

Communication Studies 130

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INTERPERSONAL
COMMUNICATION—Or, how
to Grow from the Inside Out and
Back Again

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Communication Studies 130 Packet
Table of Contents

P. 2	Table of Contents
P. 3	Skillbuilder: Perception Checking
P. 4-6	Skillbuilder: DESC or "I" Language
P. 7	Skillbuilder: Paraphrasing
P. 8	Skillbuilder: DESC/PC Role Play
P. 9	Self-concept Presentation
P. 10-11	Rehearsal Critique form for Self-concept Presentation in Kramm's class
P. 12	Adjective List for Johari Window
P. 13	Final Exam: Oral Portion
P. 14	Types of Listening Responses Guide
P. 15	Types of Listening Responses Worksheet
P. 16-19	Module: Gender Communication "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus"
P. 20-21	Defense Mechanisms we Employ (Blind Quadrant)
P. 22	What Defense Mechanism is being used?
P. 23	Communication Process Worksheet
P. 24-25	Family Group Project
P. 26-27	Family Group Survey Assignment
P. 28	Family Group Survey (Cover Page, Lab Instructor Signatures, Group Member Signatures)
P. 29	TV or No TV: Content, Relationship, and Communication

Skillbuilder: Perception Checking

Perception Checking is very useful since no two people see things exactly alike. It is a rare and wonderful experience to share an idea or event in approximately the same way as another. But most of the time, what we see, feel, hear, understand, or believe is different than the person who was with us during the event itself. Why are perceptions so disparate among us? Because we all select, organize and interpret events differently. Why? Because of conditioning, biological differences, psychological states and other reasons. For instance, if you're on the freeway at 5:00pm feel hungry and are used to eating at this time because this is when your family traditionally has dinner, what will you notice? Signs that advertise food, of course. You know what to do because your culture (family and so on) has taught you what to do.

The skill of perception checking is useful when you feel that you have the option of reading someone's mind (none of us are too slick at this!) or asking them to clarify their behavior for you. It is important to remember to be nonevaluative, to give the person options in explaining what he or she did. For example, you are sitting in a room watching television with a friend when all of the sudden, she gets up, goes out the door and closes it abruptly. You wonder, did she forget that something's cooking on the stove? Did she have to use the bathroom? This is where the skill of perception checking comes in handy.

Perception Checking- a skill that reduces mind reading and misunderstanding. The receiver of an ambiguous behavior describes the behavior without making judgement and then allows for two possible interpretations of that behavior followed by a request for clarification.

E.g. "When you hurriedly left the room and shut it quickly," (**behavior**) "I wasn't sure whether something was cooking on the stove" (**first interpretation**) "or you needed to use the bathroom." (**second interpretation**) How did you feel? (**request for clarification**)

The use of perception checking is valuable because it demonstrates to the other party an attitude of respect and concern, saying in effect, "I know I'm not qualified to judge you without some help" (R. Adler & N. Towne, 1990, Looking Out Looking In).

SKILLBUILDER

Practice your perception checking ability by developing three-part verifications for the following situations on a separate piece of paper. Make sure to label each part and to write the perception check as if you are speaking directly to the receiver.

1. At work you notice that the man who takes over for you has been coming in late forcing you to work extra time but without extra pay. This is not normal behavior and you want to know what's up with him.
2. You get home from school and your mother is quieter than usual. At first you ignore it and act normally, but she still doesn't seem to be herself. You think she may be angry with you because you forgot to take out the trash cans that morning but you're not positive.
3. You are training a new employee and while you are explaining procedures, you notice that he's looking away.

Skillbuilder: DESC or "I" Language

This skillbuilder will help you to understand the value of "I" language (AKA DESC) in everyday interaction. These skills, when understood and practiced, will increase understanding between you and the people with whom you communicate, thereby making your life richer. Moreover, this skillbuilder is a useful guide for the exam. Do the exercises for maximum results and turn them in on _____. I will be happy to review them with you.

Using **DESC script** is a method of confronting another person concerning a behavior that hurts you, or when you feel unloved, alienated, left out, frustrated, and unhappy. DESC is a mnemonic device to help you remember its component parts.

D-Describe the behavior that bothers you in non-judgmental term. Be specific. Who did what? Where? How often? Don't exaggerate.

E.g. I noticed that when you come home from work, you fall asleep on the couch after dinner and we don't get a chance to talk practically all day.

E-Explain your feelings. How did you feel about the behavior? Be honest. (Remember that the problem is yours because you're the one affected by it until your receiver knows it. Take ownership of it and deal with it assertively.)

E.g. When we don't talk, I feel lonely and unimportant to you

*See page 135 for a list of feelings in Looking Out Looking In

C-Consequences for you (or honest reaction) These could be the following: What effect did it have on you? What is your worry or concern? What did you have to give up? What is the positive consequence that you want but is not likely if they behave as they are?

E.g. I don't want our marriage to become like two roommates cohabitating in the same apartment.

S-Specify the behavior you want (or invite the other person to make a suggestion if you're not sure) What do you want the other person to do about it?

E.g. I'd like to know if we could work something out so that after dinner we can talk about what's on our minds instead of you falling asleep and me watching T. V.

(Adapted from Communication Works by Gamble and Gamble)

In using "I" language as well as perception checking, it's extremely important that you avoid name-calling and value judgments. Don't hint but be direct about your problem. Avoid sarcasm, lecturing, or "teaching a lesson." Remember to protect the dignity of the receiver (and your own) by being objective or neutral. Also make sure your nonverbal communication is congruent with the words you use.

Now try part I and II of this skillbuilder on the next two pages

Part I and II of skillbuilder #2

Name _____

SKILLBUILDER (part I)

Something that someone does that bothers me, interferes with me, irritates me or just plain frustrates me is

Now, put that information in the following forms:

1. Describe the behavior or situation in non-judgmental terms. (Who did what, when, where?) Write the entire skillbuilder as if you are directly speaking to the receiver.

