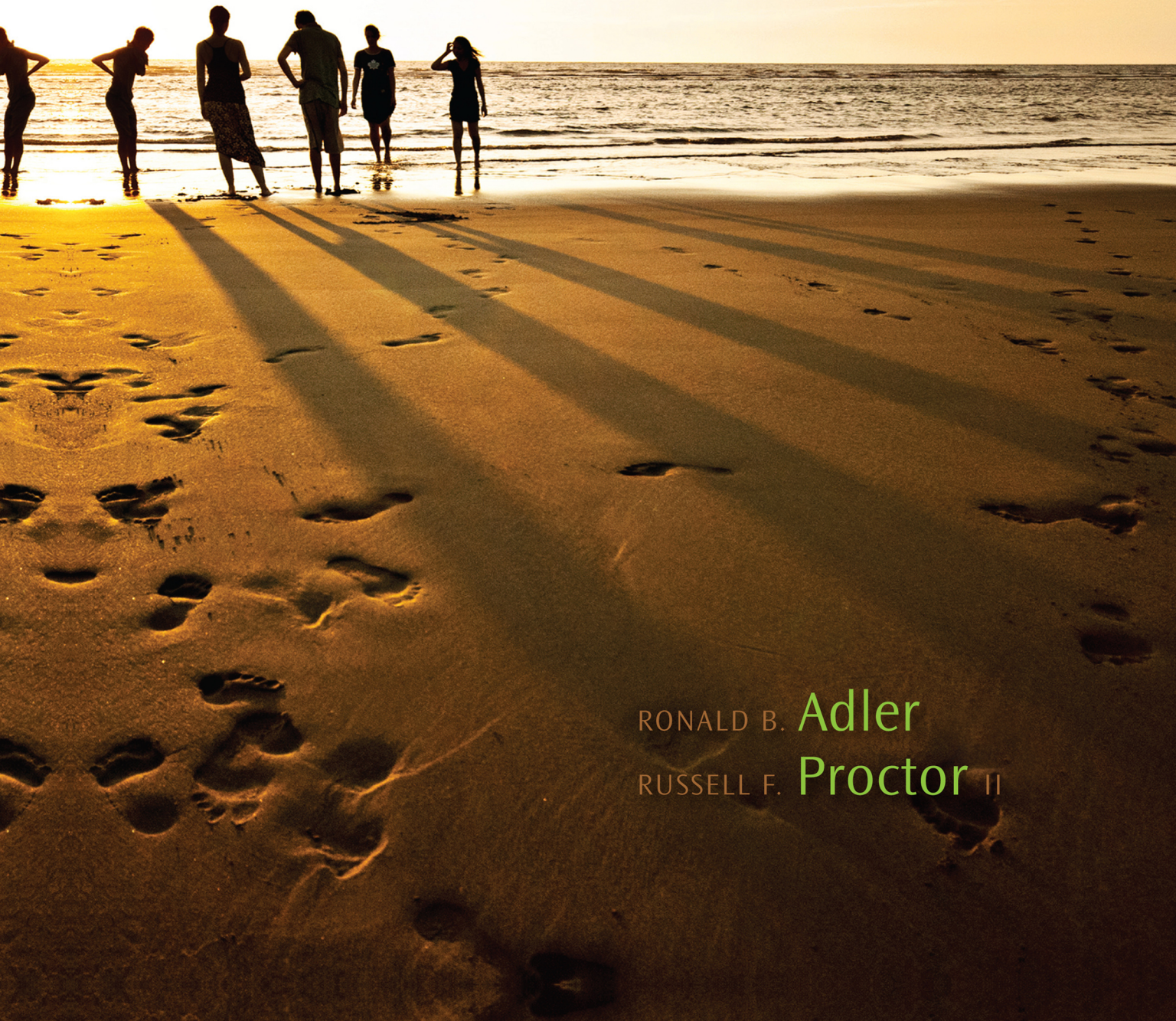


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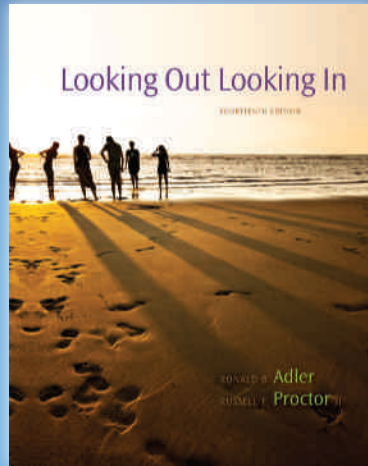
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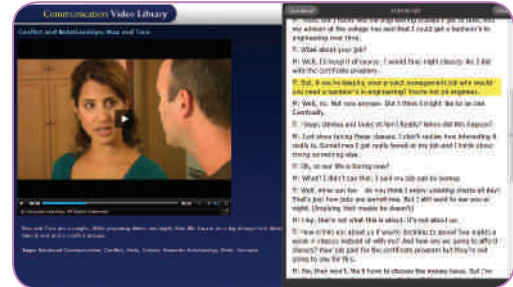
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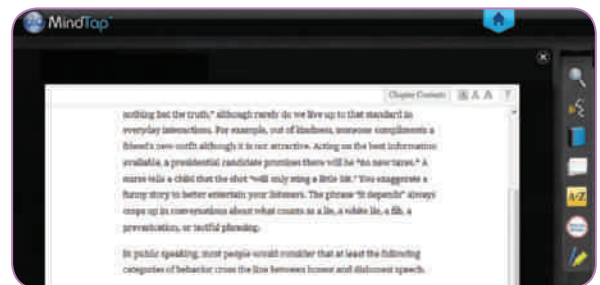
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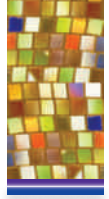
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# Looking Out Looking In



