were coworkers, classmates, family members, or strangers. The interaction model is illustrated in Figure 2.

Although the interaction model is more realistic than the action model, it still doesn't truly represent how complex communication can be. During conversations, it often seems as though both people are sending and receiving information simultaneously rather than simply communicating back and forth, one message at a time. To understand that aspect of communication, we turn to the transaction model, currently the most complete and widely used of the three models.

Communication as Transaction

Unlike the action and interaction models, the **transaction model** of communication doesn't distinguish between the roles of source and receiver, nor does it represent communication as a series of messages going back and forth. Rather, it maintains that both people in a conversation are simultaneously sources *and* receivers. In addition, it illustrates that the conversation flows in both directions at the same time.[25] As a consequence, each person must continuously adapt his or her communication behaviors to those of the other person, in order to keep the conversation flowing smoothly.

To understand the transaction model, imagine that you have taken your car in for service and you are describing to the mechanic the noise your engine has been making. As you speak, a confused look falls across the mechanic's face. According to the interaction model, that facial expression would constitute feedback to your message. The transaction model recognizes that you will interpret that expression not only as feedback to your message, but also as a message in and of itself, making the mechanic a source and you a receiver. Note that this process occurs while you are describing your car problems to the mechanic. In other words, you are both sending messages to, and receiving messages from, the other at the same time. Figure 3 depicts the transaction model.

Not only does the transaction model reflect the complex nature of communication, but it also leads us to think about context more broadly. It suggests that our communication is affected not just by the physical or psychological environment but also by our experience, gender, social class, and even the history of our relationship with the person or persons to whom we are talking. As we'll see throughout this book, communication is also influenced by our culture—the collection of shared values, beliefs, and behaviors of a group of people.

If you have a history with the car mechanic, you might help him understand your problem by referring to car trouble you've had in the past. If he isn't a native speaker of your language, you might have to speak more slowly and clearly than you otherwise would. Sometimes it's a challenge to consider how cultural aspects of context might affect the way you communicate. According to the transaction model, however, they are always with you.

Adapting to the Communication Context

Clearly, then, researchers have different ways of understanding the communication process. Instead of debating which model is right, it's more helpful to look at the useful ideas each model offers. When we do so, we find that each model fits certain situations better than others. You can use that information to adapt to the communication constraints of each model.

FIGURE 3
TRANSACTION MODEL OF COMMUNICATION
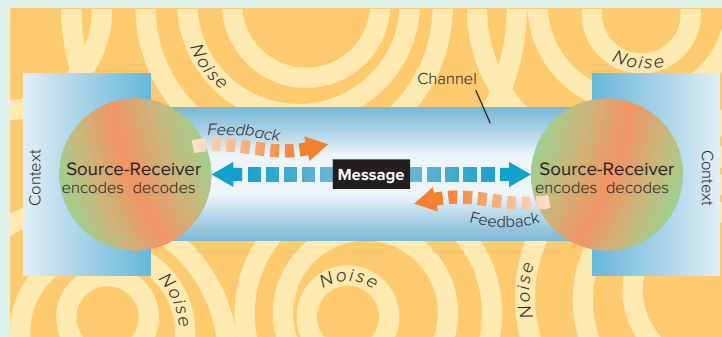
The transaction model recognizes that both people in a conversation are simultaneously senders and receivers.

Thinkstock/Getty Images

• **transaction model**
A model describing communication as a process in which everyone is simultaneously a sender and a receiver.

For instance, sending an e-mail message to your instructor is a good example of the action model. You are the source, and you convey your message through a written channel to a receiver (your instructor). Noise includes any difficulty your instructor experiences in opening the e-mail or understanding the intent of your message because of the language you have used. When the linear model is in use, you can remember that the likelihood of misunderstanding is high because there is no opportunity for feedback.

An apt example of the interaction model is the communication that occurs when you submit a report for your job, and a team of coworkers comments on it in writing. You (the source) have conveyed your message through your report, and your coworkers (the receivers) provide written feedback. Noise includes any difficulties that either you or your coworkers experience in understanding what everyone has said. In that situation, your coworkers and you send messages to one another, but not at the same time. You, therefore, have time to interpret, and perhaps misinterpret, one another's meanings.

Most conversations are good examples of the transaction model, because both parties are sending and receiving messages simultaneously. That process occurs, for instance, when you strike up a conversation with someone sitting next to you on a bus. You might make small talk about where each of you is traveling that day or how the weather has been. As you do so, each of you is sending verbal and nonverbal messages and feedback to the other, and is simultaneously receiving and interpreting such messages from the other. Your conversation is affected by the context, in that you may communicate only to pass the time until you arrive. It is also affected by noise, including traffic sounds and the bus driver's announcements. A face-to-face conversation requires you to adapt your communication behaviors to the other person's on an ongoing basis, as each of you helps to construct the conversation you are having.

Each model, then, is more useful in some situations than in others. The action and interaction models are too simplistic to describe most face-to-face conversations, but when you are just leaving a note for someone or submitting a report for feedback, those models can describe the situation quite well. The transaction model, which many experts consider the most comprehensive of the three models, better describes complex face-to-face communications. As you come across examples of different communication situations in this book, you might ask yourself how well each model fits them.

Now that we've looked at different models of communication, let's consider some of communication's most important characteristics.

COMMUNICATION HAS MANY CHARACTERISTICS

Describing the communication process requires more than just mapping out how it takes place. We also need to catalog its important features. In this section, we will discover that

- Communication relies on multiple channels.
- Communication passes through perceptual filters.
- People give communication its meaning.
- Communication has literal meanings and relational implications.
- Communication sends messages, whether intentional or unintentional.
- Communication is governed by rules.

Communication Relies on Multiple Channels How many different ways do people communicate with one another? Facial expressions convey how a person is feeling. Gestures and tone of voice help others to interpret his or her messages. Touch can signal feelings such as affection and aggression. Even a person's clothing and physical appearance communicate messages about that individual to others. Each of these is an example of a different communication channel, and we often use multiple channels when communicating with others.