"When you

2. Explain your feelings about the matter.

"I feel

3. What are the consequences for you? What did you have to give up? What effect did it have on you? What is your worry or concern?

"And then

4. Specify what you want this person to do about it or specify what you both can do about it.

"Please

Practicing "I" language (continued) (Part II)

Purpose:

To give you practice speaking descriptively, instead of evaluatively

Instructions:

Rewrite each of the evaluative "you" language statements below using descriptive "I" language. Be sure to use all 4 parts of DESC in each response and label each part as shown in the sample examples.

Example 1

"You never think of me."

(I was pissed)**E** (when I found out that you all went mountain biking without me.) **D**
(I'm wondering if you want to include me or not.) **C** (Can we talk about it?) **S**

Example 2

"That was stupid!"

(By leaving my bedroom window open,) **D** (the wind has blown my tax papers all over the place.) **C**
(That's why I'm so mad.) **E** (Please ask me before opening the window in my room.) **S**

1. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

2. "You're a total slob."

3. "Why can't you be more reasonable?"

Skillbuilder: Paraphrasing

Purpose: To develop your ability to paraphrase in order to reduce misunderstandings and maybe help another person

Instructions

Write a paraphrasing response for each of the following statements. Include the speaker's thoughts in your own words and, as appropriate, the speaker's feelings

1. Sender: "I guess it will be OK for you to use my car this weekend. It's a new car; my only transportation to work and I don't know what I'd do if something happened to it. Make sure to fill it up with gas when you're done and don't drive faster than 65 miles per hour with it. Oh yeah, don't eat or drink in it."

Receiver paraphrase:

" _____

_____."

2. Sender: "I do like the Human Sexuality class but, I don't know, it's really personal sometimes."

Receiver:"

_____."
_____."

3. Sender: "My math class is really killing me. After two weeks in the class I don't know if I'm going to keep up."

Receiver:"

_____."
_____."

4. Instructor to student: "The paper looks good. If you fix the grammar mistakes and develop the part about the problems that arise when one doesn't express their anger, you will most likely get an A."

Student: "

_____."
_____."
_____."

5. Son to dad: "I think school is for the birds. They make you take all these courses that have nothing to do with real life, they give you so much work that you can't have a real life, and then the teachers don't care if you're falling behind."

Dad's paraphrase: _____

_____."
_____."

Skillbuilder: DESC/PC Role-Play

Due date:

Value: (20 points) You and your partner receive the same grade.

Description of Assignment:

Find a partner. Then you and your partner will make up a role-play scenario that allows each of you to use one of the two skillbuilders we have completed so far. That is, one of you will use perception checking (all 3 parts which are description of behavior, two interpretations, and a request for clarification) and the other person will use DESC (Describe behavior, Explain your emotion, Consequence for you and/or the receiver, and Specify what you want). The person who uses DESC should avoid the fallacies of causation and overgeneralization when speaking.

Once you have practiced the role-play so that you can complete it without notes, go to the Communication Center and videotape your role-play again without the use of notes. Put the videotape you like in the correct folder and throw away any unwanted videos.

Here is an example of a plausible role-play.

One of you plays the role of boss and the other the role of subordinate. The boss is concerned that the subordinate is coming late to work. The boss then decides to discuss the problem with the subordinate. It might go like this:

Boss: "Jim, last week you came to work about 15 min. late on 3 separate occasions. Is there a scheduling problem? Is there a problem with transportation? I'd like to know so that we can find a solution."

Jim: I'd like to talk about it but can we do it privately maybe before you have lunch today?

It's now 11:45 AM

Jim: "Thanks boss for talking with me. Well, I do have a problem. When I arrive to work, I see your dog in your office window. Your dog looks like a pit bull to me which scares me because I was severely bitten by one last year. I was concerned about talking to you because you are my boss and I want to make a good impression even though being late, I realize, doesn't help. I'm not sure what to do but wanted to talk to you and not be so afraid."

Boss: "I'm sorry Jim. I had no idea. You deserve to feel safe and welcomed here. I should be boarding that dog or can take it to my ex-wife. She can deal with it."

Jim: Thanks for understanding.

Self-concept Presentation

"Letting people in is largely a matter of not expending the energy to keep them out."

--Hugh Prather

Due:

Points Possible: 100 points

Most of us, (no, all of us) desire to improve our communication in different settings. If we agree that our self-concept does affect our communication behavior, then finding out as much as possible about our self-concept and its development can be useful as a major step toward communication improvement. This exercise, more than anything else, should be fun. At least, it should be interesting. Think of it as an investigation into inner space. As you know, there are some rough and jagged parts that can stand to be altered and also some excellent stars that you want to keep bright and shiny. Do you understand my metaphor? I hope so.

(Desired Results) On the date that you're assigned to present your talk, bring to class a creation -- something that you spent some time working on and which symbolizes as much as possible your self-concept and give a 5-7 minute talk.

(Guidelines) There are 3 guidelines for creating and delivering your talk

- 1) Be creative, be creative, and be creative! You're going to create something (a V.A. or visual aid) that you can use in your talk to clarify your subject matter. The V.A. must be a metaphor for your self-concept. **YOU WILL EXPLAIN HOW IT IS A METAPHOR FOR YOUR SELF-CONCEPT DURING YOUR TALK.**
- 2) Write a brief outline of what you'll discuss that revolves around 3-4 points. These are as follows:
 - a. What communication experience has helped to mold your self-concept? This could include people, places, and/or events in your life—good and bad. Give examples. (THIS IS A REQUIRED POINT)
 - b. What are some key aspects of your presenting self? Give examples. (p. 65)
 - c. What are some key aspects of your perceived self? Give examples. (p. 65)
 - d. What is one goal you have for yourself to improve either your presenting-self or perceived self and what can you do to accomplish this goal?
- 3) Practice delivering the talk so that on your day, you are conversational, have minimum distracting mannerisms, give good eye contact, and are organized. The required rehearsal in the lab should help with this part of the assignment.

