

*Development Suggestions for Interpersonal Skills*

Suggested Reading

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author/Publisher</b>	<b>Learning Mode</b>
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	Covey, Stephen A./ 1990/ Free Press	Book + AudioCD
People Smart: Developing Your Interpersonal Intelligence	Silberman, Melvin L.PhD. and Hansberg, Frieda/ 2000/ Berrett-Koehler Publishers	Book

Activities

1. Assess your current ability as an effective listener. Rate each item listed below by placing a dot in the appropriate box. When you have rated all the items, draw a line to connect the dots. This will give you an “effective listener profile.” The more your profile leans toward the right, the more able you are to listen effectively to others.

<b>Do I:</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Interrupt?					
Show impatience?					
Misunderstand what someone has said?					
Have people correct my interpretation of what they’ve said?					
Daydream and miss what was said?					
Make suggestions before a problem is fully explained?					
Think about my response instead of listening to the speaker?					
Talk more than I listen?					
Avoid eye contact?					

*Development Suggestions for Interpersonal Skills, continued*

2. Follow the two key steps in listening effectively.

**Step 1: Listen to the words being expressed.**

As you listen to the words being expressed, try to grasp both the content and the meaning of the words from the speaker's perspective. While this may sound simple, external and internal distractions often distract us and compete with our ability to listen.

**Step 2: Paraphrase what was said to demonstrate your understanding.**

Paraphrasing to demonstrate your understanding requires you to verbally interact with the speaker. This interaction is either to get additional information you're missing or verify with the speaker what you think was said.

Use a phrase such as "As I understand it ..." or "It seems that ..." before you restate in your own words what the speaker said. If you paraphrase the information correctly, the speaker can confirm that you have understood. If you paraphrase incorrectly or miss important details, the speaker can give you the information you need to understand.

3. List your biggest barriers to listening effectively. Create the worksheet shown below. Once you have listed your internal and external barriers, identify ways to eliminate or reduce these barriers. For example,

<b>Internal Barriers</b>	<b>External Barriers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Preconceived notions due to prior experience with individual</li><li>- Assumptions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Phone interruptions</li><li>- Email/Blackberry</li></ul>

4. Show appropriate nonverbal behaviors when listening. Use the following suggestions:

- Remove any physical barriers between you and the speaker. Don't sit behind your desk.
- Face the speaker and lean slightly toward him or her.
- Nod occasionally to convey that you understand or agree.
- Maintain eye contact. But don't stare.
- Smile when appropriate, such as when the speaker uses humor.
- Avoid distracting behaviors such as shuffling papers, answering the phone, or looking elsewhere.

### *Development Suggestions for Interpersonal Skills, continued*

5. Identify people whom you consider to be effective listeners. Watch closely to see how they convey interest, understanding, and empathy. What nonverbal behaviors do they demonstrate? What type of questions do they ask?
6. Increase buy-in by adapting content and detail to the listeners and the situation. Consider the following questions to help you meet their needs and guide what you say and how you say it:
  - What kind of information do people want or need?
  - Why do they need this information?
  - Do they need to make a decision or simply need more background?
  - Do they need more information to help them implement the decision? If so, what specifically do they need?
  - What can I do so that they will be more receptive to my message? How will they benefit?

### Tips

1. Take responsibility for the feedback that you are providing instead of suggesting the unanimous opinions of others. Use "I think" or "in my opinion" instead of "you are."
2. When there is mixed performance, clearly separate the positive from the negative, reinforce the positive, and provide factual corrections to the negative.
3. Positive and negative feedback should be provided promptly.
4. Before giving the feedback, weigh the pros and cons of changes that may or may not result from the feedback.
5. Ask the recipient whether they agree with your feedback and whether he or she has ever been given similar feedback.
6. Do not do other tasks while you are listening. Focus on the speaker and what he or she is saying.
7. Practice listening skills by listening to a news broadcast and testing yourself on how much you can remember.
8. Identify those people to whom and situations in which you find it difficult to listen. Determine why and list three things you can do to listen more effectively.