FIGURE 4

Channel-Rich Contexts ←——————————————————————————————→ Channel-Lean Contexts

Face-to-face conversation | Live videoconference | YouTube video | Telephone call | Synchronous online chat | Text message | Fax | Personal letter or memo | Posted announcement
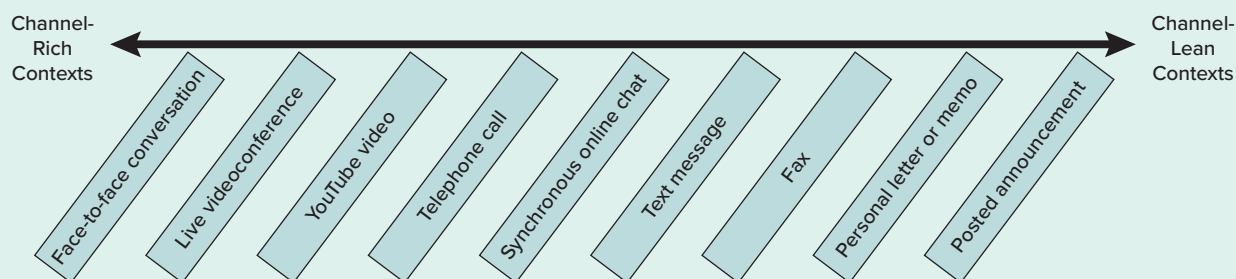
Some interpersonal communication contexts are channel-rich, such as a face-to-face conversation between friends. Other interpersonal communication contexts are channel-lean, such as sending and receiving text messages.

Some situations are **channel-rich contexts**—environments that incorporate many communication channels at once (see Figure 4). In face-to-face conversations, for instance, you can pay attention to people's words, see their expressions and gestures, hear their tone of voice, and feel their touch at the same time. Similarly, Zoom and FaceTime conversations depict words, facial cues, gestures, and vocal tones. Because you experience multiple communication channels at once, you can evaluate the information from all those channels simultaneously. Other situations are **channel-lean contexts**—environments that use relatively fewer channels.[26] Text messaging and instant messaging, for example, rely much more heavily on text, so we don't experience a person's voice or gestures. As a consequence, we may pay more attention to that person's words.

• **channel-rich contexts** Communication environments involving many channels at once.

• **channel-lean contexts** Communication environments involving few channels at once.

Communication Passes through Perceptual Filters
Anything you put through a filter—such as air, water, or light—comes out a little bit differently than how it went in. The same happens when we communicate: what one person says is not always exactly what the other person hears. The reason is that we all "filter" incoming communication through our perceptions, experiences, biases, and beliefs.

Let's say you're listening to a senator speak on television. The way you process and make sense of the speech probably depends on how much you agree with the senator's ideas or whether you belong to the same political party. Two people with different political viewpoints may listen to the same speech yet hear something very different. One may hear a set of logical, well thought-out ideas, while the other hears nothing but empty promises and lies.

Perceptual filters can also influence how different people understand the same words. For instance, some trains in New Jersey's transit system are designated "quiet cars." Since the quiet car program started, passengers have disagreed about the proper meaning of "quiet." Some believe it calls for complete silence, whereas others believe they have a right to talk quietly, or whisper. Everyone agrees on which cars are the quiet cars, but their perceptual filters give them different interpretations of what that designation means.

Many aspects of our lives can influence our perception of communication. Whether we are aware of it or not, our ethnic and cultural background, gender, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, intelligence, education, level of physical attractiveness, and experiences with illness, disease, and death can all act as filters, coloring the way we see the world and the way we make sense of communication. The officer who questioned

Because of people's different perceptual filters, the definition of "quiet" in the quiet cars of public transportation systems has been a point of debate and contention.
TravelCouples/Moment/ Getty Images

Santiago Ventura filtered Ventura's behaviors through his own cultural expectations by assuming, incorrectly, that everyone from Mexico speaks Spanish and that poor eye contact is a sign of dishonesty.

People Give Communication Its Meaning

When we write or speak, we choose our words deliberately so that we can say what we *mean*. What is the source of that meaning? Words have no meaning by themselves; they are just sounds or marks on a piece of paper or a computer monitor. A word is a **symbol**, or a representation of an idea, but the word itself isn't the idea or the meaning. The meaning of words—and of many other forms of communication—comes from the people and groups who use them.

• **symbol** A representation of an idea.

Almost all language is arbitrary in the sense that words mean whatever groups of people decide they mean. As a result, we can't assume that other people understand the meanings we intend to communicate just because we understand what we mean. For instance, what is a mouse? If you asked that question 40 years ago, the answer would have been "a small rodent that likes cheese and gets chased by cats." Today, however, many people know a mouse as a pointing device for navigating within a computer screen. As another example, what is a robot? In the United States, it's a humanlike machine that performs mechanical tasks, but in South Africa, it's a traffic light.

Communication Has Literal Meanings and Relational Implications

Nearly every verbal statement has a **content dimension**, which is the literal information the communicator is communicating.[27] When you say to your friend, "I'm kind of unhappy today," the content dimension of your message is that you're feeling sad, angry, or depressed. When your housemate says, "We're out of cereal again," the content dimension of the message is that you have no cereal left.

• **content dimension** Literal information that is communicated by a message.

There's often more to messages than their literal content, though. Many messages also carry signals about the nature of the relationship in which they are shared. Those signals make up the **relational dimension** of the message. For example, by telling your friend that you are feeling unhappy, you may also be sending the message, "I feel comfortable enough with you to share my feelings," or "I want you to help me feel better." Likewise, you might interpret your housemate's statement that you're out of cereal as also saying, "I'm sure you're aware of this, but I'm just reminding you," or you might take it as meaning, "I'm irritated that you never replace the food you use up." Even though messages like those are unspoken, we often infer meanings about our relationships from the tone and manner in which the statements are made.

• **relational dimension** Signals about the relationship in which a message is being communicated.

One way we distinguish between content and relational dimensions is through **metacommunication**, which is communication about communication. Let's say that Jude asks her husband, Han, to read over the speech she is preparing to give at a conference for small-business owners. Han reads the speech and marks it up with critical comments such as, "This argument isn't convincing," "Awkward wording," and "I can't tell what you're trying to say." After reading Han's comments, Jude is disheartened, and Han is confused by her reaction.