(Tips for earning the best grade!)

1. Make your visual aid different (not just a collage).
2. Detail is interesting and helps one to be a clearer speaker. Develop your points so you talk in some detail (or development) on them.
3. Use the vocabulary words, quotations, and 1 or 2 definitions from chapter 2 in your talk—**BEYOND THE REQUIRED WORD "SELF CONCEPT."**
4. Practice, practice, practice so your delivery helps you connect with us.
5. Do the required rehearsal.
6. Review the evaluation form I'll be using to grade you to make sure you're meeting all the criteria for the assignment

(Resources) Just check with me if you have any doubts. I am the source of this assignment so don't hesitate to let me know your concerns ASAP. So, have fun and remember to ask if in doubt.

Rehearsal Critique form for Self-concept Presentation in Kramm's class

Name of Evaluator: _____

Evaluator's G Number: _____

Name of Speaker: _____

Directions for Buddies: Each of you should videotape both presentations in one of the taping rooms in the Communication Center. Put the video rehearsal in the appropriate folder and then watch it on one of the computers outside of the taping room together if possible. Time it. Critique your partner's speech in the areas noted below. Share your suggestions with him/her as well. Encourage and be honest with each other. When you leave, have the lab instructor sign both critiques. Turn them in on your due date.

Content and Visual Aid:

1) How long was speech? _____

2) Did your partner discuss 3-4 points in enough detail that you felt you learned something significant about his/her self-concept? **EXPLAIN WHAT YOU LIKED AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE ADDED.**

Note: (4 points are development of S.C., presenting self, perceived self, goals for improving perceived or presenting self with a plan to accomplish)

3) Did your partner use a V.A. during the speech that he/she created and did they explain its metaphorical value to their self-concept? Write down what the metaphor was!!

4) Did your partner integrate vocabulary words, definitions, or quotes (pithy and clarifying) beyond the required one from chapter 2? Write down examples of what you heard **and what you suggest.**

Organization:

1) Did your partner preview his/her points in the introduction of the speech, state them in the body of the speech and review them at the end of the speech? Where do they need to improve? (Remember a speech is organized so the speaker says what he's going to talk about, then talks about it, and then reviews what he's talked about)

2) Did they stay on their points? Where do they need to improve?

Verbal Delivery:

Comment on the subtopics below. What areas were strong, good, or weak? WRITE COMMENTS.

1) Conversational Delivery/Not reading but using phrases in notes to jog memory and stay on track
EXPLAIN.

2) Avoidance of significant amounts of fillers such as “um,” “you know,” “what not,” and “like”
EXPLAIN.

3) Volume. Loud enough? EXPLAIN.

Physical Delivery:

1) Stance. Did they avoid weight shifting and crossing legs? Did they stand tall with weight evenly distributed facing the audience? EXPLAIN.

2) Distracting mannerisms other than stance. What did you see that should be eliminated?
(Note: A distracting mannerism is any movement that doesn't have any communicative purpose for the speech itself)
EXPLAIN.

3) Eye contact. (Your buddy should look away from the camera and not be reading.) How did they do?
EXPLAIN.

In summary,

1) What is one thing you really liked about their talk in terms of content, organization or delivery?
EXPLAIN.

2) What do they need to improve the most?
EXPLAIN.

Adjective List for Johari Window Exercise

adaptable
 sensible
 knowledgeable
 sensitive
 logical
 brave
 quarrelsome
 energetic
 strong
 nervous
 carefree
 relaxed
 happy
 thoughtful
 passive
 clever
 responsible
 independent
 warm
 persuasive
 critical
 self-conscious

dependable
 aggressive
 powerful
 ambitious
 proud
 domineering
 shy
 modest
 capable
 reflective
 gentle
 tactful
 overemotional
 cheerful
 reserved
 idealistic
 understanding
 perceptive
 confident
 self-aware
 introverted
 witty

kind
 determined
 principled
 disciplined
 serious
 mature
 calm
 quiet
 extroverted
 sympathetic
 organized
 caring
 reliable
 helpful
 trustworthy
 patient
 complex
 self-assertive
 intelligent
 wise
 playful

<u>Open</u>	<u>Blind</u>
<u>Hidden</u>	<u>Unknown</u>

Final Exam: Oral Portion

Value:

What: On the date and time you sign up for, be prepared to use all three of the skillbuilders we've done in class with me in my office or in the speech lab depending on when you sign up. Specifically, you will need to use the skillbuilders as follows:

- a. **Perception checking:** I will give you a situation. From it, you will offer a three-part perception check as if I am the person in the situation you're speaking to. In other words, you'll be role-playing the perception check.
- b. **DESC:** I will give you a situation and ask you to create a DESC/I language statement for me, or I'll give you a "you" language statement and ask you to convert it to a 4-part DESC statement. Avoid the fallacies of causation and overgeneralization.
- c. **Paraphrasing:** I will make a statement and ask you to paraphrase it. You will need to discern whether you should paraphrase for content or paraphrase for content as well as feeling. Don't forget the request for clarification.

Grading will be based on your ability to fluently use these skills without my help. Practice with each other aloud as this will prepare you the best for the mini-exam and for lifetime situations. Role-playing is a useful technique for improving oral expression.

If you cannot come for whatever reason, you must call within that day to schedule a make-up. Those who do not call will receive a zero.

When: Use the sign up sheet offered in class. Include your full name on it. Include your full name and the time the class meets (Clark Griswald, MWF 8am)

Types of Listening Responses Guide

We listen not only out of self-interest but also to help others with their problems. Whether the problem is large or small, knowing how to help others solve their problems is a valuable skill. The following are descriptions of the ways we can respond to help others from Looking Out Looking In.