**Ronald B. Adler**  
Santa Barbara City College

**Russell F. Proctor II**  
Northern Kentucky University

**FOURTEENTH EDITION**



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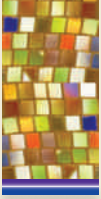
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To

**Neil Towne**

whose legacy continues in these pages.





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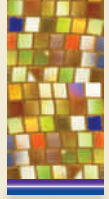
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# Preface

In a world where change seems like the only constant, some truths about education endure. Talented and inspiring professors can transform lives. Learning is best when there's a connection between abstract ideas and the student's own life. Interaction makes learning more effective and exciting. And, we believe, textbooks—whether in print or digital form—continue to play an important role by organizing course material into a coherent whole that reinforces and expands on information presented in class and online.



## What's Familiar

This edition of *Looking Out/Looking In* retains the elements that have made it the best-selling interpersonal communication textbook for over four decades, used by over one million students. As always, the user-friendly approach connects scholarship and everyday life. Virtually every page spread contains an attention-grabbing assortment of materials that support the text: articles from print and online sources, poetry, cartoons, photography, and profiles of popular films and television shows. A prominent treatment of ethical issues helps readers explore how to communicate in a principled manner. An extensive package of ancillary resources (described below) aims at helping students learn and instructors teach efficiently and effectively.

*Looking Out/Looking In* presents communication not as a collection of techniques we use *on* others, but as a process we engage in *with* them. Readers also learn that even the most competent communication doesn't always seek to create warm, fuzzy relationships, and that even less personal interaction usually has the best chance of success when handled in a constructive, respectful manner.

The discussion of gender and culture is integrated throughout the book, rather than being isolated in separate chapters. The treatment of these important topics is non-ideological, citing research that shows how other variables are often at least as important in shaping interaction. The basic focus of the chapters has remained constant, and Chapters 2 through 11 can be covered in whatever order works best for individual situations.



## New to This Edition

Users of *Looking Out/Looking In* will find that the new edition has been improved in several ways while remaining true to its approach.

- **New chapter on close relationships**

In response to many requests, the new Chapter 9 focuses on communication in the types of close relationships that matter most: with family, friends, and



romantic partners. In addition, this chapter retains information about the various ways intimacy can be expressed. This new chapter concludes with guidelines for managing communication in all types of close relationships.

- **Improved organization**

Material on self-disclosure is now in Chapter 2, where it fits most logically with the topics of self and identity management.

- **Updated and expanded coverage**

Most notably, coverage of social media has expanded to reflect the importance of mediated communication in personal relationships. For example, Chapter 1 includes a new section on competence in social media, Chapter 2 expands coverage of online impression management, and Chapter 8 explains how social media both shapes personal relationships and how people misrepresent themselves online. A reading in Chapter 2 describes the tensions that arise when parents try to connect with their children on Facebook. In Chapter 8, a young man with cerebral palsy describes how social media has opened doors for him to create and sustain relationships. In addition to in-text material, a bonus chapter dedicated to mediated communication, written by David DeAndrea of Ohio State University and Stephanie Tom Tong of Wayne State University, provides additional coverage of this important topic. To learn more about including the bonus chapter as part of a custom learning solution, please contact your Cengage Learning sales representative.

In addition to social media, every chapter describes updated research on interpersonal communication. For example, Chapter 1 updates the relationship between communication and physical health. Chapter 3 explains how expectations influence perception. Chapter 9 contains new material on relational maintenance and support. Chapter 11 includes an expanded discussion of toxic messages that can pollute a relationship. A new bonus chapter on military communication by Brandi Frisby is also available for inclusion as part of a custom learning solution, which you can learn more about by contacting your Cengage Learning sales representative.