• **metacommunication** Communication about communication.

> **Han:** *I thought you wanted my feedback. I was just trying to help you make your speech better; that's what you asked for. Why are you taking my comments so personally?*
>
> **Jude:** *It's not what you said; it's how you said it.*

By focusing his attention on Jude's request for feedback, Han is attending to the content dimension of their conversation. He can't understand why Jude is upset, because Jude had asked him for his feedback. To Jude, however, Han's comments are overly harsh and insensitive, and they imply that he doesn't care about her feelings. Jude is focusing on the relational dimension of their conversation. To highlight that

distinction, she metacommunicates with Han by explaining that her hurt feelings were caused not by what Han said but by *the way he said it*. That phrase conveys Jude's thoughts about her communication with Han; thus, it is metacommunicative.

Communication Sends Messages, Intentional and Unintentional Much of what we communicate to others is deliberate. When you order lunch at a restaurant, for instance, you do so intentionally, having thought about what what you want to eat and how much money you want to spend.

You may communicate a number of other messages, however, without intending to do so. For example, have you ever tried to stay awake in an important meeting? Despite your efforts to look engaged and interested, you might not have been aware that your slouching posture and droopy eyelids were signaling your fatigue, perhaps after a long day of working at a part-time job and attending classes. In that instance, your behavior was sending unintentional messages.

Whether unintentional messages should qualify as communication has been a focal point of debate among communication scholars for many years. Some researchers believe that only deliberate, intentional messages are a part of communication and that if you don't intend to communicate, you aren't communicating.[28] Others subscribe to the belief that "you cannot *not* communicate," meaning that absolutely everything you do has communicative value.[29] The validity of that idea is addressed in the "Fact or Fiction?" box.

Communication Is Governed by Rules Rules tell us which behaviors are required, preferred, or prohibited in various social contexts.[30] Some rules for communication are **explicit rules**, meaning someone has clearly articulated them. Perhaps your parents used to say, "Don't talk with your mouth full." Many universities have explicit rules banning hate speech, such as statements that degrade ethnic or sexual minorities, at campus events and in school publications. Facebook enforces specific guidelines regarding the content of text and photos. Those examples are all explicit communication rules because they directly express expectations for communicative behavior.

In contrast, many communication rules are **implicit rules**—rules that almost everyone in a certain social group knows and follows, even though no one has formally articulated them. People in North American cultures, for instance, follow implicit rules when riding in an elevator, such as "Don't get on if it's already full" and "Don't make eye contact with others while you're riding." Implicit rules also govern taking turns when you are waiting for some type of service, such as at a bank or grocery store; those rules include "Get into an orderly line" and "Don't cut ahead of someone else."

Most people seem to know and accept implicit rules, even though they usually aren't posted anywhere. They are just a part of everyone's cultural knowledge. Because those rules are implicit, however, their interpretations are likely to vary more from person to person than do understandings of explicit rules. For example, some people believe it is an implicit rule that you shouldn't talk on a cell phone in a crowded environment such as a subway train during rush hour, whereas other people don't see that behavior as inappropriate.

Dozing off during class sends messages to others, even if those messages are unintentional.

Cathy Yeulet/123RF

- **explicit rules** Rules that have been clearly articulated.

- **implicit rules** Rules that have not been clearly articulated but are nonetheless understood.

SHARPEN Your Skills: *Communication rules*

Choose a specific communication situation, such as listening to a distraught friend, talking to a professor about a grade, or watching a speech at an awards ceremony. Write down at least five implicit communication rules that apply to that situation. For each, note what would likely happen if someone violated the rule in that situation.

Fact or fiction?

You Cannot *Not* Communicate

Some of the research findings you'll encounter in this course will make intuitive sense to you, and others will be more challenging. Although our intuition is right much of the time, it can also fail us, and that is just one reason why the systematic study of communication is so useful. In the "Fact or Fiction?" boxes throughout this book, we'll examine some of the more intuitively appealing ideas we hold about communication to see how valid they are.

For instance, Paul Watzlawick, an Austrian-born communication theorist, proposed that "one cannot *not* communicate." He believed that every behavior sends some message, whether intentional or not, so all behavior has communicative value. Because people are engaged in some type of behavior—watching television, crying, sleeping, dancing—at every moment, they cannot help but continuously communicate, according to Watzlawick. Other researchers have pointed out, however, that Watzlawick's idea treats all behavior as communication, and they have argued

instead that unintentional behaviors are not necessarily communicative. If you don't *intend* for your behavior to convey a message, they believe, you aren't engaging in communication.

In this book, I've endeavored to take a position that reflects my own conclusions, which fall somewhere in between those of Watzlawick and his critics. Although I don't believe every possible behavior is a form of communication, neither do I think behaviors must be intentional to have communicative value. I would suggest that even unintended messages—such as the ones you might have expressed while trying to stay awake during a meeting—are forms of communication because they still convey meaning. Many aspects of appearance illustrate that idea. For instance, seeing someone in a wheelchair probably leads you to different conclusions than seeing someone in a white lab coat or an orange prison jumpsuit, yet those messages might be unintentional on the other person's part.

ASK YOURSELF

- What do you think about Watzlawick's idea? Did it seem reasonable or unreasonable to you at first? Why?

- When and how do you communicate messages unintentionally?

SOURCES: Clevinger, T. (1991). Can one not communicate? A conflict of models. *Communication Studies, 42*(4), 340–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510979109368348; Andersen, P. A. (1991). When one cannot not communicate: A challenge to Motley's traditional communication postulates. *Communication Studies, 42*(4), 309–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510979109368346

FIVE TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication occurs as five basic types: intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, public, and mass. They differ primarily with respect to the size of the audience, but they also call for different communication skills.

Intrapersonal Communication The form of communication that addresses the smallest audience is **intrapersonal communication**, the communication you have with yourself. When you mentally remind yourself to do something or you rehearse an upcoming conversation in your mind, you are engaging in intrapersonal communication.