1. **ADVISING:** A helping response in which the listener offers suggestions about how the speaker should deal with the problem. Example: "Consider trying to lean out when turning around."
 - a. Be confident that the advice is correct
 - b. Ask yourself whether the person seeking advice seems willing to accept it
 - c. Be certain that the receiver won't blame you if the advice doesn't work out
 - d. Consider offering your advice in a tentative way

2. **JUDGING:** A reaction in which the listener evaluates the sender's message either favorably or unfavorably. Example: "That was the right/wrong way to handle the problem."
 - a. The person with the problem should have requested an evaluation from you
 - b. Your judgment should be genuinely constructive and not designed as a put down

3. **ANALYZING:** the listener tries to get at the underlying motivation or also possibly at the root cause of a problem.
Example: "Maybe you're upset because"
 - a. Offer your interpretation in a tentative way rather than as absolute fact
 - b. Your analysis ought to have a reasonable chance of being correct
 - c. You ought to be sure that the receiver will be receptive to your analysis
 - d. Be sure that your motive for offering an analysis is truly to help the other person

4. **QUESTIONING:** A style of helping in which the listener asks for additional info from the sender. His or her goal is to help the person with the problem think about it and understand it more clearly.
Example: "Why do you think they would say that to you?"
 - a. Don't ask questions just to satisfy your curiosity
 - b. Be sure your questions won't confuse or distract the person you're trying to help
 - c. Don't use questions to disguise your suggestions or criticism (a kind of counterfeit question)

5. **SUPPORTING:** A response style in which the listener praises, reassures, comforts, offers help or distracts the person seeking help. Its intent is to express solidarity with them. (Note: Distracting might be construed as judging. Example: "Let's talk about it tomorrow when you have slept on it.")
 - a. Make sure your expression of support is sincere
 - b. Be sure that the receiver of help can accept your support
 - c. Consider the gender of the receiver and how they like to be supported

6. **PROMPTING:** Also known as minimal encouragers. It is offering silence and very brief statements to draw out the person you're trying to help. Example: "Go on. ." Or "Uh huh.."
 - a. Be sure your nonverbal behavior is congruent with your words.

7. **PARAPHRASING:** Restating a speaker's words and emotions into your own followed by a request for clarification. Example: "So you're sad about missing the game?"
 - a. Be sure the problem is complex enough
 - b. Be sure you have the necessary time and concern
 - c. Be sure you're genuinely interested in helping the other person
 - d. Be sure that you can withhold judgment

All of these styles can help others accept their situation, feel better, and have a sense of control or acceptance about their problems. Before choosing the best helping style one should consider 3 factors: the situation, the receiver of your help, and yourself. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your own needs? Remember there is no one best response.

Types of Listening Responses Worksheet

Purpose: to give you practice identifying types of listening in helping situations

Instructions: Match the letter of the listening type with its example found below

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| a. advising | b. judging | c. analyzing |
| d. questioning | e. supporting | f. prompting |
| g. paraphrasing | | |

- _____ 1. "Uh, huh. Go on."
- _____ 2. "So you're saying you're upset because I didn't call you when I got home?"
- _____ 3. "You're probably more unhappy because that customer yelled at you."
- _____ 4. "Why didn't she call you?"
- _____ 5. "That wasn't too bright to speak up during the wedding vows."
- _____ 6. "How did you feel when she didn't call?"
- _____ 7. "I think you should talk to her today, if possible."
- _____ 8. "You seem really excited about how you played today, are you?"
- _____ 9. "You should not have told Amy it was your sister's idea."
- _____ 10. (Pause . . .)
- _____ 11. "I'll be here the whole time. I promise."
- _____ 12. "It's not fair for you to have to retake the test."
- _____ 13. "What do you want to do about it?"
- _____ 14. "What's probably bothering you is that you don't like coming in second."
- _____ 15. "It's going to work out. I'm hella positive it will."

Module: Gender Communication “Men are from Mars Women are from Venus”

Value: _____

20/20 Video (90 minutes)

The purpose of this module is to familiarize you with some of the problems that men and women have in relating to one another in personal relationships and how both sexes can learn to improve their communication through better understanding of the opposite sex.

Your task is to begin by writing a question that you have about relating to the opposite sex (or your partner) in personal relationships.* That is, in the space provided below, I'd like you to phrase a question about him/her (or them!) based on your frustration, irritation, bewilderment, or puzzlement about how they tend to act. Do this before watching the video. Then watch the video which may answer the question (at least in part). I'll ask you to elaborate on what you learn later in this module.

*According to John Gray, in same sex relationships, one partner tends to play the male role and the other the female role. So even if your situation involves just men or just women, some of the same dynamics that apply to heterosexual relationships will likely apply to homosexual relationships. If nothing else, you will find out if John Gray's ideas apply to your life.

Question about the Opposite Sex: _____

What are the names of the couples identified who participated in the ABC experiment?

_____ How can you remember them? (Mail carrier and wife)

_____ How can you remember them? _____

_____ How can you remember them? _____

_____ How can you remember them? _____

_____ How can you remember them? _____

_____ How can you remember them? _____

The following questions are based on Gray's lecture:

1. When a man comes home from work/school and has felt the stress of the day, how does he usually react to a dirty house, yelling kids, etc.?

2. What is the woman's response to the same environmental situation?

3. What will she do to try to get help from her partner/husband?

4. Why does her way of getting help not work?

5. How do men need to feel in a relationship according to Gray? That is, what's most important to them (even more than sex)?