- **New examples from popular media**


This edition is loaded with examples that depict how communication operates in a variety of relationships. Television profiles include comedies like *Parks and Recreation*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *The Office*; reality shows including *Intervention*, *The Bachelor*, and *Undercover Boss*; and dramas such as *Mad Men*, *Parenthood*, *Glee*, *Downton Abbey*, and *Modern Family*. Many other profiles come from popular films including *The Invention of Lying*, *Easy A*, *The Hangover*, *The Artist*, *Irreconcilable Differences*, *Friends With Benefits*, *The Hunger Games*, and the *Harry Potter* series.

- **Updated sidebar readings**

Compelling readings have distinguished *Looking Out/Looking In* from the beginning. This edition features a new lineup that shows how principles in the text operate in a wide range of settings and relationships. For example, in Chapter 2, an observant dinner guest explains how even casual messages can shape the self-concept of young children. In Chapter 4, a self-confident introvert offers insights on—and appreciation of—people who prefer to observe instead of talk. In Chapter 5, a mother explains how labels make a difference for describing her special needs daughter. Chapter 7 includes an essay explaining what messages are—and aren't—helpful when confronting someone grieving over a loss. Chapter 11 includes insights about how “paying it forward” pays in the business world.

- **New coverage of diversity**

Throughout the book, *Looking at Diversity* profiles—many new to this edition—provide first-person accounts by communicators from a wide range of backgrounds. In Chapter 1, a man born and raised in Europe describes the challenges of communicating across cultures. Chapter 5 offers the perspective of a healthcare clinician whose job requires her and her associates to translate patients' needs from Spanish to English. In Chapter 7, an intercultural scholar explains how listening responses in South Korea, where he was raised, are different from those in the United States. And Chapter 9 describes the challenges faced by a family in which the parents and children are from different races.



## In-Text Learning Resources

Every chapter contains a variety of resources to help students understand and use the principles introduced in the text. These include:

**Looking at Diversity profiles**, many new to this edition, provide first-person accounts by communicators from a wide range of cultural, physical, ethnic, and occupational backgrounds. These profiles help readers appreciate that interpersonal communication is shaped by who you are and where you come from.

**On the Job sidebars** in every chapter highlight the importance of interpersonal communication in the workplace. Grounded in scholarly research, these sidebars equip readers with communication strategies that will enhance career success.

**In Real Life transcripts** describe how the skills and concepts from the text sound in everyday life. Seeing real people use the skills in familiar situations gives students both the modeling and confidence to try them in their own relationships. Dramatized versions of many of these transcripts are featured in the *Looking Out/Looking In* online resources described below.

**Activities** in every chapter help readers engage with important concepts. They are labeled by type: *Pause and Reflect* (formerly *Invitation to Insight*) boxes help readers understand how theory and research apply to their own lives. *Skill Builders* help them improve their communication skills. *Ethical Challenges* offer wisdom about dilemmas that communicators face as they pursue their own goals.




## Other Teaching and Learning Resources

Along with the text itself, *Looking Out/Looking In* is accompanied by an extensive array of materials that will make teaching and learning more efficient and effective. **Note to faculty:** If you want your students to have access to the online resources for this text, please be sure to order them for your course. The content in these resources can be bundled with every new copy of the text or ordered separately. If you do not order them, your students will not have access to the online resources for the start of class. *Contact your local Wadsworth Cengage Learning sales representative for more details.*

- The **Advantage Edition of *Looking Out/Looking In*** is available for instructors who are interested in an alternate version of the book. Part of the Cengage Learning Advantage Series, this version of the book is paperback and black and white, and it offers a built-in student workbook at the end of each chapter that has perforated pages so material can be submitted as homework.

- The **Student Activities Manual** has been revised by Justin Braxton-Brown, Hopkinsville Community College. It contains a wealth of resources to help students understand and master concepts and skills introduced in the text.
- The more you study, the better the results. Make the most of your study time by accessing everything you need to succeed in one place. The **Speech Communication CourseMate** for *Looking Out/Looking In* includes these features.
  - The **Interactive eBook for Looking Out/Looking In** provides students with interactive exercises, highlighting and bookmarking tools, search tools, and an online text-specific activity manual. The Student Activities Manual contains a wealth of resources to help students understand and master concepts and skills introduced in the text.
  - “**In Real Life**” **Video Activities** feature real-life communication scenarios, which allow students to watch and analyze videos of communication encounters that illustrate concepts discussed in the book. In addition, Interpersonal Simulations ask students to consider the consequences of their choices in hypothetical interpersonal situations.
  - **Video Skillbuilder videos** provide unscripted clips of students talking about their struggles and successes in college. Topics covered include taking notes to improve your grades, time management, and learning styles.
  - **InfoTrac College Edition** is a virtual library featuring more than 18 million reliable, full-length articles from five thousand academic and popular periodicals that can be retrieved almost instantly.
  - **Quizzes, Flashcards, Interactive Video Activities**, and more.

Go to [CengageBrain.com](http://CengageBrain.com) to access these resources, and look for this icon  to find resources related to your text in *Speech Communication CourseMate*.

