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CHAPTER

Interpersonal Communication and Self

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Define, compare, and contrast the meanings of "self-concept" and "self-esteem."
- 2. Identify factors that shape the development of your self-concept.
- 3. List and describe strategies for improving your self-esteem.
- 4. Describe how your self-concept affects your relationships with others.
- 5. Describe the process of appropriate self-disclosure, including two models of self-disclosure.

OUTLINE

Self-Concept: Who Are You?

Self-Esteem: Your Self-Worth

Improving Your Self-Esteem

How Self-Concept and Self-Esteem Affect Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

Self-Disclosure: Connecting Self to Others Through Talk

Characteristics of Self-Disclosure

People tell themselves stories and then pour their lives into the stories they tell.

Anonymous

hilosophers suggest that there are three basic questions to which we all seek answers: (1) Who am I? (2) Why am I here? and (3) Who are all these others? In this chapter, we will focus on these essential questions. We view them as progressive. Grappling with the question of who you are and seeking to define a purpose for your life are fundamental to understanding others and becoming other-oriented in your interpersonal communication and your relationships.

Fundamentally, all of your communication starts or ends with you. When you are the communicator, you intentionally or unintentionally code your thoughts and emotions to be interpreted by another. When you receive a message, you interpret the information through your own frame of reference. Your self-image and self-worth, as well as your needs, values, beliefs, and attitudes, serve as filters for your communication with others. As you develop and establish relationships, you may become more aware of these filters, and, perhaps, you will have the desire to alter them. A close relationship often provides the impetus for change.

To better understand the role that self-concept plays in interpersonal communication, we will explore the first two basic questions, "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" by trying to discover the meaning of self. We will examine the multi-faceted dimensions of our self-concept, learn how it develops, and compare self-concept with self-esteem. Then we will move to the third basic question, "Who are all these others?" What you choose to tell and not tell others about yourself reveals important clues about who you



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are, what you value, and how you relate to another person. We will explore the process of self-disclosure—purposefully revealing information about yourself—later in this chapter.

Self-Concept: Who Are You?

How did you answer the question, "Who are you?" Perhaps your self-descriptions identify activities in which you participate. Or they may list groups and organizations to which you belong or some of the roles you assume, such as student, child, or parent. All of these things are, indeed, parts of your **self**, the sum total of who you are. Karen Horney defines "self" as "that central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth." I

Your answers are also part of your **self-concept**. Your self-concept is your subjective description of who you think you are—it is filtered through your own perceptions. For example, you may have great musical talent, but you may not believe in it enough to think of yourself as a musician. We can view self-concept as the labels we consistently use to describe ourselves to others.

Who you are is also reflected in the attitudes, beliefs, and values that you hold. These are learned constructs that shape your behaviour and self-image. An **attitude** is a learned predisposition to respond to a person, object, or idea in a favourable or unfavourable way. Attitudes reflect what you like and what you don't like. If you like school, butter pecan ice cream, and your mother, you hold positive attitudes toward these things. You were not born with a fondness for butter pecan ice cream; you learned to like it, just as some people learn to enjoy the taste of snails, raw fish, or puréed turnips.

self. The sum total of who a person is; a person's central inner force

self-concept. A person's subjective description of who the person thinks he or she is.

attitude. Learned predisposition to respond to a person, object, or idea in a favourable or unfavourable way.

Who Are You?



Lam

onsider this question: Who are you? More specifically, ask yourself this question 10 times. Write your responses in the spaces provided here or on a separate piece of paper. It may be challenging to identify 10 aspects of yourself; the Spanish writer Cervantes said, "to know thyself... is the most difficult lesson in the world." Your answers will help you begin to explore your self-concept and self-esteem in this chapter.

l am	I am
l am	l am
l am	l am

Beliefs are the ways in which you structure your understanding of reality—what is true and what is false. Most of your beliefs are based on previous experience. You trust that the sun will rise in the morning and that you will get burned if you put your hand on a hot stove.

How are attitudes and beliefs related? They often function quite independently of one another. You may have a favourable attitude toward something and still believe negative things about it. You may believe, for example, that your college hockey team will not win the provincial championship this year, though you may be a big fan. Or you may believe that a God exists, yet not always like what that God does. Beliefs have to do with what is true or not true; attitudes reflect likes and dislikes.

Values are enduring concepts of good and bad, right and wrong. Your values are more resistant to change than either your attitudes or your beliefs. They are also more difficult for most people to identify. Val-

ues are so central to who you are that it is difficult to isolate them. For example, when you go to the supermarket, you may spend a few minutes deciding which cookies to buy, but you probably do not spend much time deciding whether you will steal the cookies or pay for them. Our values are instilled in us by our earliest interpersonal relationships; for almost all of us, our parents shape our values. The model in Figure 2.1 shows that values are central to our behaviour and concept of self, and that what we believe to be true or false stems from our values. Attitudes are at the outer edge of the circle because they are the most likely to change. You may like your co-worker today but not tomorrow, even though you believe the person will come to work every day and you still value the concept of friendship. Beliefs are between attitudes and values in the model because they are more likely to change than our core values but don't change as much as our attitudes (likes and dislikes).

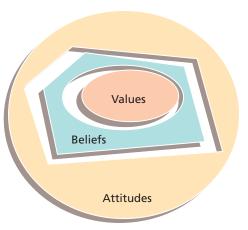


FIGURE 2.1

Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes in Relation to Self



Who You Are Is Reflected in Your Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

	Definition	Dimensions	Example
Attitudes	Learned predispositions to respond favourably or unfavourably toward something.	Likes-Dislikes	You like ice cream, incense, and cats.
Beliefs	The ways in which we structure reality.	True-False	You believe your parents love you.
Values	Enduring concepts of what is right and wrong.	Good-Bad	You value honesty and truth.

Are You Conscious of Who You Are?

Do you know what you're doing right now? "Of course," you may think, "I'm reading this textbook." But are you really aware of all of the fleeting thoughts bouncing in your head, whether you're truly happy or sad, or even whether you may be twiddling a pencil, jiggling your leg, or in need of a snack? To be aware of who you are and what you may be thinking about is a more involved process than you may think. Researchers have described three ways of being self-aware—conscious of who you are and what you are doing: subjective self-awareness, objective self-awareness, and symbolic self-awareness.² Watch on mycommunicationlab

beliefs. The ways in which you structure your understanding of reality—what is true and what is false.

values. Enduring concepts of good and bad, right and wrong.

environment.

Part 1 Foundations of Interpersonal Communication

subjective self-awareness. Ability to differentiate the self from the social and physical

objective self-awareness. Ability to be the object of one's own thoughts and attention—to be aware of one's state of mind and

symbolic self-awareness.

that one is thinking.

Uniquely human ability to think about oneself and use language (symbols) to represent oneself to others.

Subjective Self-Awareness

Subjective self-awareness is the ability that people have to differentiate themselves from their environment. You are a separate being apart from your surroundings. It is so basic an awareness that it may even seem not worth talking about. You know, for example, that you're not physically attached to the chair you may be sitting in. You are a separate entity from all that is around you.

Objective Self-Awareness

Objective self-awareness is the ability to be the object of one's own thoughts and attention. You (and, based on research, some primates) have the ability to think about your own thoughts as you are thinking about them. Not only are you aware that you're separate from your environment (subjective self-awareness), but you can also ponder the distinct thoughts you are thinking. Of course, objective self-awareness, like subjective self-awareness, can be "turned on" and "turned off." Sometimes you are aware of what you are thinking, sometimes you're unaware of what you are thinking or on what you are focusing.

Symbolic Self-Awareness

Symbolic self-awareness, unique to humans, is our ability not only to think about ourselves, but to use language (symbols) to represent ourselves to others. For example, you have the ability to think about how to make a good impression on others. In an effort to make a positive impression on someone, you may say, "Good evening, Mrs. Cleaver. You look nice this evening," rather than just saying, "Hiya." You make conscious attempts to use symbols to influence the way you are perceived by others.

One Or Many Selves?

Shakespeare's famous line, "To thine own self be true," suggests that you have a single self to which you can be true. Do you have just one self? Or is there a more real "you"



${\mathcal B}$ uilding Your Skills

Dimensions of Your Self

ake another look at your responses to the question, "Who are you?" Divide your list according to James's three components of the self. If nothing on your original list relates to one of these "selves," make a new entry here so that you have a response for each of them.

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References to the physical elements that reflect who you are.

Example:

I collect antiques.

Social Self

References to interactions with others that reflect who you are.

Example:

I am a member of the Chess Club.

Spiritual Self

References to your reflections about values, morals, and beliefs.

Example:

I believe in a higher spiritual
being.

buried somewhere within? "I'm just not myself this morning," sighs Sandy, as she drags herself out the front door to head for her office. If she is not herself, then who is she? Most scholars conclude that we have a core set of behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and values that constitute our self—the sum total of who we are. However, our concept of self can and does change, depending on circumstances and influences. Watch on mycommunicationlab

In addition, our self-concepts are often different from the way others see us. We almost always behave differently in public than we do in private. Sociologist Erving Goffman suggests that, like actors and actresses, we have "on stage" behaviours when others are watching and "backstage" behaviours when they are not.³

Perhaps the most enduring and widely accepted framework for describing who you are was developed by the philosopher William James. He identified three components of the self: the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self.⁴ We will continue our exploration by examining these components.

The Material Self

Perhaps you've heard the statement, "You are what you eat." The material self goes a step further by suggesting, "You are what you have." The **material self** is a total of all of the tangible things you own: your possessions, your home, your body. As you examine your list of responses to the question, "Who are you?" note whether any of your statements refers to one of your physical attributes or something you own.

One element of the material self gets considerable attention in our culture: the body. Do you like the way you look? Most of us, if we're honest, would like to change something about our appearance. When there is a discrepancy between our desired material self and our self-concept, we may respond to eliminate the discrepancy. We may try to lose weight, develop our muscles, or acquire more hair. The multi-billion-dollar diet industry is just one of many that profit from our collective desire to change our appearance.

The Social Self

Look at your "Who are you?" list once more. How many of your responses relate to your **social self**, the part of you that interacts with others? William James believed that you have many social selves—that depending on the friend, family member, colleague, or acquaintance with whom you are interacting, you change the way you are. A person has, said James, as many social selves as there are people who recognize him or her.