Although it may be tempting to equate intrapersonal communication with *cognition*—the act of thinking—your thoughts and memories become communicative only when you put them into words in your mind. Perhaps you have the thought "Don't

• **intrapersonal communication**
Communication with oneself.

forget to e-mail Mom about my holiday travel plans." In this instance, you have expressed your thought in words directed at yourself; that is, you have communicated intrapersonally. The same would not be true if you were simply to think of an image, such as a ski slope or a sandy beach, without translating that image into words in your mind.

Interpersonal Communication When you exchange instant messages with a friend, talk on the phone with a relative, or meet face-to-face with your supervisor, you are engaging in interpersonal communication. **Interpersonal communication** occurs between two people in the context of their ongoing relationship, and it is the most common form of communication we enact.[31] Even in larger social groups, such as families and organizations, much of our communication is typically interpersonal in nature. We delve more deeply into interpersonal communication in the chapters on social and professional relationships and intimate relationships.

Small Group Communication Almost all of us interact in small groups of people, such as sports teams, study groups, organizational departments, and teams of students working on a class project. When we communicate with groups of about 3 to 20 people who are working interdependently to accomplish a task, we are engaging in **small group communication**. As we will discover in the chapters on small groups and decision making and leadership, groups have specific ways of making decisions, negotiating power, and working together in the service of their common goals.

Public Communication **Public communication** occurs when we speak or write to an audience larger than a small group. If you give the welcome speech at a convention for your fraternity or sorority or write a column for the convention's newsletter, you are engaging in public communication. Because your communication targets a larger audience, you might spend more time preparing and practicing your remarks than if you were talking only to a friend or a small group. We will examine skills that are helpful for successful public communication when we discuss public speaking.

Mass Communication Communication delivered to a large audience is considered public communication unless it is being transmitted via electronic or print media, such as magazines, television, newspapers, blogs, radio, and websites. Communication transmitted by such media is considered **mass communication**. Newspaper journalists, television personalities, bloggers, and podcasters are among those whose words are disseminated to vast audiences of people with whom they have little or no personal connection. Because its audience is so large, mass communication works well for distributing news, commentary, and entertainment. It also is effective for marketing products and services through advertisements, but its breadth makes mass communication unsuited for developing relationships or making collective decisions.

Now that we've surveyed the nature and basic types of communication, we'll shift gears and look at some common beliefs about communication that are not as valid as they might seem.

Interpersonal communication occurs between people in the context of their relationships.

Thinkstock

• interpersonal communication
Communication that occurs between two people in the context of their relationship.

• small group communication
Communication occurring within small groups of approximately 3 to 20 people.

• public communication
Communication directed at an audience that is larger than a small group.

• mass communication
Communication to a large audience that is transmitted by media.

Dispelling Some Communication Myths

In one way or another, you've communicated practically every day of your life. You might therefore feel that you already know what there is to know about communication. As you will see, however, people have many different ideas about communication. Some of those ideas are not very accurate, which can lead people to make mistakes when communicating with others. In this section we will examine five common communication myths so that you will be better able to separate fact from fiction:

1. Everyone is a communication expert.
2. Communication will solve any problem.
3. Communication can break down.
4. Communication is inherently good.
5. More communication is always better.

MYTH: EVERYONE IS A COMMUNICATION EXPERT

Because people communicate constantly, it's easy to believe that just about everyone is an expert in communication. Indeed, in a nationwide survey of American adults conducted by the National Communication Association, fully 91 percent of participants rated their communication skills as above average.[32] Keep in mind, though, that having *experience* with something is not the same as having *expertise*. Many people drive, but that doesn't make them expert drivers. Many people have children, but that doesn't make them parenting experts. Experience can be invaluable, but expertise requires knowledge and ability that go beyond personal experience. Thus, experts in driving, parenting, or communication have training in their fields and a level of understanding that most people who drive, raise children, or communicate don't have.

> ### SHARPEN Your Skills: *Communication experts*
>
> Identify three communication experts outside your college or university. Read about each person's background, and list the training, education, and/or work experiences that make that person an expert in communication. In a brief report, share your findings with your instructor to ensure that you have identified appropriate markers of expertise for each person.

MYTH: COMMUNICATION WILL SOLVE ANY PROBLEM

The classic Paul Newman movie *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) featured a prison warden who had his own special way of dealing with inmates. Whenever things went wrong, he would say, "What we've got here is a failure to communicate,"[33] after which he would beat the inmate unconscious and send him to solitary confinement. Sometimes it seems as though we could solve almost any problem—especially in our relationships—if only we could communicate better. It's easy to blame a lack of communication when things go wrong. Yet the fact is that poor communication isn't the cause of every problem.[34]

On his television talk show *Dr. Phil*, psychologist Phil McGraw often counsels couples encountering difficulties in their relationships. Suppose Connie and Andy appear on *Dr. Phil* complaining that they have been drifting apart for some time. When they discuss their problems on the show, Connie says she feels they need to communicate better to save their relationship. In the course of their conversation, however, Andy states very clearly that he is no longer in love with Connie and he wishes to explore a new relationship with someone else.

Will communication ultimately solve this couple's marital problems? No—in fact, it will probably cause Connie to realize that their relationship is already over. Going their separate ways might be better for both of them in the long run, so we could say that communication will help them to come to that realization. Nevertheless, it won't solve the problem of their drifting apart in the first place. Therefore, we must be careful not to assume that better communication can resolve any problem we might face in our relationships.

AF archive/Alamy Stock Photo

MYTH: COMMUNICATION CAN BREAK DOWN

Just as we sometimes blame our problems on a lack of communication, many of us also point to a "breakdown" in communication as the root of problems. When marriages fail, the spouses may say it was a breakdown in communication that led to their relational difficulties. When government agencies are slow to respond to a natural disaster, people frequently blame their sluggish response on communication breakdowns within those agencies.

The metaphor of the communication breakdown makes intuitive sense to many of us. After all, our progress on a journey is halted if our car breaks down, so it's easy to think that our progress in other endeavors is halted because our communication has broken down. But communication isn't a mechanical object like a car, a refrigerator, or an iPad. Instead, it's a process that unfolds between and among people over time. It may be easy to blame a breakdown in communication for problems we face in personal relationships or during crisis situations. What is actually happening in those contexts is that we are no longer communicating *effectively*. In other words, the problem lies not with communication itself but with the way we are using it. That is one reason why learning about communication—as you are doing in this class—can be so beneficial.