- The **CengageBrain Online Store**, [CengageBrain.com](http://CengageBrain.com), is a single destination for more than 15,000 new print textbooks, textbook rentals, eBooks, single eChapters, and print and digital tools. [CengageBrain.com](http://CengageBrain.com) provides freedom to purchase Cengage Learning Products à la carte—exactly what you need, when you need it. Visit [CengageBrain.com](http://CengageBrain.com) for details.
- A comprehensive **Instructor’s Resource Manual**, revised by Heidi Murphy, Central New Mexico Community College, provides tips and tools for both new and experienced instructors. The manual also contains hard copy of over 1,200 class-tested exam questions, indexed by page number and level of understanding.
- The **PowerLecture CD-ROM** contains an electronic version of the Instructor’s Resource Manual, ExamView® Computerized Testing, predesigned Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations, and JoinIn® classroom quizzing. The PowerPoint presentations contain text, images, and videos of student speeches and can be used as they are or customized to suit your course needs.

- **Communication Scenarios for Critique and Analysis Videos** include additional scenarios covering interviewing and group work. *Contact your Wadsworth Cengage Learning sales representative for details.*
- **Communication in Film III: Teaching Communication Courses Using Feature Films** by Russell F. Proctor II, Northern Kentucky University, expands on the film tips in each chapter of *Looking Out/Looking In*. This guide provides detailed suggestions for using both new and classic films to illustrate communication principles introduced in the text.
- **Media Guide for Interpersonal Communication** by Charles G. Apple, University of Michigan-Flint, provides faculty with media resource listings focused on general interpersonal communication topics. Each listing provides compelling examples of how interpersonal communication concepts are illustrated in particular films, books, plays, websites, or journal articles. Discussion questions are provided.
- **The Teaching Assistant's Guide to the Basic Course** by Katherine G. Hendrix, University of Memphis, is based on leading communication teacher training programs and covers general teaching and course management topics, as well as specific strategies for communication instruction, such as providing effective feedback on performance, managing sensitive class discussions, and conducting mock interviews.
- **A Guide to the Basic Course for ESL Students** by Esther Yook, Mary Washington College, is available bundled with the text and assists the nonnative English speaker. It features FAQs, helpful URLs, and strategies for accent management and overcoming speech apprehension.
- **The Art and Strategy of Service Learning** by Rick Isaacson and Jeff Saperstein can be bundled with the text and is an invaluable resource for students in a basic course that integrates a service-learning component. The handbook provides guidelines for connecting service learning work with classroom concepts and advice for working effectively with agencies and organizations. The handbook also provides model forms and reports and a directory of online resources.
- **CourseCare training and support** can help you get trained, get connected, and get the support you need for the seamless integration of digital resources into your course. This unparalleled technology service and training program provides robust online resources, peer-to-peer instruction, personalized training, and a customizable program you can count on. Visit [cengagebrain.com/coursecare/](http://cengagebrain.com/coursecare/) to sign up for online seminars, first day of class services, technical support, or personalized, face-to-face training. Our online and onsite trainings are frequently led by one of our Lead Teachers, faculty members who are experts in using Wadsworth Cengage Learning technology and can provide best practices and teaching tips.
- As part of our **Flex-Text customization program**, you can add your personal touch to *Looking Out/Looking In* with a course-specific cover and up to 32 pages of your own content at no additional cost. Create a text as unique as your course: quickly, simply, and affordably. Two bonus chapters unique to *Looking Out/Looking In* are available now: one about computer-mediated communication, the other about communication and the military.





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## About the Authors

Since this is a book about interpersonal communication, it seems appropriate for us to introduce ourselves to you, the reader. The “we” you’ll be reading throughout this book isn’t just an editorial device: It refers to two real people—Ron Adler and Russ Proctor.

**Ron Adler** lives in Santa Barbara, California, with his wife, Sherri, an artist and photo researcher who selected most of the images in this book. Their three adult children were infants when early editions of *Looking Out/Looking In* were conceived, and they grew up as guinea pigs for the field testing of many concepts in this book. If you asked them, they would vouch for the value of the information between these covers.

Ron spends most of his professional time writing about communication. In addition to helping create *Looking Out/Looking In*, he has contributed to six other books about topics including business communication, public speaking, small group communication, assertiveness, and social skills. Besides writing and teaching, Ron teaches college courses and helps professional and business people improve their communication on the job. Cycling and hiking help keep Ron physically and emotionally healthy.



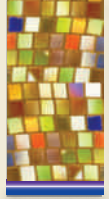
**Russ Proctor** is a professor at Northern Kentucky University, where his sons R. P. and Randy both attended. Russ’s wife, Pam, is an educator too, training teachers, students, and businesses to use energy more efficiently.