For example, when you talk to your best friend, you are willing to "let down your hair" and reveal more thoughts and feelings than you would in a conversation with your communication professor, or even your parents. Each relationship that you have with another person is unique because you bring to it a unique social self.

The Spiritual Self

Your **spiritual self** consists of all your internal thoughts and introspections about your values and moral standards. It is not dependent on what you own or with whom you talk; it is the essence of who you think you are, and of your feelings about yourself, apart from external evaluations. It is an amalgam of your religious beliefs and your sense of who you are in relation to other forces in the universe. Your spiritual self is the part of you that answers the question, "Why am I here?"



Peter Blake sought to explore his self-dimensions by painting his self-portrait. What qualities does this self-portrait reveal about the artist? (Tate Gallery, London/Art

Resources)

material self. Your concept of self as reflected in a total of all the tangible things you own.

social self. Your concept of self as developed through your personal, social interactions with others.

spiritual self. Your concept of self based on your thoughts and introspections about your values and moral standards.



William James's Dimensions of Self

	Definition	Examples
Material self	All of the physical elements that reflect who you are.	Possessions, car, home, body, clothes.
Social self	The self as reflected through your interactions with others; actually, a variety of selves that respond to changes in situations and roles.	Your informal self interacting with your best friend; your formal self interacting with your professors.
Spiritual self	Introspections about values, morals, and beliefs.	Religious belief or disbelief; regard for life in all its forms.

How Your Self-Concept Develops

Some psychologists and sociologists have advanced theories that suggest we learn who we are through four basic means: (1) our interactions with other individuals, (2) our association with groups, (3) roles we assume, (4) our own labels, and (5) our personalities. Like James's framework, this one does not cover every base in our study of self, but its constructs can provide some clues about how our own self-concepts develop.

Interaction with Individuals

In 1902, Charles Horton Cooley first advanced the notion that we form our self-concepts by seeing ourselves in a kind of figurative **looking glass**: we learn who we are by interacting with others, much as we look into a mirror and see our reflection.⁵ This is also referred to as **reflected appraisal**. In other words, we develop self concepts that often match or correspond to the ways in which we believe others see us. Like Cooley, George Herbert Mead also believed that our behaviour and our sense of who we are, are a consequence of our relationships with others.⁶ Harry Stack Sullivan theorized that from birth to death, our self changes primarily because of how people respond to us.⁷

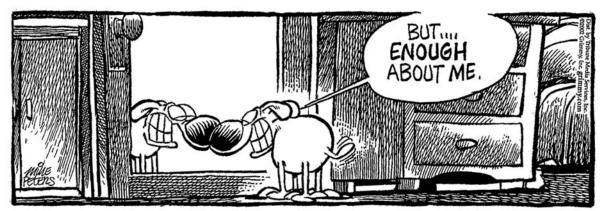
The process begins at birth. Our names, one of the primary ways we identify ourselves, are given to us by someone else. During the early years of our lives, our parents are the key individuals who shape who we are. If our parents encouraged us to play the piano, we probably play now. As we become less dependent on our parents, our friends become highly influential in shaping our attitudes, beliefs, and values. Friends continue to provide feedback on how well we perform certain tasks. This, in turn, helps us shape our sense of identity as adults—we must acknowledge our talents in math, language, or art in our own minds before we can say that we are mathematicians, linguists, or artists.

Fortunately, not every comment affects our sense of who we think we are or our own self-worth. We are likely to incorporate the comments of others into our self-concept under three conditions:

First, we are more likely to believe another's statement if he or she repeats something we have heard several times. If one person casually tells us we have a talent for singing, we are not likely to launch a search for an agent and a recording contract. However, if several individuals tell us on many different occasions that we have a talent for singing, we may decide to do something about it.

looking-glass. Concept that suggests you learn who you are based on your interactions with others, which are reflected back to you.

reflected appraisal. Another term for the looking-glass self. You learn who you are based on how others treat you.



MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM—Grimmy Inc. King Features

- Second, we are more likely to value another's statements if he or she has already earned our confidence. If we believe the individual is competent, trustworthy, and qualified to make a judgment about us, then we are more likely to believe it. You would be more likely to think you were a talented singer if you heard it from singing star Céline Dion rather than your Aunt Sally. Again, while we are very young, our parents are the dominant voices of credibility and authority. If they tell us repeatedly that we are spoiled and sloppy, then we will probably come to view ourselves that way. If they tell us we are loving, gifted, and charming, we are likely to believe it.
- Third, we are likely to incorporate another's comments into our own concept of self if the comments are consistent with other comments and our own experience.
 If your boss tells you that you work too slowly, but for years people have been urging you to slow down, then your previous experience will probably encourage you to challenge your boss's evaluation.

Association with Groups

Reflect once more on your responses to the "Who are you?" question. How many responses associate you with a group? Religious groups, political groups, ethnic groups, social groups, study groups, and occupational and professional groups play important roles in determining our self-concept. Some of these groups we are born into; others we choose on our own. Either way, these group associations are significant parts of our identities. In the *In Canada* box, you will find the compelling true story of Ian Stewart, a Canadian journalist, who describes being shot while on the job. Still seeing himself as a writer and a journalist, he felt the need to document the tragic events and his slow recovery.

Associating with groups is especially important for people who are not part of the dominant culture. Some gays and lesbians, for example, may find the support provided by associating with other gays and lesbians to be beneficial to their well-being. The groups you associate with provide not only information about your identity but also needed social support.

Roles We Assume

Look again at your answers to the "Who are you?" question. Perhaps you see words or phrases that signify a role you often assume. Father, aunt, sister, uncle, manager, salesperson, teacher, and student are labels that imply certain expectations for behaviour, and they are important in shaping self-concept. Couples who live together before they

marry often report that marriage alters their relationship. Before, they may have shared domestic duties, such as doing dishes and laundry. However, when they assume the labels of "husband" and "wife," they may slip into traditional roles. Husbands don't do laundry. Wives don't mow the grass. These stereotypical role expectations that they



In Canada...



A Long Journey Home

hese are a few excerpts from the story of Ian Stewart, a Canadian journalist who was shot on January 9, 1999, while covering a civil war in Africa. His award-winning story from November 24, 1999, is the account of his courageous struggle back toward health after being shot in the head.

I floated in a grey fog illuminated by the flickering of fluorescent lights. Someone was calling my name over and over, but the voice sounded far away. Blurry faces hovered over me. Shadows, then gone . . .

Wavering on that boundary between sleep and awareness, I couldn't lift my head from the pillow . . . Something was awfully wrong. Why couldn't I feel my leg?

Weeks drifted by. The mist that had enshrouded my brain began to lift. Destruction and death haunted my hospital dreams. Silhouettes of palm trees swayed against a cobalt sky streaked red and yellow by tracer bullets. Waking hours were no better. Lying on rubber sheets, I struggled to stop the walls as they spun by.

Adding to the torment, I have never been able to remember what happened when we were shot. With no recollection of the most cataclysmic moment of my life, each day is a battle against the incomprehensible.

Of course, I have been told how it happened. Our station wagon turned a corner and came upon five armed men in American-style jeans and flip-flops.

Oddly, one was wearing a bowler hat. He raised his automatic rifle and fired a burst. Our escort returned fire, killing the shooter and another rebel. It was over in seconds. David had been cut by flying glass. I had been shot in the head. Myles had been killed instantly, the 24th AP journalist to die in the line of duty in the organization's 151 years . . .

Over the next several hours, David and AP Abidjan correspondent Tim Sullivan (now bureau chief) saved my life, pleading and cajoling my way onto a succession of airplanes that would hop across Africa and on to England and modern medical care. It was late Monday night by the time I was carried into London's Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. With the dirty field dressing still around my head, I was wheeled past a shocked couple who had just rushed from Toronto . . .

I can't say when I began to realize the gravity of my wound. Because of the very nature of a brain injury, patients often find it hard to understand and almost impossible to accept. The consequences of my injury were almost entirely physical. My left arm and hand were paralysed, my left leg impaired . . .

But there were other complications. For days, I struggled just to understand where I was . . . My brain was a crystal goblet shattered into a million slivers of fading dreams and dashed hopes. I have been piecing it back together, one sliver at a time . . . Ten weeks after the shooting, I returned to my parents'

home on Toronto's Lake Ontario waterfront.

For months I have struggled to adjust to life with a disability. I don't ever want to forget even the smallest detail of this experience. Two months after returning to Toronto, I have improved enough to walk with a cane. On June 3, a Thursday, I walk into a medical supply centre to return my wheelchair.

Once I was an athlete, a football player. Now I shuffle a few yards, stop to catch my breath, sit for a spell. As a wire service reporter, I used to whip out several stories a day. Now I spend months on this one, pecking at the keys with my one good hand. My therapist says that in time, my left arm will regain some function. How much is impossible to say . . .

Myles, David, and I were naive to hope our reporting could make people care about a little war in Africa. In fact, Freetown might never have made your daily newspaper had it not been for the death of one western journalist and wounding of another.

Will I continue to work as a journalist when I am well enough to work? Yes, and most likely I'll go back overseas.

Will I risk my life for a story again? No. Not even if the world cares next time.

Source: Ian Stewart, "A Long Journey Home." November 24, 1999, www.apme. com/writing_awards/stewart_story.html. Used with permission of The Canadian Press.

Chapter 2 Interpersonal Communication and Self



n North American culture, it is often accepted, or even encouraged, for boys to exhibit rough-and-tumble, aggressive behaviour when they interact with one another.

(Tony Freeman/PhotoEdit)

learned long ago may require extensive discussion and negotiation. Couples who report the highest satisfaction with marriage agree on their expectations regarding roles ("We agree that I'll do laundry and you'll mow the grass").⁸

One reason we assume traditional roles automatically is that our gender group asserts a powerful influence from birth on. As soon as parents know the sex of their child, many begin placing their children in the group by following cultural rules. They may paint the nursery pink for a girl, blue for a boy. Boys may get a catcher's mitt, a train set, or a hockey stick for their birthdays; girls may get dolls, frilly dresses, and tea sets. These cultural conventions and expectations play a major role in shaping our self-concept and our behaviour.

Although it is changing, North American culture is still male-dominated. What we consider appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is often different for males and females. In group and team meetings, for example, task-oriented, male-dominated roles are valued more than feminine, relationship-building roles. We often applaud fathers who work 60 hours a week as "diligent and hard-working" but criticize mothers who do the same as "neglectful and selfish." Although this kind of example is becoming outdated as society slowly changes, it can still be observed in many workplaces.