MYTH: COMMUNICATION IS INHERENTLY GOOD

Listen to people who are having relationship problems, and you will hear them say they no longer communicate with their romantic partners, parents, or friends. "Sure, we talk all the time," someone might say, "but we don't really *communicate* anymore." Reflected in that statement is the idea that *talking* means just producing words, but *communicating* means sharing meaning with another person in an open, supportive, and inherently positive manner.[35]

Thinking that communication is inherently good is similar to thinking that money is inherently good. Sometimes money is put to positive uses, such as providing a home for your family and donating to a worthy charity. At other times it is put to negative uses, such as providing funding for a terrorist group and gambling away hard-earned income. In either case, it isn't the money itself that is good or bad—rather, it's the way it is used.

We can make the same observation about communication. We can use communication for positive purposes, such as expressing love for our parents and comforting a grieving friend. We can also use it for negative purposes, such as intimidating and deceiving people. In fact, bullying has become a prevalent problem for many

In many instances, people feel they are *talking* but not really *communicating*.

Steve Debenport/Getty Images

THE DARK SIDE OF COMMUNICATION

Hurtful Communication: Bullying and Cyberbullying

Recent years have brought increased attention to the problems associated with bullying. Bullying can occur in person and often involves teasing, name-calling, threats, spreading rumors, and physical behaviors such as hitting, kicking, or pushing. In the United States, approximately 20 percent of young people report experiencing bullying in school. Bullying also occurs online—a behavior known as *cyberbullying*—and can involve harassing or stalking people and sending humiliating photos of them to others. Approximately 15 percent of young people in the United States report being the target of cyberbullying, but that figure is likely low because many cyberbullying incidents go unreported.

One reason we are paying more attention to bullying is that we better understand its health risks. According to research, adolescent and adult bullying targets are at elevated risk of experiencing anxiety and depression, inflammation, sleep problems, body pain, and frequent headaches. They are also more likely to smoke heavily and are even more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide.

There is evidence, in fact, that experiencing bullying actually changes the structure of our brains. One study examined brain scans of more than 600 young people in Europe, nearly a third of whom had endured chronic bullying. According to the research, parts of the brain that allow people to learn from their experiences were demonstrably smaller in bullying targets than in non-targets. The scientists who conducted the study speculated that these differences could help explain why bullying is associated with mental health problems such as anxiety.

If you or someone you know is a target of bullying or cyberbullying, the website StopBullying.gov offers information and resources that can help.

SOURCES: National Center for Education Statistics. (2019, April). Indicator 10: Bullying at school and electronic bullying. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/ind_10.asp; Quinlan, E. B., Barker, E. D., Luo, Q., Banaschewski, T., Bokde, A. L. W., Bromberg, U., Büchel, C., Desrivières, S., Flor, H., Frouin, V., Garavan, H., Chaarani, B., Gowland, P., Heinz, A., Brühl, R., Martinot, J.-L., Paillère Martinot, M.-L., Nees, F., Orfanos, D. P., Paus, T., . . . IMAGEN Consortium. (2018). Peer victimization and its impact on adolescent brain development and psychopathology. *Molecular Psychiatry,* article 1. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-018-0297-9; Wolke, D., & Lereya, S. T. (2015). Long-term effects of bullying. *Archives of Disease in Childhood, 100*(9), 879–885. https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2014-306667

adolescents and adults, and one with the potential to cause enormous harm, as "The Dark Side of Communication" explains.

Regarding the "dark side" terminology: in recent years, several scholars in the area of interpersonal communication have been studying what they call the "dark side" of communication, or the ways in which people sometimes use communication to hurt or manipulate others. As you encounter "The Dark Side of Communication" box in each chapter of this book, remember that communication itself is not positive or negative—it's what individuals do with it that makes it good or bad.

MYTH: MORE COMMUNICATION IS ALWAYS BETTER

Antonio thinks that if others don't agree with him, the reason is that they just don't understand him. In those situations, he talks on and on, figuring that others will eventually see things his way if he gives them enough information. Perhaps you know someone like Antonio. Does more communication always produce a better outcome?

When people have genuine disagreements, more talk doesn't always help. In some cases, it can just lead to frustration and anger. A study of consultations between doctors and patients found that the more doctors talked, the more likely they were to get off-track and forget about the patients' problems, a pattern that can translate into worse care for the patient.[36] Another study found that the more people communicated with one another on cell phones, the less happy they were, the less satisfied they were with their families, and the more likely they were to say that their work lives "spilled over" into their family lives.[37]

We've already considered that communication cannot solve every problem, so it shouldn't surprise you to learn that more of it isn't always preferable. Indeed, sometimes it seems as though the less said, the better. As you'll learn in this book, the *effectiveness* of our communication—rather than the *amount*—is often what matters. That fact explains why learning to be a competent communicator is so advantageous.

Building Your Communication Competence

Recently, the National Association of Colleges and Employers asked employers around the United States which skills and personal qualities they most look for in new college graduates whom they are considering hiring. As you can see in Table 2, communication skills topped the list.[38] That survey—along with several others like it over the past decade—indicates that being an effective communicator gives job applicants a sizable advantage.[39]

None of us is born a competent communicator. Rather, like driving a car, playing a sport, or designing a web page, communicating competently requires skills we must learn and practice. That doesn't mean that nature doesn't give some people a head start. Indeed, research shows that genes partly contribute to some of our communication traits, such as how sociable, aggressive, or shy we are.[40] No matter which traits we are born with, though, we can still learn how to communicate competently. In this section, we probe what it means to be a competent communicator, which skills are necessary for competent communication, and how we learn them.

COMPETENT COMMUNICATION IS EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE

Think about five people you consider to be really good communicators. Who's on your list? Any of your friends or relatives? Classmates or teachers? Politicians? Celebrities? Yourself? You probably recognize that identifying good communicators means first asking yourself what a good communicator is. Even communication scholars find that a tricky question. Nevertheless, most researchers seem to agree that **communication competence** means communicating in ways that are *effective* and *appropriate* in a given situation.[41] Communication scholars Brian Spitzberg and Bill Cupach have spent much of their careers studying effective, appropriate communication. Let's take a closer look at what it means to communicate effectively and appropriately, and also at how we can engage in effective and appropriate communication online.