6. What should women do to let a man know he's succeeding?

7. What do women feel is a "waste of time" that men need as a way to handle stress?

8. What should women NOT do if a man is in his cave?

9. What do men feel is a "waste of time" that women need as a way to handle stress?

10. What should men do to help women deal with their stress?

11. When a woman says that's "nothing the matter" what should a man translate that statement to mean?

12. What does a woman need to feel to be satisfied in a relationship?

13. What should a man NOT do to help a woman with her problems?

14. If a woman says “I don’t know what to do about problem XYZ!!” how should a man respond?
15. Should couples fight and quarrel according to Gray?
16. What should they do?
17. What is resentment flu, and who gets afflicted with it according to Gray?
18. What causes resentment flu?
19. What should a man do over and over to help a woman get over resentment flu so that she can grow and also love him?
20. What does Gray think is romantic to a woman that men aren’t likely to think about as being romantic?
21. What is a woman’s responsibility to help a man feel successful in a relationship?
22. How many times should a woman be touched each day—and in what way?

Questions based on the Panel Discussion:

23. How does a man interpret a woman’s experience of resentment flu when she tells him what to do to make her happy (i.e. get over resentment flu)?
24. What becomes the problem with the dynamic of the relationship that mostly turns off men?
25. What should woman do to avoid the above problem in relating to her man?
26. Why should a woman not punish a man in a relationship?

Questions based on the Workshop:

27. What does the metaphor “men are like rubber bands mean?”

28. What is the woman’s role in making the above metaphor work?

Essay Questions: Please type, double space and support your answers well. I’m looking for two paragraph responses for each question.

29. a.) Now that you have watched the entire video, please explain if and how Gray has answered part of or all of the question that you had about the opposite sex (your partner) in the beginning of this worksheet.

b.) Do you agree with Gray’s explanation? Why or why not?

(Note: **If** the video didn’t answer your question, muse about what you found interesting. Try to find something positive and useful to discuss)

30. Please pull from this video two techniques that you can use from Gray in a present or future romantic relationship. I want you to be very specific in your response. Explain clearly what it is you plan to do, and then give an example of a scenario for which you could apply each of the techniques. If you wish to use a past relationship to illustrate your goal (if you’re currently single) feel free to do so.

Again, please type the two essay questions. Make sure the grammar, spelling, and paragraph construction is correct. Staple the essay question responses to this worksheet and submit everything to your instructor on the due date.

Defense Mechanisms We Employ (Blind Quadrant)

from Mader & Mader, Understanding One Another

I. Punctuation: Organizing Interactions

A. **Punctuation** means that "we arbitrarily decide that a series of interactions has a starting point and perhaps even a concluding point."

B. It becomes a problem when people in a relationship focus on who caused the problem (blaming) rather than dealing with a resolution (problem solving).

1. Example: He: "You don't listen to me."
She: "I don't listen to you because all you do is complain."
He: "I complain because you never listen."
2. Solution: a. "Seek first to understand, then to be understood"
b. Let the receiver know what you want/need and let him/her know when they succeed.

C. **Self-fulfilling prophecy and punctuation**--a negative self-fulfilling prophecy would be punctuated by the participant at the point where he or she is "hurt" by others.

1. Example: Gwen assumes no one likes her because people leave her abruptly at parties. Her assumption is that it has nothing to do with her, that she is a passive participant and does not affect the receiver's perceptions.
2. Leo Tolstoy: "Everyone wants to change humanity but no one wants to change himself."

II. Defense Mechanisms: Excuses

We use defense mechanisms to deflect criticism and to protect our self-concept—especially our presenting self. Why do we have to protect our self-concept? Because we like to think of ourselves as competent, good people and our actions don't always match this self-perception. And, or we fear criticism and/or feel inadequate in some way. Usually, we are not aware of the defensive mechanisms we use. In any case, using defense mechanisms are different forms of **repression**. That is, we circumscribe a problem and avoid the uncomfortable emotions that go with it rather than face it head on. Here are two kinds of excuses:

A. **Rationalize**. It has been said that humans are not rational as much as they are rationalizing. When we rationalize, "we offer a plausible explanation for our behavior unaware that it is not the real explanation."

1. e.g. "If you had to face the traffic I do, you'd be late too."
2. e.g. "The reason I lost my job is because the boss didn't like me."

B. **Regression**. When we practice regression, we adopt a childish attitude in dealing with adult responsibilities. In a sense, we "go back" to a time when we were dependent on our caretakers or parents to meet our needs.

1. The key in identifying regression is the idea that one "can't" control their impulses. The implication is that we are not in control of our actions.
2. E.g. Gwen in **I. C. 1.** above might be regressing.

III. Defensive Mechanisms: Accentuating the Positive

The following defensive mechanisms are used as "acceptable" substitutes for unacceptable/or unaccepted? behavior.

- A. **Compensation.** People engage in compensation when they attempt to make up for a personal defect by emphasizing a strength or talent they possess in other areas.
 - 1. e.g. The lady who people think is strange and who thinks so herself subconsciously becomes a friend of the felines and feeds her friends everyday.
 - 2. e.g. The person who is shy one-on-one becomes a fantastic public speaker.

- B. **Reaction Formation** is the development of a personality trait that is the exaggerated opposite of the original, unconscious, or repressed trait.
 - 1. e.g. A person who is dogmatic in their beliefs, may be attempting to conceal the opposite of dogmatism—self doubt.

- C. **Projection** means that people repress what faults they have by seeing those faults in others. It is a one-up/one-down formation.
 - 1. e.g. If you hate egotistical people, perhaps it's because you're egotistical.
 - 2. e.g. If you hate people who grab attention, perhaps it's because you want it for yourself.
 - 3. One possible way to understand projection is to ask yourself two questions:
 - a. What weakness in others bothers me the most?
 - b. Is it possible these weaknesses are in me?