Although our culture defines certain roles as masculine or feminine, we still exercise individual choices about our gender roles. One researcher developed an inventory designed to assess whether you play traditional masculine, feminine, or androgynous roles. ¹⁰ Because an **androgynous role** is both masculine and feminine, this role encompasses a greater repertoire of actions and behaviours.

Self-Labels

Although our self-concept is deeply affected by others, we are not blank slates for them to write on. The labels we use to describe our own attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions also play a role in shaping our self-concept.

androgynous role. A gender role that includes both masculine and feminine qualities.

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Part 1 Foundations of Interpersonal Communication



Applying Theory and Research



Symbolic Interaction Theory

We defined human communication as the way we make sense of the world and share that sense with others by creating meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages. Symbolic interaction theory is based on the assumption that we each make sense of the world based on our interactions with others. We interpret what a word, symbol, or experience means based, in part, on how other people react to our use of words and symbols. Even our own understanding of who we think we are (our self-concept) is influenced by who others tell us we are. Central to understanding ourselves is understanding the importance of other people in shaping our self-understanding. Symbolic interaction theory has had a major influence on communication theory because of the pervasive way our communication with others influences our attitudes, beliefs, values, and self-concept.

George Herbert Mead is credited with the development of symbolic interaction theory, although Mead did not write extensively about his theory. One of Mead's students, Herbert

Blumer, actually coined the term "symbolic interaction" to describe the process through which our interactions with others influence our thoughts about others, our life experiences, and ourselves. Mead believed that we cannot have a concept of our own self-identity without interactions with other people.

Applying the Research to Your Life

Symbolic interaction theory suggests that you make sense out of your world and your life experiences based on the influence of your family, friends, and other people with whom you communicate. Because of the far-reaching influence of others on your life, it's sometimes hard to be consciously aware of how other people shape your thoughts about yourself and others. Consider the following questions to explore how other people have shaped your un-derstanding of your self-concept and attitudes you hold.

- How have other people helped shape your own sense of your skills and talents? Identify specific people and recall things they have said to you that have either reinforced or contradicted your understanding of your own abilities and skills.
- 2. How do you and your friends and family members talk about your attitudes toward the college or university you now attend? How do other people, especially your family and friends, describe your school, either positively or negatively? How do their comments influence your own attitudes about your school?
- 3. Has your own concept of who you are undergone dramatic changes? What role did the comments and expressed attitudes of your family, friends, and co-workers have on how you changed your self-concept?

Source: George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

symbolic interaction theory.

The theory that people make sense of the world on the basis of their interactions with other people.

self-reflexiveness. The human ability to think about what we are doing while we are doing it.

Where do we acquire our labels? One way that we label ourselves is through a process of **self-reflexiveness**. We interpret what we experience; we are self-reflexive. Self-reflexiveness is the human ability to think about what we are doing while we are doing it. We talk to ourselves about ourselves. We are both participants and observers in all that we do. This dual role encourages us to use labels to describe who we are

When you were younger, perhaps you dreamed of becoming an NHL hockey player or a movie star. Your coach or your teacher may have told you that you were a great player or a terrific actor, but as you matured, you probably began observing yourself more critically. You scored no goals; you did not get the starring role in local theatre productions. So you self-reflexively decided that you were not, deep down, a hockey player or an actor, even though others may have labelled you as "talented." However, sometimes, through this self-observation, we discover strengths that encourage us to assume new labels. A woman we know never thought of herself as "heroic" until she went through 72 hours of labour before giving birth and then nursed her baby right after delivery.

🧩 Your Personality

The concept of personality is central to **psychology**, the study of how our thinking influences how we behave. According to psychologist Lester Lefton, your **personality** consists of a set of enduring internal predispositions and behavioural characteristics that, together, describe how you react to your environment.¹¹ Understanding the forces that shape your personality is central to increasing your awareness of your self-concept and how you relate to

others. * Explore on mydevelopmentlab

Does nature or nurture play the predominant role in your personality? As we noted in Chapter 1, the **communibiological approach** to communication suggests that genetic makeup is a major factor affecting how people communicate with others. Others argue that although it's true that communication behaviour is influenced by genes, we should not forget that humans can learn to adjust and adapt. ¹³

One personality characteristic that communication researchers have spent considerable time studying is comfort or discomfort with interactions with other people. Some people just don't like talking with others. 14 In interpersonal communication situations, we may say someone is shy. Shyness is the behavioural tendency not to talk with others. One study found that about 40 percent of adults reported they were shy. 15 In public-speaking situations, we say a person has stage fright; a better term to describe this feeling is "communication apprehension." Communication apprehension, according to communication experts James McCroskey and Virginia Richmond, is "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." One study found that up to 80 percent of the population experiences some degree of nervousness or apprehension when they speak in public. ¹⁷ Another study found that about 20 percent of people are considerably anxious when they give a speech. 18 What makes some people apprehensive about communicating with others? Again, we get back to the nature-nurture issue. Heredity plays an important role in whether you are going to feel nervous or anxious when communicating with someone else. However, so does whether you were reinforced for talking with others as a child, as well as other experiences that are part of your culture and learning.

Your overall **willingness to communicate** with others is a general way of summarizing the shyness or apprehension that you feel when talking with others in a variety of situations, including interpersonal conversations. If you are unwilling to communicate with others, you will be less comfortable in a career that forces you to interact with others.

Understanding the factors that influence your self-concept—such as your interactions with individuals and groups, the roles you assume, your self-labels, and your personality, including your overall comfort level in communicating with others—can help you understand who you are and why you interact (or don't interact) with others. However, it's not only who you are that influences your communication; your overall sense of self-esteem or self-worth also affects how you express yourself and respond to others.



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psychology. Study of how thinking influences behaviour.

personality. Set of enduring internal predispositions and behavioural characteristics that, as a whole, describes how people react to their environment.

communibiological approach. Perspective that suggests that genetic and biological influences play a major role in influencing communication behaviour.

shyness. Tendency not to talk or interact with other people. A discomfort or inhibition in interpersonal situations that interferes with the pursuit of goals.

communication apprehension. Fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with other people.

willingness to communicate. General characteristic that describes an individual's tendency to be shy or apprehensive about communicating with others.

Interpersonal Communication and Emotion Connecting Heart to Heart

Self and Emotion: How We Influence How We Feel

n Chapter 1, we defined an emotion as a biological, cognitive, behavioural, and subjective affective reaction to an event. Emotions are reactions to what we experience. What continues to be debated is the specific sequence of events that results in an emotional response. Are we in control of our emotions, or do our emotions control us? We present three different theories that describe the chain of events that cause us to experience emotions.

Commonsense Theory of Emotion: Emotions Happen

The commonsense approach is so named because it seems to be a description of the way many people would describe how emotions occur. The commonsense theory, shown in Figure 2.2, suggests the following order of emotional experience: (1) Something happens, (2) you have an affective reaction to the event (you feel sad or happy), and finally, (3) you respond physiologically by blushing, experiencing an increased heart rate, or having another biological reaction to your emotion. Here's an example: (1) You meet your new boss for the first time, (2) you feel nervous, and

(3) your heart rate increases and you begin to perspire. This sequence is typically the way many people think about emotions occurring—emotions just happen, and we really have no choice in how we feel. But there are other theories about what causes emotions.

James-Lange Theory of Emotion: Physiological Response Determines Emotional Response

Another theory, developed by psychologists William James and Carl Lange, is

called the James-Lange theory of emotions. Note the difference in the sequence of events in this theory in Figure 2.3: (1) Something happens, (2) you respond physiologically, and then (3) you experience an emotion. This theory suggests that we respond physiologically *before* we experience an emotion. The physiological responses tell us whether or not to experience an emotion. When you meet your new boss, you begin to perspire, and your heart starts beating more

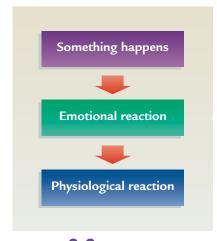


FIGURE **2.2**Commonsense Theory of Emotion

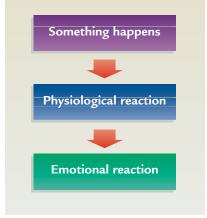


FIGURE **2.3**James-Lange Theory of Emotion

Self-Esteem: Your Self-Worth

self-esteem (self-worth). Your evaluation of your worth or value as reflected in your perception of such things as your skills, abilities, talents, and appearance

social comparison. Process of comparing yourself to others who are similar to you to measure your worth and value.

Your self-esteem is closely related to your self-concept. Through your self-concept, you describe who you are. Through your self-esteem (self-worth), you evaluate who you are. The term "self-worth" is often used interchangeably with "self-esteem." There is evidence that your overall feeling of self-worth is related to feeling and expressing positive messages toward others as well as being supportive of other people. You feel better about yourself if you behave in ways that researchers call being prosocial, which means your behaviours benefit others.

People derive their sense of self-worth from comparing themselves to others, a process called social comparison. **Social comparison** helps people measure how well



rapidly; this, in turn, causes you to feel nervous.

Appraisal Theory of Emotions: Labels Determine What Emotions Are Experienced

Yet a third view suggests that you are more in control of your emotions than you might think. You can change the emotion you are feeling by the way you decide to label or describe your experiences to yourself. This theory is called the appraisal theory, which means we appraise and label what we feel: the labels we use to describe what we experience have a major effect on what we feel as an emotional response.3 Here is the suspected sequence in this theory: (1) Something happens, (2) you respond physiologically, (3) you decide how you will react to what is happening to you, and then (4) you experience the emotion (see Figure 2.4). Do you see the difference in this last approach? It suggests that you have control over how you feel, based in part on what you tell yourself about what you are experiencing.

According to the appraisal theory of emotions, you actively participate in determining what emotion you

experience by labelling your experiences. For example, (1) you meet your new boss, (2) your heart rate increases and you start to perspire, (3) you tell yourself that this is an important and fear-inducing event, so (4) you feel nervous



FIGURE **2.4**Appraisal Theory of Emotion

and anxious. Or you could tell yourself, "This is no big deal," and not feel nervous but look forward to meeting your new boss.

Although researchers continue to debate precisely how events trigger our emotions, we know that our emotional reaction to what we experience has a profound impact on how we relate to others.