• **communication competence** Communication that is effective and appropriate for a given situation.

Communicating Effectively Effectiveness describes how well your communication achieves its goals.[42] Suppose you want to persuade your neighbor to donate money to a shelter for abused animals. There are many ways to achieve that goal. You could explain how much the shelter needs the money and identify all the services it provides to animals in need. You could offer to do yard work in exchange for your neighbor's donation. You could even recite the times when you have donated to causes that were important to your neighbor.

1. Communication skills	**TABLE 2**
2. Problem-solving skills	PERSONAL QUALITIES MOST SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS AMONG NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES
3. Ability to work in a team	
4. Initiative	
5. Analytical/quantitative skills	

SOURCE: National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2019). *Job Outlook 2019.* Author.

Your choice of strategy may partly depend on what other goals you are trying to achieve at the same time. If maintaining a good relationship with your neighbor is also important to you, then asking politely may be the most effective course of action. If all you want is the money, however, and your neighbor's feelings are less important to you, then making your neighbor feel obligated to donate may help you achieve your goal, even though it might not be as acceptable morally.

The point is that no single communication strategy is effective in all situations. Because we often pursue more than one goal at a time, being an effective communicator means using behaviors that meet all the goals we have, in the specific context in which we have them.

Communicating Appropriately for the Social and Cultural Context

Besides being effective, competent communication should also be appropriate. That means it adheres to the rules and expectations that apply in a social situation, as we considered earlier in this chapter. For instance, when a coworker asks, "How are you?" you know that it's appropriate to say, "Fine, how are you?" in return. The coworker probably isn't expecting a long, detailed description of how your day is going, so if you launch into one, he or she may find that response inappropriate. Similarly, it's appropriate in most classrooms to raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking, so it would be inappropriate in those cases to blurt out your comments.

Communicating appropriately can be especially challenging when you're interacting with people from other cultures. The reason is that many communication rules are culture-specific, so what might be perfectly appropriate in one culture may be inappropriate or even offensive in another.[43] If you are visiting a Canadian household and your hosts offer you food, it's appropriate to accept if you are hungry. In many Japanese households, however, it is inappropriate to accept until you have declined the food twice and your hosts offer it a third time.

Even within a specific culture, expectations can vary according to the social situation. Communication that's appropriate at home might be inappropriate at work and vice versa. Moreover, communication that's appropriate for a socially powerful individual is not necessarily appropriate for everyone. It might not be unexpected for your manager to make you wait before a meeting, although making your manager wait for you may be considered out of line.

High self-monitors pay close attention to the way they look, sound, and act.

Ghislain and Marie David de Lossy/Cultura/Getty ImagesC

People who know how to communicate effectively can use their abilities to succeed in a wide range of fields. Throughout this book, you'll find descriptions of careers that can make excellent use of communication training. In the "Putting Communication to Work" box, you'll also discover the diversity of options available to students who hone their communication skills.

Whether face-to-face or online, communication competence implies both effectiveness and appropriateness. Note that those are characteristics of *communication,* not of people. Thus, the logical follow-up question is whether competent *communicators* share any traits. They do, as we will see next.

COMPETENT COMMUNICATORS SHARE MANY CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS

Look again at your list of five people who are good communicators. What do they have in common? Of course, competence is situation-specific, so what works in one context may not work in another. Good communicators, however, tend to have certain characteristics that help them to behave competently in most situations: they are self-aware, adaptable, empathic, cognitively complex, and ethical.

putting**communication**to**work**

Job Title >

Work Responsibilities >

Public Information Officer for Nonprofit Organization

A public information officer, or PIO, is the public face and voice of an organization. This person speaks to the media and to representatives from government and business about the organization's activities and priorities. On any given day, the PIO might be writing a press release, taking part in a live televised interview, making an announcement to an organization's employees, or giving a presentation about the organization to a group of schoolchildren. The job requires excellent public speaking skills, an ability to consider how messages should be framed, and a high level of skill at adapting to the communication needs of different audiences.

Competent Communicators Are Self-Aware Good communicators are aware of their own behavior and its effects on others.[44] Researchers call that awareness **self-monitoring**. People who are "high self-monitors" pay close attention to the way they look, sound, and act in social situations. In contrast, people who are "low self-monitors" often seem oblivious to both their own behaviors and other people's reactions to them. For instance, you may know someone who never seems to notice that he dominates the conversation or who seems unaware that she speaks louder than anyone around her.

Self-monitoring usually makes people more competent communicators because it enables them to see how their behavior fits or doesn't fit in a given social setting. In addition, high self-monitors often have the ability to understand people's emotions and social behaviors accurately.[45]

How high of a self-monitor are you? Take the quiz in "The Competent Communicator" box to find out.

Competent Communicators Are Adaptable It's one thing to be aware of your own behavior; it's quite another to be able to adapt it to different situations. We have seen that what works in one situation might not be effective in another. Competent communicators are able to assess what will be appropriate and effective in a given context and then modify their behaviors accordingly.[46] As we'll discover in the chapter on choosing, developing, and researching a topic, part of delivering a good speech is being aware of the audience and adapting our behavior accordingly. A competent communicator would speak differently to a group of senior executives than to a group of new hires, for example.

Competent Communicators Are Empathic Good communicators practice **empathy**, or the ability to be "other-oriented" and to understand other people's thoughts and feelings.[47] When people say "Put yourself in my shoes," they are asking

• **self-monitoring** Awareness of one's behavior and how it affects others.

• **empathy** The ability to think and feel as others do.

COMPETENT COMMUNICATOR

Are You a High Self-Monitor?

One of the ways to improve your communication ability is to think about how you communicate now. Each "The Competent Communicator" box will help you to do so by presenting a self-assessment quiz covering a specific communication skill or tendency. For instance, how high a self-monitor are you? Indicate how well each of the following statements describes you by assigning it a number between 1 ("not at all") and 7 ("very well").