Russ met Ron at a communication conference in 1990, where they quickly discovered a shared interest in using feature films as a teaching tool. They have written and spoken extensively on this topic over the years, and they have also co-authored several textbooks and articles. When Russ isn’t teaching, writing, or presenting, his hobbies include sports (especially baseball), classic rock music (especially Steely Dan), and cooking (especially for family and friends on his birthday each year).





Masterfile



# A First Look at Interpersonal Communication

Here are the topics discussed in this chapter:

## Why We Communicate

Physical Needs  
Identity Needs  
Social Needs  
Practical Goals

## The Process of Communication

A Linear View  
A Transactional View  
Interpersonal and Impersonal Communication

## Communication Principles and Misconceptions

Communication Principles  
Communication Misconceptions

## Social Media and Interpersonal Communication

Benefits of Social Media  
Challenges of Social Media

## What Makes an Effective Communicator?

Communication Competence Defined  
Characteristics of Competent Communicators  
Competence in Intercultural Communication  
Competence in Social Media

## Summary

## Key Terms

## Online Resources

## Search Terms

## Film and Television

After studying the topics in this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Assess the needs (physical, identity, social, and practical) that communicators are attempting to satisfy in a given situation or relationship.
2. Apply the transactional communication model to a specific situation.
3. Describe how the communication principles and misconceptions identified in this chapter are evident in a specific situation.
4. Describe the degree to which communication (in a specific instance or a relationship) is qualitatively impersonal or interpersonal, and describe the consequences of this level of interaction.
5. Diagnose the effectiveness of various communication channels in a specific situation.
6. Determine the level of communication competence in a specific instance or a relationship.

Perhaps you played this game as a child. The group of children chooses a victim—either as punishment for committing a real or imagined offense or just for “fun.” Then for a period of time, that victim is given the silent treatment. No one speaks to him or her, and no one responds to anything the victim says or does.

If you were the subject of this silent treatment, you probably experienced a range of emotions. At first you might have felt—or at least acted—indifferent. But after a while the strain of being treated as a nonperson probably began to grow. If the game went on long enough, it’s likely you found yourself either retreating into a state of depression or lashing out with hostility—partly to show your anger and partly to get a response from the others.

Adults, as well as children, have used the silent treatment in virtually every society throughout history as a powerful tool to express displeasure and for social control.<sup>1</sup> We all know intuitively that communication—the company of others—is one of the most basic human needs, and that lack of contact is among the cruelest punishments a person can suffer.

Besides being emotionally painful, being deprived of companionship is so serious that it can affect life itself. Fredrick II, emperor of Germany from 1196 to 1250, may have been the first person to prove the point systematically. A medieval historian described one of his significant, if inhumane, experiments:

He bade foster mothers and nurses to suckle the children, to bathe and wash them, but in no way to prattle with them, for he wanted to learn whether they would speak the Hebrew language, which was the oldest, or Greek, or Latin, or Arabic, or perhaps the language of their parents, of whom they had been born. But he labored in vain because all the children died. For they could not live without the petting and joyful faces and loving words of their foster mothers.\*

Fortunately, contemporary researchers have found less barbaric ways to illustrate the importance of communication. In one study of isolation, subjects were paid to remain alone in a locked room. Of the five subjects, one lasted for eight days. Three held out for two days, one commenting, “Never again.” The fifth subject lasted only two hours.<sup>2</sup>

The need for contact and companionship is just as strong outside the laboratory, as individuals who have led solitary lives by choice or necessity have discovered. W. Carl Jackson, an adventurer who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean alone in fifty-one days, summarized the feelings common to most loners:

I found the loneliness of the second month almost excruciating. I always thought of myself as self-sufficient, but I found life without people had no meaning. I had a definite need for somebody to talk to, someone real, alive, and breathing.†

## Why We Communicate

You might object to stories like this, claiming that solitude would be a welcome relief from the irritations of everyday life. It’s true that all of us need solitude, often more than we get, but each of us has a point beyond which we do not want to be alone. Beyond this point, solitude changes from a pleasurable to a painful condition. In other words, we all need relationships. We all need to communicate.

\*Ross, J. B., & McLaughlin, M. M. (Eds.). (1949). *A portable medieval reader*. New York, NY: Viking.

†Jackson, W. C. (1978, September 7). Lonely dean finishes “excruciating” voyage. *Wisconsin State Journal*. Retrieved from <http://newspaperarchive.com/wisconsin-state-journal/1978-09-07/page-2/>. Reprinted with permission.