Notes:

- W. Gerrod Parrott, "The Nature of Emotion," in Emotion and Motivation, ed. M. B. Brewer and M. Hewston (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 6; R. A. Baron, B. Earhard, and M. Ozier, Psychology (Toronto: Pearson Education, 2001).
- See W. James, "What Is an Emotion?"
 Mind, 9 (1884): 188-205; B. Parkinson, A. H. Fischer, and A. S. R.
 Manstead, Emotion in Social Relations:
 Cultural, Group, and Interpersonal
 Processes (New York: Psychology Press, 2004).
- 3. S. Schacter and J. E. Singer, "Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional States," *Psychological Review*, 69 (1962): 379–99.

they think they are doing compared to others. I'm good at playing soccer (because I beat others); I can't cook (because others cook better than I do); I'm not good at meeting people (most people I know seem to be more comfortable interacting with others); I'm not handy (but my brothers and sisters can fix a leaky faucet). Each of these statements implies a judgment about how well or badly you can perform certain tasks, with implied references to how well others perform the same tasks. A belief that you cannot fix a leaky faucet or cook like a chef may not in itself lower your self-esteem. But if there are several things you can't do well or many important tasks that you cannot seem to master, these shortcomings may begin to colour your overall sense of worth.

Psychologist Eric Berne developed the concept of a **life position** to describe our overall sense of our own worth and that of others. ²⁰ He identified four life positions: (1) "I'm OK, you're OK," or positive regard for self and others; (2) "I'm OK, you're not

life position. Your feeling of being either "OK" or "not OK" as reflected in your sense of worth and self-esteem.



face. A person's positive perception of himself or herself in interactions with others.

facework. Using communication to maintain your own positive self-perception (self-face) or to support, reinforce, or challenge someone else's self-perception (other-face).

Positive self-talk can help us focus on our own goals and improve our performance levels even when the goals seem insurmountable.

(Canadian Cancer Society)



OK," or positive regard for self and low regard for others; (3) "I'm not OK, you're OK," or low self-regard and positive regard for others; and (4) "I'm not OK, you're not OK," or low regard for both self and others. Your life position is a driving force in your relationships with others. People in the "I'm OK, you're OK" position have the best chance for healthy relationships because they have discovered their own talents and also recognize that others have been given talents different from their own.

Another way communication researchers talk about being "OK" is by referring to what is called "face." Face is a person's positive perception of himself or herself in interactions with others. ²¹ Facework is the use of communication to maintain one's own positive self-perception (self-face) or to support, reinforce, or even challenge someone else's self-perception (other-face). ²² You are involved in facework, for example, when you announce to your parents that you made the dean's list during your most recent semester in college. By telling them about your academic success, you're using communication to maintain your parents' positive image of you and thus reinforce your own positive self-image. The effort you expend to save face (protect your positive image) reflects the kind of perception you want others to have of you.

mproving Your Self-Esteem

We have already seen how low self-esteem can affect our own communication and interactions. In recent years, teachers, psychologists, ministers, rabbis, social workers, and even politicians have suggested that many of our societal problems stem from

our collective feelings of low self-esteem. Our feelings of low self-worth may contribute to our choosing the wrong partners; to becoming dependent on drugs, alcohol, or other substances; and to experiencing problems with eating and other vital activities. We owe it to society, as well as to ourselves, to maintain or develop a healthy sense of self-esteem.

Although no simple list of tricks can easily transform low self-esteem into feelings of being valued and appreciated, you can make improvements in the ways you think about yourself and interact with others. We'll explore seven proven techniques that have helped others.

Practise Positive Self-Talk

Cycling champion Lance Armstrong is also a cancer survivor. When he got sick, he told a friend, "Cancer picked the wrong guy. When it looked around for a body to hang out in, it made a big mistake when it chose mine. Big mistake." The positive self-talk reflected in his words undoubtedly helped Armstrong to overcome the challenge of cancer and go on to

win the Tour de France several times. Every Canadian knows only too well the story of Terry Fox and his battle with the cancer that ended his young life. Through it all, he remained upbeat, and his positive attitude enabled him to run an equivalent to a marathon every day for 143 days. He has been described as Canada's true hero.²⁴

Intrapersonal communication is communication within one's own mind—self-talk. Realistic, positive self-talk can have a reassuring effect on your level of self-worth and on your interactions with others. Conversely, repeating negative messages about your lack of skill and ability can keep you from trying and achieving.

Of course, blind faith without hard work won't succeed. Self-talk is not a substitute for effort; it can, however, keep you on track and help you, ultimately, to achieve your goal.

Visualize a Positive Image of Yourself

Visualization takes the notion of self-talk one step further. Besides just telling your-self that you can achieve your goal, you can actually try to "see" yourself conversing effectively with others, performing well on a project, or emphasizing some other desirable behaviour. Recent research suggests that an apprehensive public speaker can manage his or her fears not only by developing skill in public speaking but also by visualizing positive results when speaking to an audience. ²⁵ If, for example, you tend to get nervous when meeting people at a party, imagine yourself in a room full of people, glibly introducing yourself to others with ease. Visualizing yourself performing well can yield positive results in changing long-standing feelings of inadequacy. Of course, your visualization should be realistic and coupled with a plan to achieve your goal.

Avoid Comparing Yourself with Others

Even before we are born, we are compared with others. The latest medical technology lets us see sonograms of fetuses still in the womb, so parents may begin comparing children with their siblings or other babies before birth. For the rest of our lives we are compared with others, and, rather than celebrating our uniqueness, comparisons usu-

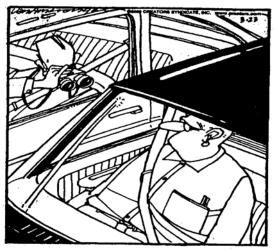
ally point out who is bigger, brighter, and more beautiful. Most of us have had the experience of being chosen last to play on a sports team, being passed over for promotion, or standing unasked against the wall at a dance.

In North American culture, we may be tempted to judge our self-worth by our material possessions and personal appearance. If we know someone who has a newer car (or simply a car, if we rely on public transportation), a smaller waistline, or a higher grade point average, we may feel diminished. Comparisons such as "He has more money than I have," or "She looks better than I look" are likely to deflate our self-worth.

Rather than focusing on others who are seemingly better off, focus on the unique attributes that make you who you are. Avoid judging your own value in comparison with that of others. A healthy, positive self-concept is fuelled not by judgments of others but by a genuine sense of worth that we recognize in ourselves.

intrapersonal communication. Communication within one's own mind, including self-talk.

visualization. A technique of imagining that you are performing a particular task in a certain way. Positive visualization can enhance your self-esteem.



Michael continually measures himself against others.

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Reframe Appropriately

Reframing is the process of redefining events and experiences from a different point of view. Just as reframing a work of art can give the painting a whole new look, reframing events that cause us to devalue our self-worth can change our perspective. Research suggests that in times of family stress, individuals who are able to engage in self-talk and describe the event from someone else's perspective manage stress more successfully. If, for example, you get a report from your supervisor that says you should improve one area of your performance, instead of listening to the self-talk that says you're bad at your job, reframe the event within a larger context: tell yourself that one negative comment does not mean you are hopeless as a worker.

Of course, all negative experiences should not be lightly tossed off and left unexamined because you can learn and profit from your mistakes. However, it is important to remember that our worth as human beings is not contingent on a single letter grade, a single response from a prospective employer, or a single play in a football game.

Develop Honest Relationships

Having at least one other person who can help you objectively and honestly reflect on your virtues and vices can be extremely beneficial in fostering a healthy, positive self-image. As we noted earlier, other people play a major role in shaping our self-concept and self-esteem. The more credible the source of information, the more likely we are to believe it. Later in the chapter, we discuss how honest relationships are developed through the process of self-disclosure. Honest, positive support can provide encouragement for a lifetime.

Let Go of the Past

Your self-concept is not a fixed construct. Nor was it implanted at birth to remain constant for the rest of your life. Things change. You change. Others change. Individuals with low self-esteem may be locking on to events and experiences that happened years ago and tenaciously refusing to let go of them. Someone wrote, "The lightning bug is brilliant, but it hasn't much of a mind; it blunders through existence with its headlight on behind." Looking back at what we can't change only reinforces a sense of helplessness. Constantly replaying negative experiences in our mental DVD player only serves to make our sense of worth more difficult to change. Becoming aware of the changes that have occurred, and can occur, in your life can assist you in developing a more realistic assessment of your value.

reframing. The process of redefining events and experiences from a different point of view.

social support. Expression of empathy and concern for others that is communicated while listening to them and offering positive and encouraging words.

talk therapy. Technique in which a person describes his or her problems and concerns to a skilled listener in order to better understand the emotions and issues that are creating the problems.

Seek Support

You provide **social support** when you express care and concern as well as listen and empathize with others. Perhaps you just call it "talking with a friend." Having someone be socially supportive is especially important to us when we experience stress and anxiety or are faced with a vexing personal problem.²⁶

Social support from a friend or family member can be helpful, but some of your self-image problems may be so ingrained that you need professional help. A trained counsellor, clergy member, or therapist can help you sort through them. The technique of having a trained person listen as you verbalize your fears, hopes, and concerns is called **talk therapy**. You talk, and a skilled listener helps you sort out your feelings and problems. There is power in being able to put your thoughts, especially your negative thoughts and emotions, into words. By saying things out loud to an open, honest, empathetic listener, we gain insight and can sometimes figure out why we experience

the hurts and difficulties that we do. If you are not sure to whom to turn for a referral, you can start with your school counselling services. Or, if you are near a medical-school teaching hospital, you can contact the counselling or psychotherapy office there for a referral.

Because you have spent your whole lifetime developing your self-esteem, it is not easy to make big changes. However, as we have seen, talking through our problems can make a difference. As communication researchers Frank E. Dance and Carl Larson see it, "Speech communication empowers each of us to share in the development of our own self-concept and the fulfillment of that self-concept."