Design Pics/Don Hammond

_____ I tend to show different sides of myself to different people.

_____ I would probably make a good actor.

_____ I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading it in the listener's eyes.

_____ I pay attention to how other people react to my behavior.

_____ I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation I'm in.

_____ I am often able to read people's true emotions through their eyes.

_____ I can usually tell when others are lying to me.

_____ I am not always the person I appear to be.

When you're finished, add up your scores. Your total score should fall between 8 and 56. A score of 8–22 suggests that self-monitoring is a skill you can work on, as you are doing in this class. If you scored between 23 and 38, you are already a moderate self-monitor, with a good sense of self-awareness. Continued practice can strengthen that skill. If you scored above 38, you are a high self-monitor, which usually makes your communication more effective.

Remember that your score on this quiz—and on every "The Competent Communicator" quiz in this book—reflects only how you see yourself at this time. If your score surprised you, take the quiz again later in the course to see how studying communication may have changed the way you assess your communication abilities.

SOURCE: Lennox, R. D., & Wolfe, R. N. (1984). Revision of the self-monitoring scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*(6), 1349–1364. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.6.1349

you to consider a situation empathically, from *their* perspective rather than your own. Because people often think and feel differently than you do about the same situation, empathy helps you understand and adapt to their communication behaviors.

Suppose you want to ask your instructor for a one-week extension on an assignment. You might think, "What's the big deal? It's only a week." To your instructor, however, the extension might mean that she will be unable to complete her grading in time for her planned vacation. If the situation were reversed, how would you feel? An empathic approach would help you consider the situation from the instructor's perspective and tailor your behavior accordingly. People who don't practice empathy tend to assume that everyone thinks and feels the same way they do, and they risk creating problems when that assumption isn't accurate.

Empathy is a particular challenge for individuals with conditions such as autism and Asperger's disorder, both of which impair the ability to interpret other people's nonverbal behaviors. You may have little difficulty judging when a friend is being sarcastic, for instance, because you infer that from his facial expressions and tone of voice. For people with autism or Asperger's disorder, however, the meaning of those nonverbal signals may not be as evident, making it more challenging to understand and adopt another person's perspective.

Competent Communicators Are Cognitively Complex Let's say you see your friend Annika coming toward you in the hallway at school. You smile and get ready to say hi, but she walks right by as if you're not there. How would you interpret her behavior? Maybe she's mad at you. Maybe she was concentrating on something when she passed by and didn't notice anyone around her. Maybe she actually did smile at you and you just didn't see it.

The ability to consider a variety of explanations and to understand a given situation in multiple ways is called **cognitive complexity**. Cognitive complexity is a valuable skill because it keeps you from jumping to the wrong conclusion and responding inappropriately.[48] Someone with little cognitive complexity might feel slighted by Annika's behavior and might therefore ignore her the next time they meet. In contrast, someone with more cognitive complexity would remember that behaviors do not always mean what we think they mean. That person would be more open-minded, considering several possible interpretations of Annika's behavior.

Competent Communicators Are Ethical Finally, competent communicators are ethical communicators. **Ethics** are principles that guide us in judging whether something is morally right or wrong. Ethical communication generally dictates that we treat people fairly, communicate honestly, and avoid immoral or unethical behavior. Communicating ethically can be easier said than done, however, because people often have very different ideas about right and wrong. What may be morally justified to one person or one culture may be considered completely unethical to another.

Ethical considerations are often particularly important when we are engaged in compliance-gaining strategies, trying to change the way another person thinks or behaves. Referring back to a previous example: is it ethical to make your neighbor feel obligated to contribute money to your cause? To some people, that strategy would seem unfair, because it may lead your neighbor to donate even if he or she doesn't want to. Depending on why you need the money, however, or what you have done for your neighbor in the past, you might not consider it unethical even if others do. Competent communicators are aware that people's ideas about ethics vary. They are also aware of their own ethical beliefs, and they communicate in ways that are consistent with those beliefs.

Take one last look at your list of five good communicators. Are they generally aware of their own behaviors and able to adapt them to different contexts? Can they adopt other people's perspectives and consider various ways of explaining situations? Do

Children with autism often have difficulty interpreting other people's nonverbal behaviors.

Maskot/Getty Images

SHARPEN Your Skills: *Evaluating competence*

Choose a reality TV show, and consider the cast members and their communication behaviors. Based on what you have learned in this section, how would you rate each participant in terms of communication competence? What makes some individuals more communicatively competent than others? Try to identify specific skills, such as empathy and cognitive complexity, that distinguish each individual. Consider how each person might improve his or her communication competencies. Share your thoughts in a brief report.

• **cognitive complexity** The ability to understand a given situation in multiple ways.

• **ethics** Principles that guide judgments about whether something is morally right or wrong.

Difficult Conversations

Dealing with an Angry Customer

Imagine this: You are working at a car rental counter at the airport when a customer approaches you to complain. She says your website listed the cost of her rental car at $39.95 per day, so she is frustrated about getting charged more than twice that amount. As you explain that taxes, insurance, and fuel fees account for the added costs, she blames you for trying to scam her. You get angry and consider calling security to have her escorted away.

In your situation, it is natural to feel attacked and to respond with anger. After all, the customer seems to be blaming you for the cost of the car, when you know she was clearly shown the costs at the time of the rental.

Now, consider this: You could respond to this customer's anger with anger of your own, and call security to have her escorted out. A more constructive approach to this difficult conversation may be to respond to the customer in an empathic way.

- Begin by putting aside your own feelings for a moment and considering how you would feel if you were this customer. Have you ever felt cheated or taken advantage of by a business? If so, then you understand how this woman feels right now.

- Remember that it's not important whether you think her feelings are justified. All that matters in this moment is identifying how she feels.

- Look for ways to communicate that you recognize the customer's feelings. Statements such as "I understand how frustrating this must be" convey your *empathy* for the other person's situation. Comments such as "I would feel the same way if I were in your situation" show the customer that you can take her perspective.

Recognizing the customer's feelings won't, by itself, solve her problem. Communicating with empathy, however, can help you identify acceptable solutions because it lets you consider the situation from her point of view. Empathic communication can also keep the customer's emotions from becoming more negative.

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they behave ethically? These aren't the only characteristics that make someone a competent communicator, but they are among the most important. That's especially true when we deal with tricky situations, as the "Difficult Conversations" box illustrates. To the extent that we can develop and practice these skills, we can all become better at the process of communication.