AP Photo/Javier Galeano



## PHYSICAL NEEDS

Communication is so important that its presence or absence affects physical health. In extreme cases, communication can even become a matter of life or death. When he was a Navy pilot, U.S. Senator John McCain was shot down over North Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war for six years, often in solitary confinement. He and his fellow POWs set up clandestine codes in which they sent messages by tapping on walls to laboriously spell out words. McCain describes the importance of keeping contact and the risks that inmates would take to maintain contact with one another:

The punishment for communicating could be severe, and a few POWs, having been caught and beaten for their efforts, had their spirits broken as their bodies were battered. Terrified of a return trip to the punishment room, they would lie still in their cells when their comrades tried to tap them up on the wall. Very few would remain uncommunicative for long. To suffer all this alone was less tolerable than torture. Withdrawing in silence from the fellowship of other Americans . . . was to us the approach of death.\*

Other prisoners have also described the punishing effects of social isolation. Reflecting on his seven years as a hostage in Lebanon, former news correspondent Terry Anderson said flatly, “I would rather have had the worst companion than no companion at all.”<sup>3</sup>

The link between communication and physical well-being isn’t restricted to prisoners. Medical researchers have identified a wide range of health threats that can result from a lack of close relationships. For instance:

- A meta-analysis of nearly 150 studies and over 300,000 participants found that socially connected people—those with strong networks of family and friends—live an average of 3.7 years longer than those who are socially isolated.<sup>4</sup>
- A lack of social relationships jeopardizes coronary health to a degree that rivals cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, blood lipids, obesity, and lack of physical activity.<sup>5</sup>
- Socially isolated people are four times more susceptible to the common cold than are those who have active social networks.<sup>6</sup>
- Divorced, separated, and widowed people are five to ten times more likely to need mental hospitalization than their married counterparts. Happily married people also have lower incidences of pneumonia, surgery, and cancer than do single people.<sup>7</sup> (It’s important to note that the *quality* of the relationship is more important than the institution of marriage in these studies.)

By contrast, a life that includes positive relationships created through communication leads to better health. As little as ten minutes per day of socializing improves memory and boosts intellectual function.<sup>8</sup> Conversation with others reduces feelings of loneliness and its accompanying maladies.<sup>9</sup> Stress hormones decline the more often people hear expressions of affection from loved ones.<sup>10</sup>

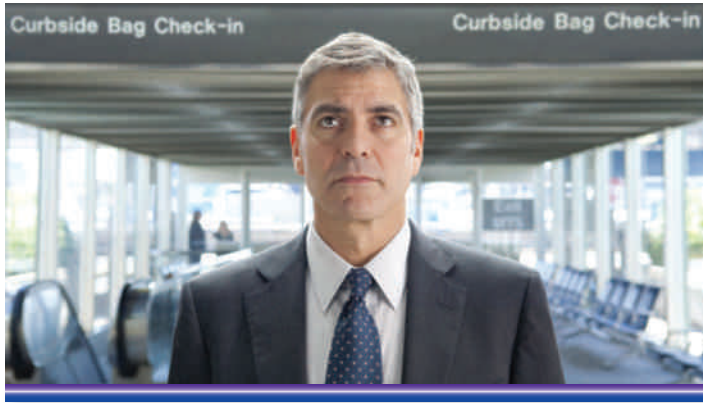
Research like this demonstrates the importance of having satisfying personal relationships. Not everyone needs the same amount of contact, and the quality of communication is almost certainly as significant as the quantity. The key point is that personal communication is essential for our well-being.

## IDENTITY NEEDS

Communication does more than enable us to survive. It is the way—indeed, the *only* way—we learn who we are. As Chapter 2 explains, our sense of identity comes from the way we interact with other people. Are we smart or stupid, attractive or ugly, skillful or inept? The answers to these questions don’t come from looking in the mirror. We decide who we are based on how others react to us.

\*McCain, J. (1999). *Faith of my fathers* (p. 212). New York, NY: Random House.





Paramount Pictures/The Kobal Collection

In the film *Up in the Air*, Ryan Bingham (George Clooney) learns the hard way that life without friendship, family, and love is void of meaning. (See the film summary at the end of this chapter.)

Deprived of communication with others, we would have no sense of ourselves. A dramatic example is the “Wild Boy of Aveyron,” who spent his early childhood without any apparent human contact. The boy was discovered in January 1800 digging for vegetables in a French village garden. He showed no behaviors that one would expect in a social human. The boy could not speak but rather uttered only weird cries. More significant than this lack of social skills was his lack of any identity as a human being. As author Roger Shattuck put it, “The boy had no human sense of being in the world. He had no sense of himself as a person related to other persons.”<sup>11</sup>

Only with the influence of a loving “mother” did the boy begin to behave—and, we can imagine, think of himself—as a human.

Like the boy of Aveyron, each of us enters the world with little or no sense of identity. We gain an idea of who we are from the way others define us. As Chapter 2 explains, the messages we receive in early childhood are the strongest, but the influence of others continues throughout life.