Strategies for Improving Your Self Esteem

Engage in positive self-talk	If you're having a bad hair day, tell yourself that you have beautiful eyes and lots of friends who like you anyway.
Visualize	If you feel nervous before a meeting, visualize everyone in the room congratulating you on your great ideas.
Avoid comparisons	Focus on what you can do to enhance your own talents and abilities.
Reframe appropriately	If you experience one failure, keep the larger picture in mind rather than focusing on that isolated incident.
Develop honest relationships	Cultivate friends in whom you can confide and who will give you honest feedback for improving your skills and abilities.
Let go of the past	Try not to dwell on negative experiences in your past; instead focus on ways to enhance your abilities in the future.
Seek support	Talk with professional counsellors who can help you identify your gifts and talents.

ow Self-Concept and Self-Esteem Affect Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

Your self-concept and self-esteem act as filters in every interaction with others. They determine how you approach, respond to, and interpret messages. Specifically, your self-concept and self-esteem affect your ability to be sensitive to others, your self-fulfilling prophecies, your interpretation of messages, your own social needs, and your typical communication style.

Self and Others

We have suggested the importance of becoming other-oriented—being sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others—as a requisite for developing quality interpersonal relationships with others. The process of becoming other-oriented begins with **social decentring**: consciously thinking about another person's thoughts and feelings. However, before you begin to decentre (to try to understand another person from another perspective) it is important for you to feel centred—to know yourself and to understand how others see you.

social decentring. Cognitive process in which you take into account another person's thoughts, feelings, values, background, and perspective.

PEANUTS



Becoming other-oriented involves recognizing that your self is different from that of others. As the *Peanuts* cartoon reminds us, the world does not revolve around our solitary selves. Others influence our actions and our self-image. George Herbert Mead suggests that we develop an "I," which is based on our own perspective of ourselves, and a "Me," which is an image of ourselves based upon the collective responses we receive and interpret from others. Being aware of how your concept of self ("I") differs from the perceptions others have of you ("Me") is an important first step in developing an other-orientation.

When we begin the social-decentring process, we often interpret our observations of others by using our own selves as a frame of reference, especially if we do not know the other person well.²⁸ For example, if you are nervous and frightened when you have to take a test, you might assume that your friend feels the same way. You may need to remind yourself that the other person is separate from you and has a different set of responses.

When you use a **specific-other perspective**, you rely on information that you have observed or that you can imagine about a particular person to predict his or her reactions. If, for example, you know first-hand that your sister hates it when someone eats off her plate during dinner, you may use that experience to conclude that she would dislike sharing a bag of popcorn at the movies.

Sometimes a **generalized-other perspective** will be more useful. When you decentre, you can apply knowledge and personal theories that you have about people in general or about specific subgroups to the person with whom you are interacting. For example, you might think that your economics professor, who holds a Ph.D., would prefer to be addressed as Professor rather than as Mister because almost all of your other professors with doctorates prefer to be called Professor.

Your ability to predict how others will respond to you is based on your ability to understand how your sense of the world is similar to, and different from, theirs. First you must know yourself well. Then you can know and understand others. The best way to improve your ability to decentre is to notice how others respond when you act on the predictions and assumptions you have made about them. You may discover that you have not moved out of your own frame of reference enough to make an accurate prediction about another person.

specific-other perspective. The process of relying on observed or imagined information about another person to predict that person's behaviour.

generalized-other perspective. The process of relying on ob-

served or imagined information about many people or people in general to predict a person's behaviour.

self-fulfilling prophecy. The notion that predictions about your future actions are likely to come true because you believe that they will come true.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

What people believe about themselves often comes true because they expect it to come true. Their expectations become a **self-fulfilling prophecy**. If you think you will fail the math quiz because you have labelled yourself inept at math, then you must overcome

not only your math deficiency but your low expectations of yourself. Research suggests that you can create your own obstacles to achieving your goals by being too critical of yourself.²⁹ Or you can increase your chances for success by having a more positive mindset.³⁰ Your attitudes, beliefs, and general expectations about your performance have a powerful and profound effect on your behaviour.

The medical profession is learning the power that attitudes and expectations have over healing. Physician Howard Brody's research suggests that in many instances, just giving patients a placebo—a pill with no medicine in it—or telling patients that they have been operated on when they haven't had an operation can yield positive medical results. In his book *The Placebo Response*, Dr. Brody tells of a woman with debilitating Parkinson's disease who made a miraculous recovery; her only treatment was the doctors' telling her that they had completed a medical procedure. They hadn't. Before the "treatment," she could barely walk; after it, she could easily pace around the room. There is a clear link, suggests Dr. Brody, between mental state and physical health. Patients who believe they will improve are more likely to improve.

Self and Interpretation of Messages

Do you remember Eeyore, the donkey from the stories about Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends? Eeyore lived in the gloomiest part of the Hundred Acre Wood and had a self-image to match. In one story, which used to be a favourite of the son of one of the authors, all of the animals congregate on a stormy night to check on Eeyore:

... they all came to the part of the forest known as Eeyore's gloomy place. On this stormy night it was terribly gloomy indeed—or it would have been were it not for Christopher Robin. He was there with a big umbrella.

"I've invited Eeyore to come and stay with me until the storm is over," said Christopher Robin.

"If it ever is," said Eeyore, "which doesn't seem likely. Not that anybody asked me, you understand. But then, they hardly ever do." 32

Perhaps you know, or have known, an Eeyore—someone whose low self-esteem colours how he or she interprets messages and interacts with others. According to research, such people are more likely to have the following traits:³³

- They are more sensitive to criticism and negative feedback from others.
- They are more critical of others.
- They believe they are not popular or respected by others.
- They expect to be rejected by others.
- They dislike being observed when performing.
- They feel threatened by people who they feel are superior.
- They expect to lose when competing with others.
- They are overly responsive to praise and compliments.
- They evaluate their overall behaviour as inferior to that of others.

The Pooh stories offer an antidote to Eeyore's gloom in the character of the optimistic Tigger, who assumes that everyone shares his exuberance for life:

... when Owl reached Piglet's house, Tigger was there. He was bouncing on his tail, as Tiggers do, and shouting to Piglet. "Come on," he cried. "You can do it! It's fun!" ³⁴

If, like Tigger, your sense of self-worth is high, research suggests that:

- You will have higher expectations for solving problems.
- You will think more highly of others.
- You will be more likely to accept praise and accolades from others without feeling embarrassed.
- You will be more comfortable having others observe you when you perform.
- You will be more likely to admit you have both strengths and weaknesses.
- You will be more comfortable when you interact with others who view themselves as highly competent.
- You will expect other people to accept you for who you are.
- You will be more likely to seek opportunities to improve skills that need improving.
- You will evaluate your overall behaviour more positively than would people with lower self-esteem.³⁵

Self and Interpersonal Needs

According to social psychologist Will Schutz, our concept of who we are, coupled with our need to interact with others, profoundly influences how we communicate with others. Schutz identifies three primary social needs that affect the degree of communication we have with others: the need for inclusion, the need for control, and the need for affection. The **need for inclusion** suggests that each of us has a need to be included in the activities of others. We all need human contact and fellowship. We need to be invited to join others, and perhaps we need to invite others to join us. The level and intensity of this need differs from person to person, but even loners desire some social contact. Our need to include others and be included in activities may stem, in part, from our concept of ourselves as either a "party person" or a loner.

The second need, the **need for control**, suggests that we also need some degree of influence over the relationships we establish with others. We may also have a need to be controlled because we desire some level of stability and comfort in our interactions with others. If we view ourselves as people who are comfortable being in charge, we are more likely to give orders to others rather than take orders from them.

And finally, we each have a **need for affection**. We need to give and receive love, support, warmth, and intimacy, although the amounts we need vary enormously from person to person. If we have a high need for affection, we will more likely place ourselves in situations where that need can be met. The greater our inclusion, control, and affection needs are, the more likely it is that we will actively seek others as friends and initiate communication with them.

Self and Communication Style

Our self-concept and self-esteem affect not only the way we feel about ourselves, the way we interpret messages, and our personal performance, but also the way we deliver messages and treat other people. Each of us has a **communication style** (or **social style**) that is identifiable by the habitual ways in which we behave toward others. The style we adopt helps others interpret our messages. As they get to know us, other people begin to expect us to behave in a certain way, based upon previous associations with us.

How do we develop our communication style? Many communication researchers, sociologists, and psychologists believe that we have certain underlying traits or personality characteristics that influence how we interact with others. Some scholars believe

need for inclusion. Interpersonal need to be included and to include others in social activities.

need for control. Interpersonal need for some degree of domination in our relationships as well as the need to be controlled.

need for affection. Interpersonal need to give and receive love, personal support, warmth, and intimacy.

communication style (social style). Your consistent way of relating to others based upon your personality, self-concept and self-esteem.

these traits stem from genetics: we are born with certain personality characteristics; we are who we are because that's the way we are made.³⁷ Others emphasize the **social learning approach**: we communicate with others as we do because of our interactions with others, such as our parents and friends. The truth is that we cannot yet explain xactly how we come to communicate as we do.

Even though we don't know the precise role of nature or nurture in determining how we communicate, most inventories of personality or communication style focus on two primary dimensions that underlie how we interact with others—assertiveness and responsiveness. Assertiveness is the tendency to make requests, ask for information, and generally pursue our own rights and best interests. An assertive style is sometimes called a "masculine" style. By masculine, we don't mean that only males can be assertive, but in many cultures, being assertive is synonymous with being masculine. You are assertive when you seek information if you are confused, or direct others to help you get what you need.

Responsiveness is the tendency to be sensitive to the needs of others. Being other-oriented and sympathetic to the pain of others, and placing the feelings of others above your own feelings are examples of being responsive. Researchers sometimes label responsiveness a "feminine" quality. Again, this does not mean that only women are or should be responsive but only that many cultures stereotype being responsive as a traditional behaviour of females.

social learning approach.

Theoretical perspective that suggests the origins of our communication styles lie in what we learn, directly and indirectly, from other people.

assertiveness. Tendency to make requests, ask for information, and generally pursue your own rights and best interests.

responsiveness. Tendency to be sensitive to the needs of others, including being sympathetic to the pain of others and placing the feelings of others above your own feelings.