When it comes to communication competence, the mode of communication matters. People who grew up before the invention of the Internet may feel comfortable talking to others face-to-face or by telephone, for instance, but they may be less competent at using Snapchat, sending tweets, or posting to Instagram. For some others, it's just the opposite. Because social media have greatly expanded our options for communication, it pays to consider specifically what makes people competent online communicators.

COMPETENT ONLINE COMMUNICATION

These days, much of our interpersonal communication takes place in electronically mediated contexts. These include e-mail, instant messaging, and text messaging; social networking (such as on Facebook and LinkedIn); tweeting; image sharing (such as on YouTube and Instagram); and videoconferencing (such as on Skype and FaceTime), among others. As you'll see in this section, communicating competently in these venues requires paying attention to their unique capabilities and pitfalls.

Beware of the Potential for Misunderstanding Face-to-face conversations allow you to pay attention to behaviors that help to clarify the meaning of a speaker's words. People's facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice, for example, generally provide clues about what they are trying to say. Are they speaking seriously or sarcastically? Are they upset or calm, tentative or self-assured? We can usually tell a lot about people's meaning by considering not only *what they say* but *how they say it*.

We saw earlier that some channel-lean forms of communication—such as tweeting and instant messaging—rely heavily on text, restricting our access to facial expressions and other clues. As a result, these forms of communication increase the potential for misunderstanding. Many of us have had the experience of teasing or joking with someone in a text message, for instance, only to discover that the person took our words seriously and felt offended or hurt. Similarly, recall from the chapter-opening story that Alex McDaniel even faced potential legal action because someone misunderstood her tweet.

To communicate competently when using channel-lean media, follow these guidelines:

- *Review your message before you share it.* Although the meaning of your words is clear to you, think about the ways in which it may be unclear to your recipient. In particular, identify words or phrases in your message that could have more than one meaning.

- *Clarify your meaning wherever possible.* When you find parts of your message that could be misinterpreted, consider whether using a different word or phrase would be clearer.

- *Use emoji to convey emotion.* Adding symbols to express your emotional state— such as a smiling face, a winking face, or a crying face—can help receivers understand how to interpret your message.

Presume that Everything Is Permanent and Nothing Is Secret Perhaps you've had the embarrassing experience of sending a text message to the wrong person. Words you intended for one recipient are therefore read by someone else, who may choose either to delete them or to save them. That situation illustrates an important characteristic of electronically mediated communication: Everything you say and do leaves behind a record. That creates the possibility that your messages can be seen or heard by virtually anyone. Sometimes this occurs by accident, as when you send your text message to the wrong person. On other occasions, however, people can copy or forward your messages to others without your knowledge or permission.

It is best, therefore, to remember that anything you communicate via electronically mediated channels could reach people other than your intended receivers, and to modify your messages accordingly. Here are some specific tips:

- *Write as though others will read your words.* Psychologist Ken Siegel, who advises companies on workplace efficiency, offers this advice: "send e-mail with the assumption that the person you really don't want to read it *will* read it."[49]

- *Double-check your recipients before hitting "Send."* When drafting a text message, make sure you have chosen the proper receiver. Before you send an e-mail message,

ensure that you haven't hit "Reply All" when you intended to reply only to one person.

- *Take sensitive messages offline.* When your message includes sensitive information, communicate it face to face whenever possible. Never send private financial information, personal evaluations of others, or similarly sensitive details in an e-mail or instant message that could easily be saved and shared with others.

Avoid Communicating in Anger When someone else's words or actions upset us, it can be easy to lash out by sending a nasty text message or posting words of anger online. Doing so may soothe our feelings in the short run, but our words can continue to wound and upset others long after our anger is gone. That's important to remember, because anger can cloud our ability to think clearly and make us less likely to care about the repercussions of our words. Because electronically mediated messages can be read—and misunderstood—by broad audiences, however, competent online communicators recognize this danger and avoid communicating in anger.

To do the same, consider these suggestions:

- *Consider whether your anger springs from misunderstanding.* We have seen that electronically mediated messages—especially channel-lean forms such as e-mails and texts—are easy to misinterpret. If your anger was sparked by a message you received from someone else, consider the possibility that you misunderstood what he or she was saying. Before lashing out at the person, think about whether you might have misinterpreted his or her meaning.

- *Write a draft, then set it aside.* There's nothing wrong with *composing* messages while you're in an emotional state. You just want to be cautious about sending them. A good option is to write a draft of your message and then set it aside, without sending it. Later, after you feel less angry, read your draft carefully and consider how you want to modify it, if at all.

Considering the potential for misunderstanding, remembering the scope of your audience, and avoiding communication while angry can be helpful in most any social context. They are particularly important while communicating in electronically mediated ways, however. Although they aren't the only components of online communication competence, these suggestions can help you communicate in effective and appropriate ways across a range of contexts.

For REVIEW

- What needs does communication help us meet?

  We use communication to help us stay physically healthy, form and maintain important relationships, understand and express our identities, convey our spiritual beliefs, and accomplish mundane, instrumental tasks.

- How does communication work, and what misconceptions do we have about it?

  Communication can be described as action, interaction, or transaction, depending on the situation. Many people mistakenly believe that everyone is a communication expert, communication will solve any problem, communication can break down, communication is inherently good, and more communication is always better.

- What particular skills characterize competent communicators?

  Competent communicators express themselves effectively and appropriately in whatever situation they are in. They are self-aware, adaptable, empathic, cognitively complex, and ethical.

KEY TERMS

adapt 4

communication 4

relational needs 5

instrumental needs 7

model 8

action model 8

source 9

encode 9

message 9

channel 9

receiver 9

decode 9

noise 9

interaction model 10

feedback 10

context 10

transaction model 11

channel-rich contexts 13

channel-lean contexts 13

symbol 14

content dimension 14

relational dimension 14

metacommunication 14

explicit rules 15

implicit rules 15

intrapersonal communication 16

interpersonal communication 17

small group communication 17

public communication 17

mass communication 17

communication competence 21

self-monitoring 23

empathy 23

cognitive complexity 25

ethics 25

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