- D. **Introjection** When people introject, they attribute to themselves the good qualities of others with whom they identify. Introjection is usually a form of hero worship or fantasy. During an identity crisis such as adolescence, teenagers identify with a rock star or other famous person. Introjection is a problem when a person never works out a personal identity.

- E. **Displacement** is directing hostility or aggression at objects or persons seen as less powerful than the person or persons who influenced the hostility or aggression.
 - 1. e.g. Kicking the cat when you get home after being criticized by your boss at work.

IV. Verbal Aggression

When we verbally attack others, we might be trying to protect our precarious self-concept. Verbal aggressors fear that their reasoning ability will not be sufficient to influence others. They must attack to get what they want.

What Defense Mechanism is being used?

1. I don't know why I should go to George's party tonight. He just asked me because he thinks I'm lonely. I won't know anybody there. George's groups are always so closed; if you're new, they act as if you don't exist. I know I won't have a good time, so I won't even try to talk to anyone.
2. He gives me enough work for three people, and that's unfair. It's no wonder I goof around when he's not here to supervise.
3. I can't make up my mind whether to take this job or not. I'm torn about what I should do. On the one hand, I'd love the job. Guidance is what I've always wanted to do. It would make me feel as if I was really contributing. The only problem is that I don't have a degree in the field. I'm afraid I won't be able to hack it. I think I'll ask my spouse whether or not I should take the job.
4. He: I was only trying to give her some advice. I said that I didn't think it was wise to pressure our son and daughter to choose a career in their first year in college. I said that she was trying to control their lives and they'd resent it after a while. Then she blew up. I can't say anything to her; she just blows up.
She: He wanted to pick a fight. I am concerned that our children are just drifting. They keep on saying that they feel they aren't getting much out of college. I wonder whether, if they had a career goal, they'd feel more connected. I love my kids and want to talk about them. He just started to tell me what was wrong with me, as if it were all my fault. He always starts an argument so we don't have to deal with things.
5. I can't seem to talk to anyone in my family, but everyone else says that I am the most supportive person they know.
6. He said I irritated him. Well, he's just an obnoxious, crude, chauvinist pig who doesn't know how to deal with strong, confident people like me.
7. Well, I may have pushed ahead of her in line, but I know she would have done the same thing if she had the chance.
8. I may not spend a lot of time with my kids, but I work night and day to give them all the things I never had.
9. He said I didn't do a good job on that last assignment. What does he know? I spent four weeks researching that project, and he didn't even let me explain the way my plan would work. I wish I could tell him off. Just let the kids ask me to do something tonight. I'll really let them have it.
10. I find it almost impossible to be around him very much. He gossips all the time. Did I tell you about the time he was on a business trip and had an accident? He was drinking and wound up in jail. He even had his license suspended.
11. This job probably won't work out. They're looking for someone with a great deal more statistical experience than I have, but my mom wants me to apply. I don't deserve the job. I feel uneasy and stupid. But I'll apply and make a fool of myself.
12. She let me down by not having the report done on time, so I didn't give her the message when her son called.
13. So what if I never go anywhere or do anything. I watch my soap operas and live life fully.
14. I came home from two weeks vacation and saw all the dishes in the sink. The milk was as solid as concrete. I said to my daughter, "You are a goddamn slob. Aren't you ever going to grow up and be responsible?"
15. I'm not really sure that I'm good enough for this job. I got it because of my experience as a pilot during the Korean war. This new engine may not work, but I can't let these guys know that I'm scared. I'll volunteer to fly the test flight.

Communication Process Worksheet

Purpose

To give you practice in identifying elements of the communication process

Instructions

Match the letter of the communication process element with its description found below. Underlined words provide clues.

- a. Encode
- b. Decode
- c. Channel
- d. Message/feedback
- e. Noise (external, physiological, psychological)
- f. Environment

1. ____ "I hate you." said Larry.
2. ____ Bobby decides to lie to his buddies about the size of the fish he caught at the Russian River.
3. ____ Susan has chills during a meeting and thinks she might be getting sick.
4. ____ Ralph thinks that Terri doesn't want to talk on the phone anymore when she says, "Well, anyways" after he has just finished telling her a story.
5. ____ Leslie winks when she says she's tired and waves at him.
6. ____ While Larry bemoans the fact that he ate too many burritos, Mary opens her mouth in shock.
7. ____ Veronica tries to decide what would be the best way to tell Martin she can't go skiing in Tahoe with him.
8. ____ Jill sends an e-mail to her boyfriend in Spain instead of using Skype.
9. ____ Jack is from a family that likes to talk about intellectual topics and Martha is from a family where sports are the only topic discussed. Sometimes they get frustrated with each other over what to talk about.
10. ____ Hobart says, "I'm positive about making the right decision."
11. ____ Since Bob has never been married with a baby, he doesn't understand why his good buddy Howard doesn't go out to the city with him like they used to do every weekend.
12. ____ Gerard is daydreaming about his date with Marcia while Natrone talks to him.
13. ____ Martin decides that Veronica doesn't love him because she doesn't go skiing in Tahoe with him.
14. ____ Brad has a hard time concentrating on what his partner is telling him because of the radio noise in the background.

Family Group Assignment [100 points total]

The family group assignment asks that you work together as a true team. You will be surprised that you will come together as a family in the final weeks of the semester. The components of the assignment are:

55 points:

30-40 minute oral presentation focused on concept(s) from sections in chapters covered.

The family group oral presentation should involve all members in egalitarian fashion. It is possible for someone who prefers to be “behind-the-scenes” to do such work; however, this work must be accounted for in the family history “book” (strengths, weaknesses, and compensations) and the family member must participate in the oral presentation to some extent.

Choose a section from chapters 3, 4, 5, or 6. Check with other groups to see that your choice is unique. I would like to avoid repetition of material so the first group to “reserve” a topic area will be entitled to build their presentation around it.