### SOCIAL NEEDS

Besides helping to define who we are, communication provides a vital link with others. Researchers and theorists have identified a whole range of social needs that we satisfy by communicating. These include pleasure, affection, companionship, escape, relaxation, and control.<sup>12</sup>

Research suggests a strong link between effective interpersonal communication and happiness. In one study of more than 200 college students, the happiest 10 percent described themselves as having a rich social life. (The very happy people were no different from their classmates in any other measurable way such as amount of sleep, exercise, TV watching, religious activity, or alcohol consumption.)<sup>13</sup> In another study, women reported that “socializing” contributed more to a satisfying life than virtually any other activity, including relaxing, shopping, eating, exercise, TV, or prayer.<sup>14</sup> Married couples who are effective communicators report happier relationships than less skillful husbands and wives—a finding that has been supported across cultures.<sup>15</sup>

Despite knowing that communication is vital to social satisfaction, a variety of evidence suggests that many people aren’t very successful at managing their interpersonal relationships. For example, one study revealed that one-quarter of the more than 4,000 adults surveyed knew more about their dogs than they did about their neighbors’ backgrounds.<sup>16</sup> Research also suggests that the number of friendships is in decline. One widely recognized survey reported that, in 1985, Americans had an average of 2.94 close friends. Twenty years later, that number had dropped to 2.08.<sup>17</sup> It’s worth noting that educated Americans reported having larger and more diverse networks. In other words, a higher education can enhance your relational life as well as your intellect.

Because connections with others are so vital, some theorists maintain that positive relationships may be the single most important source of life satisfaction and emotional

well-being in every culture.<sup>18</sup> If you pause now and make a mental list of your own relationships, you'll probably see that, no matter how successfully you interact with at home, with friends, at school, and at work, there is plenty of room for improvement in your everyday life. The information that follows will help you improve the way you communicate with the people who matter most to you.

### PRACTICAL GOALS

Besides satisfying social needs and shaping our identity, communication is the most widely used approach to satisfying what communication scholars call **instrumental goals**: getting others to behave in ways we want. Some instrumental goals are quite basic: Communication is the tool that lets you tell the hair stylist to take just a little off the sides, lets you negotiate household duties, and lets you convince the plumber that the broken pipe needs attention *now*!

Other instrumental goals are more important. Career success is the prime example. As the On the Job box on page 8 shows, communication skills are essential in virtually every career. They can even make the difference between life and death. The Los Angeles Police Department cited “bad communication” among the most common reasons for errors in shooting by its officers.<sup>19</sup> The ability to communicate effectively is just as essential for doctors, nurses, and other medical practitioners.<sup>20</sup> Researchers discovered that “poor communication” was the root of more than 60 percent of reported medical errors—including death, serious physical injury, and psychological trauma.<sup>21</sup> Research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and elsewhere revealed a significant difference between the communication skills of physicians who had no malpractice claims against them and those with previous claims.<sup>22</sup>

Psychologist Abraham Maslow suggested that the physical, identity, social, and practical needs we have been discussing fall into five hierarchical categories, each of which must be satisfied before we concern ourselves with the less fundamental needs.<sup>23</sup> The most basic of these needs are *physical*: sufficient air, water, food, and rest, and the ability to reproduce as a species. The second of Maslow's needs is *safety*: protection from threats to our well-being. Beyond physical and safety needs are the *social needs* we have mentioned already. Beyond these, Maslow suggests, each of us has *self-esteem* needs: the desire to believe that we are worthwhile, valuable people. The final category of needs described by Maslow is *self-actualization*: the desire to develop our potential to the maximum, to become the best person we can be. As you read on, think about the ways in which communication is often necessary to satisfy each level of need.



## The Process of Communication

We have been talking about *communication* as though the meaning of this word were perfectly clear. Communication scholars have argued for years about communication definitions. Despite their many disagreements, most would agree that at its essence, communication is about using messages to generate meanings.<sup>24</sup> Notice how this basic definition holds true across a variety of contexts—public speaking, small groups, mass media, etc. Before going further, we need to explain systematically what happens when people exchange messages and create meanings in interpersonal communication. Doing so will introduce you to a common working vocabulary and, at the same time, preview some of the topics that are covered in later chapters.

## ON THE JOB

### Communication and Career Success

No matter what the field, research confirms what experienced workers already know—that communication skills are crucial in finding and succeeding in a job. Communication skills often make the difference between being hired and being rejected. In one widely followed annual survey, employers list the skills and qualities for their ideal candidate. Communication skills always top the list, ahead of technical skills, initiative, analytical ability, and computer skills.<sup>a</sup>

In another survey, managers across the country rated the abilities to speak and listen effectively as the two most important factors in helping college graduates find jobs in a competitive workplace—more important than technical competence, work experience, and specific degree earned.<sup>b</sup> When 170 well-known business and industrial firms were asked to list the most common reasons for *not*

offering jobs to applicants, the most frequent replies were “inability to communicate” and “poor communication skills.”<sup>c</sup>