Building Your Skills

Sociocommunicative Orientation	11. Dominant		
Directions: The following questionnaire lists 20 personality characteristics. Please indicate the degree to which	12. Sincere13. Gentle14. Willing to take a stand15. Warm16. Tender17. Friendly18. Acts as a leader19. Aggressive20. Competitive		
you believe each of these characteristics applies to you, as you normally communicate with others, by marking whether you (5) strongly agree that it applies, (4) agree that it applies, (3) are undecided, (2) disagree that it applies, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; record your first impression. 1. Helpful			
2. Defends own beliefs 3. Independent 4. Responsive to others 5. Forceful 6. Has strong personality 7. Sympathetic 8. Compassionate 9. Assertive	Scoring: Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, and 20 measure assertiveness. Add the scores on these items to get your assertiveness score. Items 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17 measure responsiveness. Add the scores on these items to get your responsiveness score. Scores range from 50 to 10. The higher your score, the higher your orientation as assertive and responsive. Source: James C. McCroskey and Virginia P. Richmond, Fundamentals of Human Communication: An Interpersonal Perspective (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1996), 91.		
10. Sensitive to the needs of others			

Part 1 Foundations of Interpersonal Communication

What is your communication style? To assess your style of communication on the assertiveness and responsiveness dimensions, take the "Sociocommunicative Orientation" test by James McCroskey and Virginia Richmond in the *Building Your Skills* box. You may discover that you test higher in one dimension than in the other. It's also possible to be high on both or low on both. Assertiveness and responsiveness are two different dimensions; you need not have just one or the other.

What many of you will want to know is, "What is the best communication style? Should I be assertive or responsive?" The truth is, there is no one best style for all situations. Sometimes the appropriate thing to do is to assert yourself—to ask or even demand that you receive what you need and have a right to receive. In other situations, it may be more appropriate to be less confrontational. Maintaining the quality of the relationship by simply listening and being thoughtfully responsive to others may be best. The appropriateness of your communication style involves issues we will discuss in future chapters, such as how you adapt to culture and gender differences, your needs, the needs and rights of others, and the goal of your communication.



How Self-Concept and Self-Esteem Affect Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

Term	Definition	Examples
Message interpretation and interaction	Feelings of high or low self-esteem affect how you understand and react to messages.	If you have high self-esteem, you are more likely to accept praise without embarrassment.
Self-fulfilling prophecy	What you believe about yourself will come true because you expect it to come true.	You expect to have a rotten time at a party, and you behave in such a way that you don't enjoy the party.
Communication style	Your self-concept and self-esteem contribute to habitual ways of responding to others.	Your image of yourself influences your expressive or assertive behaviour toward others.

* Self-Disclosure: Connecting Self to Others Through Talk

one important way people develop and revise their self-concept is by receiving other people's reactions to their self-disclosure. Self-disclosure occurs when you purposefully provide information to others about yourself that they would not learn if you did not tell them. People can learn your approximate age, height, and weight by just observing you, but they can't learn your exact age, height, or weight unless you tell them. Self-disclosure ranges from revealing innocuous information about who you are to admitting your deepest fears and most private fantasies. Disclosing personal information not only provides a basis for another person to understand you better, but also conveys your level of trust and acceptance of the other person. Because others self-disclose, you are able to learn information about them and deepen your interpersonal relationships with them. To help explore the relationships among self-concept, self-esteem, and self-disclosure, we will describe how self-disclosure occurs, note how people become aware of who they are through self-disclosure, and identify general characteristics of self-disclosure. Explore on mydevelopmentlab

self-disclosure. Purposefully providing information to others that they would not learn if you did not tell them.

Interpersonal relationships cannot achieve intimacy without self-disclosure. Without true self-disclosure, you form only superficial relationships. You can confirm another person's self-concept, and have your self-concept confirmed, only if both you and your partner have revealed yourselves to each other.

social penetration model.

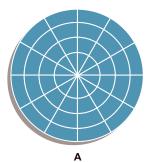
Model of self-disclosure and relational development that reflects both depth and breadth of shared information.

Understanding the Depth and Breadth of Self-Disclosure: The Social Penetration Model of Self-Disclosure

What makes your best friend your best friend? Undoubtedly, one characteristic is that you have shared your most personal information with him or her. You share more personal information over a broader range of topics with people you know well and who know you, than you do with people you know only superficially.

Researchers Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor developed a model called social penetration model that illustrates how much and what kinds of information people reveal in various stages of a relationship. 40 Their model starts with a circle that represents all the potential information about yourself that you could disclose to someone (see Figure 2.5, circle A). This circle is divided into many pieces, like a pie, with each piece representing a particular aspect of self. For instance, some pieces in your pie might relate to athletic activities, religious beliefs, family, school, recreational activities, political interests, and fears. These pie pieces represent the breadth of topics or information available about you.

In addition, the concentric circles in the pie represent the depth of information you could disclose. By depth, we mean how personal or intimate the information is;



Your "self" with all its various dimensions. The pies represent the breadth of your "self," and the rings represent depth.

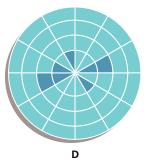


A limited relationship in which one dimension of your "self" has





A relationship with greater breadth than B but with no intimacy.



A highly intimate, close relationship in which there has been extensive breadth and depth of disclosure.

FIGURE 2.5

Social Penetration Models



Understanding Diversity

Cultural Differences in Self-Disclosure

The social penetration model of self-disclosure, as described above, suggests that self-disclosure can be described by both breadth—the number of topics we discuss—and depth—the level of intimacy we establish with others. Do cultural differences affect how much we disclose to one another? Several researchers suggest that the answer is yes. People's cultural backgrounds affect both the kinds of things they reveal and the intimacy of the information about themselves they share with others. Intercultural communication scholar William Gudykunst found that North Americans

are more likely than Japanese to reveal more personal and intimate information about themselves with people whom they consider to be close friends. North Americans were more likely than the Japanese to talk about their sex lives, dating patterns, and love interests, and to reveal their emotions. A researcher investigating Korean communication patterns found that North Americans tend to disclose more than Koreans about their marital status, sexual morality, and use of birth control.² However, Koreans were more likely than North Americans to talk about issues related to education and family rules. What are the larger implications of these studies? Simply this: the amount of self-disclosure that is considered appropriate is learned; the

level of self-disclosure with which we are comfortable varies from culture to culture. Cultural norms influence how much we reveal about our selves.

Notes:

- W. B. Gudykunst and T. Nishida, "Social Penetration in Japanese and American Close Friendships," in Communication Yearbook 7, ed. R. N. Bostrom (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1963), 592-611.
- J. C. Korn, "Friendship Formation and Development in Two Cultures: Universal Constructs in the United States and Korea," in *Interpersonal Communication in Friend and Mate Relationships*, ed. A. M. Nicotera (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 61–78.

telling your friend about your fear of elevators is more intimate than telling someone that your favourite ice cream is homemade vanilla. The smallest circle represents the most personal information. Each of your relationships represents a degree of social penetration, or the extent to which the other person has penetrated your concentric circles (depth) and shared pieces of your pie (breadth). For example, the shading in circle B shows a relationship that involves a high degree of penetration but of only one aspect of self. Perhaps you have a good friend with whom you study and go to the library, but you don't spend much time socializing with your friend; it's all work and no play with this friend. You might have disclosed some personal or intimate information to your friend about your study skills and weaknesses but little about your family, hobbies, political views, or other aspects of who you are.

Your relationships with your instructors probably look a little like circle B, with its limited breadth. In circle C, more pieces of the pie are shaded, but the information is all fairly safe, superficial information about yourself, such as where you went to school, your hometown, or your major. These would be the kind of disclosures associated with a new friendship. Circle D represents almost complete social penetration, the kind achieved in an intimate, well-developed relationship in which a large amount of self-disclosure has occurred.

Understanding How We Learn about Ourselves from Others: The Johari Window Model of Self-Disclosure

To disclose information to others, you must first be aware of who you are. Your **self-awareness** is your understanding of who you are. In addition to just thinking about who you are, asking others for information about yourself and then listening

self-awareness. A person's conscious understanding of who he or she is.

to what they tell you can enhance your self-awareness. There are a variety of personality tests, such as the Myers-Briggs personality inventory, that may give you additional insight into your interests, style, and ways of relating to others. Most colleges and universities have a career services office where you can take vocational aptitude tests to help you identify careers that fit who you are. • Watch on mycommunicationlab

The **Johari Window model** nicely summarizes how your awareness of who you are is influenced by your own level of disclosure, as well as by how much others share information about you with you. (The name "Johari Window" sounds somewhat mystical and exotic, but "Johari" is simply a combination of the first names of the creators of the model, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. As Figure 2.6 shows, the model looks like a window. Like the circles in the social penetration model, the window represents the self. Your self includes everything about you, including

things even you don't yet see or realize. One axis is divided into what you have come to know about yourself and what you don't yet know about who you are. The other axis represents what someone else may know about you and not know about you. The intersection of these categories creates a four-panel, or four-quadrant, window.

Quadrant 1 is an *open* area. The open area contains information that others know about you and that you are also aware of—such as your age, your occupation, and other things you might mention about yourself. At first glance, all four quadrants in the window appear to be the same size, but that may not be the case (in fact, it probably isn't). In the case of quadrant 1, the more you reveal about yourself, the larger this quadrant will be. Put another way, the more you open up to others, the larger the open area will be.

Quadrant 2 is a *blind* area. This part of the window contains information that other people know about you but that you do not know. Perhaps when you were in grade school, someone put a sign on your back that said, "Kick me." Everyone was aware of the sign but you. The blind area of the Johari Window represents much the same situation. For example, you may see yourself as generous, but others may see you as a tightwad. As you learn how others see you, the blind area of the Johari Window gets smaller. Generally, the more accurately you know yourself and perceive how others see you, the better your chances of establishing open and honest relationships with others.

Quadrant 3 is a *hidden area*. This area contains information that you know about yourself but that others do not. You can probably think of many facts, thoughts, feelings, and fantasies that you would not want anyone else to know. They may be feelings you have about another person or something you've done privately in the past that you'd be embarrassed to share with others. The point here is not to suggest you should share all information in the hidden area with others. It is useful to know, however, that part of who you are is known by some people but remains hidden from others.

Quadrant 4 in an *unknown area*. This area contains information that is unknown to both you and others. These are things you do not know about yourself yet. Perhaps you do not know how you will react under certain stressful situations. Maybe you are not sure what stand you will take on a certain issue next year or even next week. Other people may also not be aware of how you would respond or behave under certain conditions. Your personal potential, your untapped physical and mental resources, are unknown. You can assume that this area exists because eventually some (though not necessarily all) of these things become known to you, to others, or to both you and others. Because you can never know yourself completely, the unknown quadrant will always exist; you can only guess at its current size because the information it contains is unavailable to you.