You will also want to resist the typical response of choosing TOO MUCH INFORMATION to present in the span of 30-40 minutes. It is better to keep your presentation goals moderate in terms of the *number* of ideas you advance; however, with what you do present, make sure it is engaging enough for it to “stick” with the class. [For example, in any given class, CONSIDER how many ideas are presented during class time. And, of these ideas, how much time is spent on application, e.g. doing an exercise, discussion, simulation. Remember that PRESENTING is not just saying as much as you can in an allotted time. Get us involved as audience members and learners]

In addition, your family must advance a research question or hypothesis about your concept and devise a survey so you can capture some local empirical evidence to support your group’s presentation. This is explained on page 27. It gives directions for how to capture public opinion using a questionnaire based on a Likert scale and other forms of questioning. This empirical evidence should be incorporated into your presentation.

However, the empirical evidence comprises only a small part of your presentation. You must also cover, orally, the interpersonal concept(s) you are “teaching” us. Additionally, you may choose a creative means to have the class “experience” the results of your research. This means that you will want to avoid a straight lecture or “talking heads” panel format of presentation. You may want the class to experience a simulation and to debrief the experience with us; you may want to incorporate videotaped footage (make sure the quality is good) in the presentation; you may want to have the class compete for “prizes” as a means of review of the material presented. After sitting through many tedious lectures, I am confident that you students can invent some fabulous ways of presenting the material.

Remember: your aim is to instruct—that must be clear. However, as Horace says of poetry, it is possible to instruct through delighting your audience.

(MORE ON NEXT PAGE)

25 points:

Typed family history “book” that contains:

- Family group contact numbers
- Family group norms or constitution & sanctions
- Strengths, weaknesses, and compensations of each family member
- Log of what business took place at each meeting, who did what, what assignments or decisions were made, etc.
 - Explanation of interpersonal concept(s)
 - Description of teaching methodology
- Your survey instrument, survey results and typed interpretation
 - Signed cover sheet for lab assignment
- OUTLINE of presentation as we will witness it on the day of presentation

The family history “book” contains all elements above. You may include additional materials, if desired. The book is to be turned in on the day of presentation. (USE RECYCLED MATERIALS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHEN COMPILING THIS BOOK. FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU USE A PHOTO ALBUM, REUSE AN OLDER ONE).

20 points

Evaluation of each family member, including yourself, with rationale for why they merited the points you gave them.

In order to evaluate, you should look at the family member’s performance against the group norms or constitution and whether his or her strengths were maximized in the group project. *You may not give everyone the same number of points, say that everyone was great, or overlook your own contribution—or need for improvement in this regard—in the evaluation.* It is an exceedingly responsible act to be engaged in assessment; I’d like you to take it seriously. The analysis of why any member received what he or she did is important and should consist of at least a written paragraph. If the rationales are weak and unsubstantiated by explanation, I will deduct points from *your* individual assessment. Turn in the assessments individually to me after your group has completed its presentation. See syllabus for exact date. Also note that I will give you an extra handout on how to do the ranking before the due date. Must be typed.

Family Group Quiz [20 points]

As each family group presents, I expect you to take notes on what you are learning as there will be a small test (T/F) based on concepts brought up by family groups in their presentations (worth 20 points). You will be taking the test with your family for a collective grade. See syllabus for the date of the small test.

Family Group Survey Assignment [20 points]

As previously noted, your presentation to the class will include a creative review of what you learned as a result of the research project your group undertook to learn more about the interpersonal concepts you are investigating. The following explains in detail what I am hoping to see from you.

This research project encourages students to explore course content first-hand through a modest research project; the assignment was developed by Bruce Knoll, University of South Dakota.

You are to design a small research project to explore an area of communication that intrigues you. You should choose to look into a concept or area that is represented within the pages that your group chose to teach to us. Your thinking about and executing a research project will take you out of the textbook and put you into the real world of human perception.

Designing a small research project consists of several steps.

1. Create a hypothesis. Is there something within your group's section about which you want more information or a research finding you wish to validate? Creating a hypothesis gets you to consider the finite and more subtle aspects of an area of communication. For example, here is a hypothesis that makes an assertion about the communication we have been studying this semester, "Effective interpersonal communication is characterized by high immediacy." High immediacy includes direct eye contact, direct body orientation, animated tone, use of listeners' names, and spontaneous and substantive interchange.

2. Design a methodology. You do this by devising a survey instrument to gather data from people that you interview; you will need to interview at least ten individuals. For example, to determine whether effective interpersonal communication is characterized by high immediacy in this example, you may want to use a Likert scale. A Likert scale asks the interviewee to locate his or her view, which indicates the intensity with which it is held, on a continuum.

Statement: Direct eye contact is important to effective interpersonal communication

+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
Strong agreement			Neutral	Strong disagreement		

You will want to have between 5-7 questions on your survey instrument. Type up the hypothesis **AND** the 5-7 survey questions that will yield information about your defined research question (**THIS WILL NEED TO BE APPROVED BY ME OR A LAB INSTRUCTOR BEFORE YOU DO THE SURVEYS**). I recommend saving paper and encouraging more interaction by **READING** the questions to the interviewees and then tallying their responses—as opposed to having them “fill out” a questionnaire on their own.

Some advice from other students in designing a research methodology are, “The first challenge in gathering data is to devise questions that are specific enough to give you a concrete result, but at the same time are non-biased enough to guarantee that you do not lead your subject to a pre-determined response. A student interviewer saw the need for uniformity: “I learned that while gathering information I needed to ask the same question in the same manner. If I hadn't gathered data in this way, the project wouldn't have worked.”

3. Gather the data. After you have devised the hypothesis and the 5-7 survey questions, you will want to gather data using your survey, again interviewing at least 10 people. You will want to think about what you have learned about communication, including the influence of relational history (do you know the interviewees?), artifacts (will looking professional make a difference in interviewees' willingness to participate?), and so on. You will want to preface administering the survey instrument by introducing yourself by name, giving information about this class project, and saying that you will take about 2-3 minutes of their time. Be sure to thank the interviewee whether he or she participates or not.