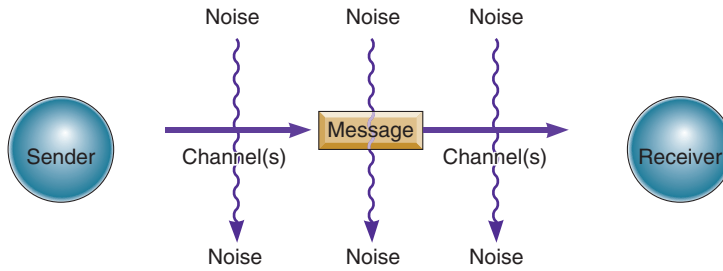
Once you have been hired, the need for communication skills is important in virtually every career.<sup>d</sup> Engineers spend the bulk of their working lives speaking and listening, mostly in one-to-one and small-group settings.<sup>e</sup> Accountants and the firms that hire them consistently cite effective communication as essential for career success.<sup>f</sup> One executive at computer giant Sun Microsystems made the point forcefully: “If there’s one skill that’s required for success in this industry, it’s communication skills.”<sup>g</sup> Writing in *The Scientist*, a commentator echoed this sentiment: “If I give any advice, it is that you can never do enough training around your overall communication skills.”<sup>h</sup>

#### A LINEAR VIEW

In the early days of studying communication as a social science, researchers created models to illustrate the communication process. Their first attempts resulted in a **linear communication model**, which depicts communication as something a sender “does to” a receiver. According to the linear model in Figure 1.1,

A **sender** (the person creating the message)  
**encodes** (puts thoughts into symbols and gestures) a  
**message** (the information being transmitted), sending it through a  
**channel** (the medium through which the message passes) to a  
**receiver** (the person attending to the message) who  
**decodes** (makes sense of the message), while contending with  
**noise** (distractions that disrupt transmission).

Notice how the appearance of and vocabulary in Figure 1.1 represent how radio and television broadcasting operate. This isn’t a coincidence: The scientists who created it were primarily interested in early electronic media. The widespread use of this model has affected the way we think and talk about communication. There is a linear, machinelike quality to familiar phrases, such as “We’re having a communication breakdown” and “I don’t think my message is getting through.” While this is sometimes the case in mediated forms of communication, these familiar phrases (and the thinking they represent) obscure some important features of human communication. Does interpersonal communication really “break down,” or are people still exchanging information even when they’re not talking to each other? Is it possible to “get a message through” to someone loudly and clearly, but still not get the desired reaction? Here are some other questions to consider about the shortcomings of the linear model:



**FIGURE 1.1** Linear Communication Model © Cengage Learning

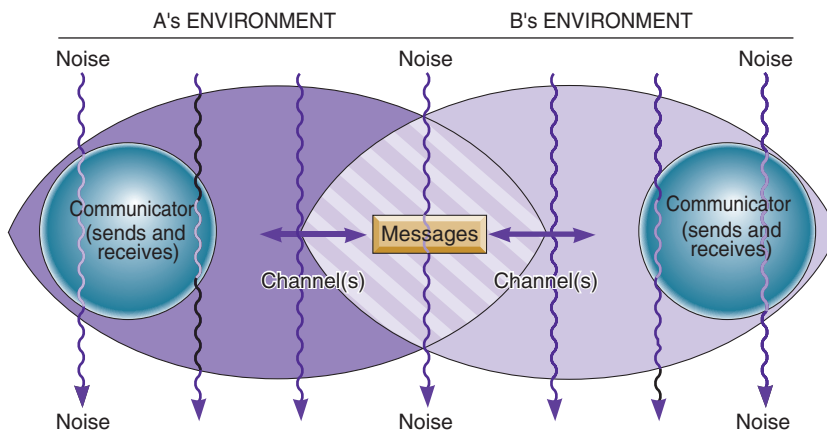
- When you're having a face-to-face conversation with a friend, is there only one sender and one receiver, or do both of you send and receive messages simultaneously?
- Do you purposely encode every message you send, or do you engage in some behaviors unconsciously that still communicate messages to others?
- Even when you send a message electronically (e.g., through texting or email), is the message's meaning affected by larger factors such as culture, environment, and relational history?

These and other questions have led scholars to create models that better represent interpersonal communication. We will look at one of these models now.

### A TRANSACTIONAL VIEW

A **transactional communication model** (Figure 1.2) updates and expands the linear model to better capture communication as a uniquely human process. Some concepts and terms from the linear model are retained in the transactional model, whereas others are enhanced, added, or eliminated.

The transactional model uses the word *communicator* instead of *sender* and *receiver*. This term reflects the fact that people typically send and receive messages simultaneously and not in a unidirectional or back-and-forth manner, as suggested by the linear model. Consider, for example, what might happen when you and a housemate negotiate how to handle household chores. As soon as you begin to hear (receive) the words sent by your housemate, "I want to talk about cleaning the kitchen . . .," you grimace and clench your jaw (sending a nonverbal message of your own while receiving the verbal one). This reaction leads your housemate to interrupt herself defensively, sending a new message: "Now wait a minute . . ."



**FIGURE 1.2** Transactional Communication Model

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