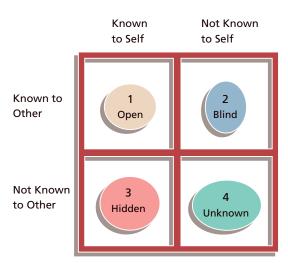


FIGURE 2.6

The Johari Window

Johari Window model. Model of self-disclosure that reflects the movement of infor-

mation about yourself from Blind and Unknown quadrants to Hidden and Open ones.

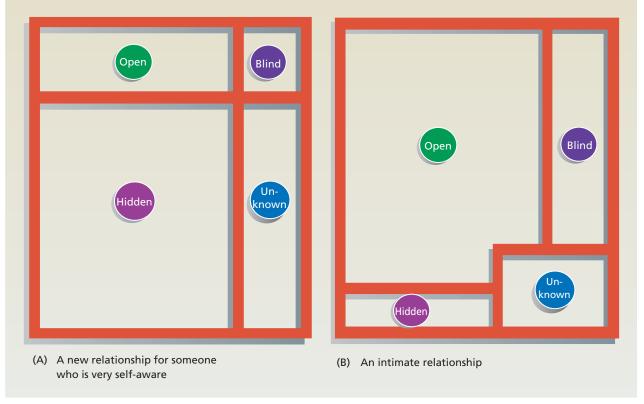


FIGURE 2.7

Variations on Johari Windows

As we did with the social penetration model, we can draw Johari Windows to represent each of our relationships (see Figure 2.7). Window A shows a new or restricted relationship for someone who knows himself or herself very well. The open and blind quadrants are small, but the unknown quadrant is also small. Window B shows a very intimate relationship, in which both individuals are open and disclosing.

We've discussed what self-disclosure is and described two models that explain how self-disclosure works and affects your understanding of who you think you are. Next we will describe characteristics of self-disclosure and discuss how disclosure, both appropriate and inappropriate, can affect our interpersonal relationships with others.

Characteristics of Self-Disclosure

ave you had the experience of meeting someone who told you more than you wanted to know about him- or herself? Although self-disclosure is a means of establishing relationships with others, revealing too much too soon or making the disclosure only a one-way stream of revelatory information violates self-disclosure norms for most North Americans. It is by revealing who we are in the normal course of conversations that others come to know us and (we often hope) grow to like us. 42

Researchers have found that we self-disclose in predictable ways. For example, there is some evidence that women are slightly more likely to self-disclose than are men. 43 The following discussion describes other characteristics of appropriate selfdisclosure.







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Self-Disclosure Usually Moves in Small Increments

Most people usually reveal information about themselves a little bit at a time, rather than delivering a condensed version of their autobiography all at once. Monitor your own self-disclosure. Are you revealing information at a greater depth sooner than you should? If you do, others may find your disclosure disquieting. Appropriate self-disclosure should be well timed to suit the occasion and the expectations of the individuals involved.

Communication privacy management theory suggests that each of us has our own boundaries and rules for sharing personal information—that is, we manage our own degree of privacy. We typically don't share all that we know about ourselves to most people when we first meet them. When we do start sharing information, we offer smaller bits and pieces, rather than revealing our entire life story to someone. Communication privacy management theory suggests that we each have individual rules about how much private information we share and with whom we share that information. What determines how much information we share with others? According to communication privacy management theory, our cultural background, our need to connect to others, and the amount of risk involved in sharing information (whether the information would embarrass us or others) are factors that determine how much and how quickly we share information about our personal lives with others. 45

Self-Disclosure Moves from Less Personal to More Personal Information

As the social penetration model illustrates, we can describe the depth of our self-disclosure by the intimacy level of the information we share. If we move too quickly to more intimate information before we've developed a history with someone, we violate social norms or expectations our partner may have. John Powell, author of *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* notes that the information we reveal about ourselves often progresses through the following predictable levels:⁴⁶

Level 5: *Cliché communication.* We first establish verbal contact with others by saying something that lets the other person know we acknowledge his or her presence. Standard phrases such as "Hello" or "Hi, how are you?" or the more contemporary "What's up?" signal the desire to initiate a relationship, even if it is a brief, superficial one.

Level 4: Facts and biographical information. After using cliché phrases and responses to establish contact, we typically next reveal non-threatening information about ourselves, such as our names, hometowns, or majors.

communication privacy management theory. Theory that suggests that we each manage our own degree of privacy by means of personal boundaries and rules for sharing information.

Level 3: Attitudes and personal ideas. After noting our name and other basic information, we often begin sharing more personal information such as our attitudes about work or school, or other relatively safe topics. At this level, the information is not too threatening or revealing, but we do begin to talk about our likes and dislikes or about what we assume are non-controversial topics.

Level 2: *Personal feelings.* At this level, we discuss topics and issues that are exceedingly more personal. After we've developed rapport with someone, we then share more intimate fears, secrets, and attitudes. Increasingly, we take risks when we share this information. It requires trust to share these personal feelings.

Level 1: *Peak communication.* Powell calls this the ultimate level of self-disclosure that is seldom reached; his other name for level 1 communication is "gut level" communication. Only with our most intimate friends do we reveal such personal information, and it's possible, says Powell, that we may not reach this level of intimacy with our life partners, parents, or children. Peak communication is rare because of the risk and trust involved in being so open and revealing.

Self-Disclosure Is Reciprocal

In mainstream North American culture, when people share information about themselves, they expect their communication partners to share similar information about themselves. If you introduce yourself by name to someone, you expect that person to respond by telling you his or her name. This cultural rule allows people to use disclosure as a strategy for gaining information and reducing uncertainty. The reciprocal nature of self-disclosure is called the **dyadic effect**: you disclose to me, and I'll disclose to you.

Self-Disclosure Involves Risk

Although self-disclosure is a building block for establishing intimacy with others, it can be risky. Once you disclose something to someone, that person can now share the information with others; that person has additional power if the information is something you'd rather not have others know.

There is also the risk of rejection when you tell someone something that is personal. As Powell comments, "If I tell you who I am, and you do not like who I am, that is all that I have." Once you reveal what you believe is your true nature or personal feeling and you are rejected or rebuffed, you can't explain your rejection away by saying, "Oh, they don't know the real me." If you've revealed what you honestly believe is "the real you," then experiencing disapproval from your partner can hurt more than if your partner did not know "the real you."

Self-Disclosure Online Is Different from Face-to-Face Disclosure

There is evidence that people are likelier to disclose more personal information about themselves when they communicate online than they would when communicating with others face to face. Communication researchers Lisa Tidwell and Joseph Walther wanted to know whether there are differences between face-to-face conversations and e-mail conversations in amount of self-disclosure, perceptions of confidence, and effectiveness of communication. They found that when people communicate via e-mail, they exchange information more directly with each other and perceive themselves and others to be more "conversationally effective" because they are more direct.

dyadic effect. The reciprocal nature of self-disclosure: you disclose to me, and I'll disclose to you.

E-mail conversation partners also reported that they were more confident when communicating online than they were in their face-to-face encounters.⁴⁸

In addition to the tendency for people to self-disclose more information about themselves via e-mail, they may be less truthful in what they say about themselves when they are online compared with face-to-face communication. Two Internet researchers found strong evidence that people are much more likely to misrepresent themselves in cyberspace than in "realspace" relationships.⁴⁹ In this study, people reported that their face-to-face realspace relationships were more serious. Even though there were greater feelings of commitment to realspace relationships than to cyberspace relationships, the participants reported about the same levels of satisfaction with both types of relationships and similar potential for emotional growth in their romantic relationships, whether in realspace or cyberspace.

Self-Disclosure Involves Trust

As we have already noted, to know something personal about someone is to have power over that person. Using personal information against others to manipulate and control is a misuse of the trust that was placed in you. According to British social psychologists Michael Argyle, Monica Henderson, and Adrian Furnham, one of the most fundamental expectations people have of their friends is that they will not reveal confidences. When you say, "Oh, I won't tell anyone. Your secret's safe with me," mean it.

Perhaps the most intimate secrets are known by family members; our parents and siblings know quite a few things about us that we'd rather others not know. Interpersonal communication researchers Anita Vangelisti, John Caughlin, and Lindsay Timmerman found several factors that may help predict whether we do or don't disclose family secrets. For example, we would be more likely to share a family secret under certain conditions:

- During an intimate conversation with another person, we found out that this person had a similar problem, or we thought revealing the secret would help the other person.
- We thought the secret would eventually come to light even if we didn't reveal the secret.
- There was some urgency or importance in revealing the secret; if we didn't reveal
 the secret, the concealment would create more problems than revealing the secret
 would cause.
- We thought the family member wouldn't mind if the secret were told; the family member would still accept us.
- It seemed like a normal and natural thing to reveal, given the topic of conversation; if the topic came up, we might disclose the secret.⁵¹

You might read this list and become worried that your family members might tell things they know about you that you'd rather others not know. Not to worry (too much). The researchers also found that there were some secrets that people would never disclose.

As we develop a relationship, we reveal more of ourselves, removing the masks that we routinely use with strangers. (Sandra Rice)



Self-Disclosure over Time: Enhancing Intimacy

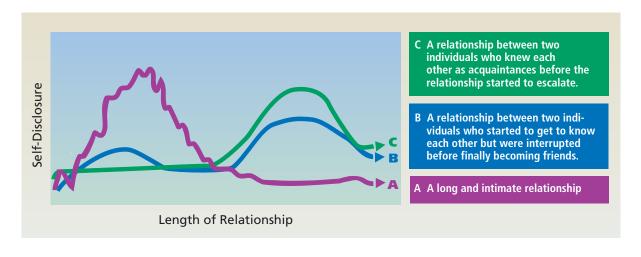
Self-disclosure is often associated with relationship development because it is through the process of revealing information about yourself that it becomes possible for relationships to become more intimate. However, simply disclosing information about yourself is no guarantee of intimacy.⁵² (Note that when we talk about intimacy and self-disclosure, we're not just talking about sex; rather, we're talking about greater depth and breadth of self-disclosure.) In an intimate friendship, we become aware of things about our friend that few, if any, other people may know. Intimacy occurs through the process of self-disclosure.