4. Process and interpret the data. Processing and interpreting data is interesting, regardless of how your research question is "answered." A student commented, "When I had those 'filled-in' questionnaires in front of me, I didn't know where to begin to deal with everything." And, "I never realized until then that all the information from research studies that the public reads and watches could be slightly biased. No matter how many times I looked, I always found something new to add to my study."

5. Write up the discussion for your family album. As usual, write this using good grammar and spelling. The discussion should cover the following areas: 1) Methodology—explain how your group administered the survey yielding your results. 2) Analysis—what patterns do you find in looking at the data? Is your hypothesis confirmed? Disconfirmed? Or are the results mixed? You need to do a detailed analysis of your individual questions as well as a global assessment of the survey in relation to the hypothesis. Use graphs that are easy to read to help clarify and structure the data. 3) Limitations of the Survey—discuss any limitations of your survey instrument and/or the execution of the survey that could have adversely affected the final results. 4) Implications—lastly, and most importantly, discuss implications for interpersonal communication based on what was learned in the survey. In other words, give the reader advice based on your new knowledge that he or she could use to be a better communicator. **(I hope your group will work with me on this part to ensure that you have a solid report from your research).**

Some thoughts . . .

Keep in mind that the presentation of your research as part of the entire 30-40 minute presentation should not discuss every detail of your survey but must be clear in reviewing what you learned using visual aids to illustrate your findings. I hope you will use creative techniques to make your research come alive for the class. For instance, you could have us predict in advance whether your hypothesis would be valid or not and then reveal whether we are right or not as you present. You could also have us take part in a small part of the survey. The point is to try to get us involved.

Family Group Survey (Include this page in Family Album with Instructor Signatures, Group Member signatures as asked for below)

The key CHRONOLOGICAL directions for completing this assignment are as follows:

1. Frame a hypothesis based on your topic area
2. Create 5-7 Likert scale questions or choose other sub-questions to help you answer the research question
3. Share the hypothesis and your scale questions (or other survey questions) with the Lab Instructor in the Communication Lab or with me. Make sure that the instructor knows why you're making these questions and what your topic is. Have the instructor write down their comments including suggestions on what you created before you administer your survey in the space below this number. **Have the Instructor sign their name after their comments in the space provided here below:**

4. Administer the survey to a minimum of 10 people.
5. Process your findings. Write them down to share with the Lab Instructor or me.
6. Share your interpretation of the data/ discussion section with the Lab Instructor. **Have the Lab Instructor sign their name after their comments in the space provided here below (note: If your group runs out of time to get the signature for this number, that is okay but if you can get feedback before putting this part of the family album together).**

7. Finally, explain how you as a group WILL use the data in your presentation to optimize the audience's knowledge of interpersonal communication. **Use the space below:**

8. **All group members who participated in this survey assignment should sign their names on the bottom of this page. Make this sheet a part of your group's Family History Book. Also attach a copy of the Hypothesis you used, the 5-7 Likert scale questions (or other questions) along with a typed Discussion of your group's interpretations as part of the book. Also include relevant graphs.**

TV or No TV: Content, Relationship, and Communication by Mark Knapp

The following dialogue shows how even the most ordinary conversations operate on both content and relational levels. Notice that three dimensions of the couple's relationship are at issue. At the outset the wife is seeking inclusion in her husband's spare time as well as hoping for more affection from him. As the conflict escalates, control becomes the central issue.

Imagine how much more constructive the exchange might have been if the husband and wife had realized that television watching was really only a symptom of several relational issues they needed to resolve.

Wife: "You watch too much TV."

While the content addresses a specific behavior, the relationship level is saying: I wish you didn't have so many things which take time and attention away from me. TV is only one minor example which happened to strike me at the moment.

Husband: "I do not."

The relationship message has been ignored completely and the husband prepares himself for the impending battle over TV watching.

Wife: "C'mon, honey . . . you do too."

The wife feels obligated to defend her initial statement. She cannot or will not verbalize the major problem with the relationship but tries not to be too argumentative at this point. She is still hoping her husband will respond to her cues that reveal the relationship message -- sitting on the arm of his chair with her arm around his shoulders

Husband: "All right, then, I won't watch any TV for a whole week, damn it!"

He is still trying to win on the content level. His kick-me-while-I'm-down strategy is clever because if she agrees, she is truly unreasonable, forcing him to make the big sacrifice. The "damn it" characterizes this sacrifice. Besides, if she agrees, he will still "win" because she will feel guilty for having caused him to be one down which, of course, puts him one up.

Wife: "Oh, just forget it. Do what you want."

The wife sees the trap her husband has prepared on the content level. She gives up on the possibility of positive communication on the relationship level and removes herself from his chair and starts to leave the scene.

Husband: "Forget it! How can I forget it? You come in here and make a big deal out of my TV habits. Then, to satisfy you, I agree to cut it out completely and you say, 'Forget it!' What's wrong with you, anyway?"

He realize he has "won" on the content level and finally tunes into the relationship level -- only to find negative cues. As if enjoying a relationship where he dominates, he tries to prolong his "winning" streak by urging continued argument -- never realizing he is also prolonging his partners losing streak.

Now the wife assesses her marital relationship. Her husband does not pay enough attention to her; he was insensitive to her metacommunication about their relationship; he enjoys dominating her; and now he has impugned her sanity for wishing to drop an issue she raised in the first place. The forecast for the immediate future is a long, miserable argument about TV watching. The long-range forecast is a frustrated and confused husband who can't understand why his wife is leaving him, especially since the only thing they fought about was so trivial -- TV watching.