As relationships move toward intimacy, they typically include periods of high self-disclosure early in the relationship. However, the amount of information that is disclosed decreases as the relationship becomes more and more intimate. In other words, there is generally more self-disclosing activity earlier in a relationship than later. As a relationship proceeds, we begin sharing low-risk information fairly rapidly, move on to sharing higher-risk information, and then finally, share our most personal disclosures. The more intimate the relationship becomes, the more intimate the information that is disclosed. The sculpture in the photo on page 61 represents the way we reveal ourselves when we are with close friends; with our best friends, we may reveal what is behind our "masks." Holding back from sharing intimate information signals a reluctance to escalate the relationship. The amount of information that we have to share about ourselves is finite, so we slow down as we have less left to disclose.

Graph A in Figure 2.8 illustrates a typical disclosure pattern over the course of a long and intimate relationship. The peaks and valleys represent periods of variable disclosure. Note that most of the disclosure takes place in the beginning of the relationship. Not all relationships progress this way, however. The relationship in graph B represents two individuals who started to get to know each other but were interrupted before they became close friends. They might have stopped because of some conflict, indecisiveness about pursuing the relationship, or external circumstances that limited opportunities for interacting. When the disclosure resumed, it became more intense. Graph C represents two individuals who probably knew each other as acquaintances for some time but never really had the opportunity or inclination to self-disclose. Once they did begin to escalate the relationship, however, there was a steep rise in self-disclosure. This graph might

FIGURE 2.8

Self-Disclosure and Relational Development





Becoming Other-Oriented

A World View

It is sometimes a challenge to avoid becoming self absorbed-focusing exclusively on yourself and not others. There is evidence that the challenge of becoming other-oriented rather than self-absorbed is not new. Most world religions emphasize a common spiritual theme, known in Christianity as the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. This "rule" is the basis for most ethical codes throughout the world and has been the foundation of ideas about how we should treat others for centuries. The following excerpts from various religious traditions emphasize the importance of becoming otheroriented.

Hinduism This is the sum of duty: do nothing to others that would cause

pain if done to you.

Buddhism One should seek for others the happiness one desires for one-

self.

Taoism Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain, and your neigh-

bour's loss as your loss.

Confucianism Is there one principle that ought to be acted on throughout

one's whole life? Surely it is the principle of loving-kindness: do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.

Zoroastrianism The nature alone is good that refrains from doing unto another

whatsoever is not good for itself.

Judaism What is hateful to you, do not do to others. That is the entire

law: all the rest is but commentary.

Islam No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that

which he desires for himself.

Christianity Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Source: Adapted from Wayne Ham, Man's Living Religions (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1966), 39-40.

represent two co-workers who eventually start dating, or two students who have shared a class or two together before striking up a friendship.

Generally, a dramatic increase or decrease in self-disclosure reflects some significant change in the relationship. Even long-term relationships have significant increases and decreases in disclosure that signify changes. Before the birth of a first child, for example, both parents might disclose their fears and expectations about child rearing, and the information might have a profound effect on the relationship.

Interpersonal relationships cannot achieve intimacy without self-disclosure. Without true self-disclosure, we form only superficial relationships. You can confirm another person's self-concept and have your self-concept confirmed only if both you and your partner have revealed yourselves to each other.

Future chapters will discuss the essential other-oriented skills of perceiving others accurately, using and understanding verbal and non-verbal messages, and listening empathetically.

Self-Disclosure Reflects Perceptions About the Nature of Your Relationships

What you reveal about yourself to others and what others reveal to you about themselves provide important information about how each of you perceives the nature, quality, and intimacy of your relationship.

The tricky part of interpreting the level of intimacy you have with another person, however, is to consider that what someone else thinks is very intimate and personal information, you may perceive as not intimate and personal at all. For example, as a relationship becomes more intimate, a friend might say, "I've never told anyone this before, but when I was in high school, I had a crush on my English teacher." Your friend may feel comfortable sharing intimate information with you and may think, "I'm being quite intimate in sharing this information." You, in contrast, may think it's no big deal to have had a crush on a high school teacher. It is difficult to know precisely what others think about a particular relationship, because we don't all view the same self-disclosing information as being equally intimate or risky. It is possible to send the wrong signal about how you regard the relationship or to misperceive your partner's perception about the quality and nature of the relationship.

As you disclose information to another person, consider how the other person may perceive the level of intimacy and trust that you are implying when you reveal personal information. What you perceive as intimate and personally revealing may not be perceived as intimate information by your partner. Intimacy is in the mind of the listener. So, although the depth and breadth of self-disclosure provide important information about the quality of the interpersonal relationship you have with another person, ultimately each person determines whether the information is actually intimate.

Self-Disclosure Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for helping you appropriately self-disclose and respond to the disclosures of others:

- Be other-oriented when you self-disclose; think about how the information you share will affect the other person. Are you self-disclosing only to meet your own needs (which is sometimes appropriate)? Will your disclosure make your communication partner unnecessarily uncomfortable?
- Monitor the non-verbal responses others have when you disclose to them; these will help you determine if you are giving someone too much personal, intimate information. If the other person has little eye contact with you or is fidgeting, shifting in his or her seat, or making facial expressions that suggest he or she is uncomfortable, limit your self-disclosure. Or check your perceptions: ask the other person if the information you are sharing is making him or her uncomfortable.
- Be careful not to disclose too much information about yourself too soon in a relationship. Self-disclosure usually occurs in smaller bits and pieces.
- Decrease self-disclosure if you are sharing information about yourself and your communication partner is not sharing information about him- or herself.
 Watch on mycommunicationlab

Summary

We all seek answers to three questions: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Who are all these others?" William James answered the first question by dividing the self into three parts. The material self includes our bodies and those tangible possessions that give us identity. The social self is the part that engages in interactions with others. The spiritual self consists of thoughts and assumptions about values and moral standards, and beliefs about forces that influence our lives. Other

theorists conclude that our self-concept develops through interaction with other people. The groups we belong to also give us identity. Our roles as sisters, brothers, students, and parents are important in how we view who we are; the roles we assume provide labels for who we are. We also make our own observations about ourselves apart from others, and about groups or roles we assume. Gender plays a key part in affecting our view of who we are in relation to others.

Given the importance of developing a positive sense of self-esteem, this chapter has identified strategies that can enhance self-worth. Those strategies include engaging in positive self-talk, using positive visualization, avoiding comparisons with others, reframing, developing honest relationships, letting go of the past, and seeking support when needed.

Our sense of self relates to self-disclosure. Self-disclosure occurs when we purposefully provide information to others that they would not learn if we did not tell them. The social penetration model of self-disclosure describes how the depth and breadth of our disclosure can affect our relationships. The Johari Window model of self-disclosure provides an explanation of the relationship between our self-awareness

and self-disclosure. The four quadrants in the Johari Window (open, hidden, unknown, and blind) reflect how much information we and others know about our selves. As we develop relationships, the sizes of these windows change relative to one another. Appropriate self-disclosure (1) moves in small increments, (2) moves from less to more personal information, (3) is reciprocal, (4) involves risk, and (5) involves trust.

Finally, self-disclosure has the potential to enhance the quality of our interpersonal relationships. The amount of information we disclose decreases as a relationship becomes more intimate. We first are likely to share low-risk information; as the relationship matures, we typically disclose more personal, high-risk information.



Are you ready for the test? You can find review questions and additional resources to deepen your understanding and test your recall of the material in this chapter by going to MyCommunicationsLab. This valuable resource offers interactive multimedia assets and activities and diagnostic tests with customized study plans and remediation, along with an enhanced eText. To access MyCommunicationsLab, see the access card shrinkwrapped with this textbook.

For Discussion and Review

Focus on Critical Thinking

- 1. Joel, who is 30 years old, married, and has two children, suffers from feelings of low self-esteem. Although he has many friends and a wife who loves him, he feels that others perform much better than he does at work. What strategies would help Joel enhance his self-esteem?
- 2. Using the online Research Navigator, access the following article: J. J. Jones, S. Bennett, M. P. Olmsted, M. L. Lawson, and G. Rodin, "Disordered Eating Attitudes and Behaviours in Teenaged Girls: A School-Based Study," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 165(5) (2001): 547–553. Or, you may find another article about eating disorders and self-concept using Research Navigator. In what ways does this study tie in with the theories of self-concept and self-esteem? After reading this chapter, what advice would you give a young teenage girl about weight preoccupation?
- Provide an original example of how visualization might help you enhance your self-esteem. Describe the positive scene in detail.

4. Provide an example from your own experiences that illustrates the Johari Window model of self-disclosure.

Focus on Ethics

- 5. Discuss the ethical implications of using untrue flattery to enhance a friend's self-esteem.
- 6. There are many self-help books on the market that claim to enrich your social life by providing surefire techniques for enhancing self-esteem. Do you think these claims are ethical? Why or why not?
- 7. Aelish has long planned to attend a top-notch graduate program in psychology. Her grades, however, are only in the C and B range. Should she try to reframe this factual information or deal with her problem in another way?
- 8. Susan would like to become better friends with Kaled. She decides to disclose some personal information to Kaled, hoping that this self-disclosure will increase feelings of intimacy between them. Is it ethical to self-disclose to others as a strategy to enhance intimacy in a relationship?

Learning with Others

In a group with other students, compare your answers. Discuss how your personal ranking of these values influences your interaction with others.			
Honesty		_ Justice	
Salvation		_ Wealth	
A comfortable life		_ Beauty	
Good health		_ Equality	
Human rights		_ Freedom	
Peace		_ Personal happiness	
Fulfilling work		_ A personal code of ethics	

1. Place the following list of values in order from 1 to 14.

2. Create a coat of arms (in the shape of a shield) that represents your life. Draw a large outline of a shield that fills an entire sheet of paper. Divide your coat of arms into four equal sections. In the upper right-hand section,

draw or symbolize something at which you have skill or talent. In the upper left-hand section, draw or symbolize something you are trying to improve or a new skill you are learning. In the lower right-hand section, draw or symbolize your most prized material possession. Finally, in the lower left-hand section, write three words that you hope someone would use to describe you.

Share your coat of arms with other students. Tell your classmates why you drew what you did. Discuss how your coat of arms reflects your attitudes, beliefs, and values.

3. Go through your personal music collection and identify a selection that best symbolizes you. Your selection may be based on either the lyrics or the music. Bring your selection to class and play it for your classmates. (Your instructor will bring the necessary audio equipment.) Tell why this music symbolizes you. Discuss with classmates how today's music provides a glimpse of our culture and a vehicle for self-expression.