Understanding Interpersonal Relationships
Class 1
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What makes communication "Interpersonal"?

- Context:
  - all two-person (dyadic) interaction is interpersonal
- Quality not Quantity is what counts
- Qualitative:
  - When two people treat each other as unique individuals regardless of the context
  - Interpersonal relationship:
    - When two people meet one another's social needs

Content vs. Relational Messages

- Every verbal msg. contains two kinds of msgs.
- Content:
  - Focuses on a subject being discussed
  - Clean your room, Put gas in the car, Pay the rent $
- Relational:
  - Shows how the parties feel about each other
  - Deal with 1 or more social needs
    - Inclusion
    - Control
    - Affection
    - Respect

Relational Messages cont'd.

- Relational messages are often conveyed nonverbally
- Remember than nonverbal communication can be difficult to interpret (ambiguous)
- Use Perception checking to clarify meaning

Metacommunication

– Metacommunication:

- Communication about communication
- Discussing our relationship is metacommunication
- Uses for metacommunication
  - It is essential in successful relationships
  - Method of solving conflicts constructively
  - Shift discussion from content to relational questions
  - Relational issues are usually where problems are found
  - It sounds like you're angry with me
  - I appreciate your honesty with me

Intimacy

- Intimacy usually refers to closeness.
- Can appear on different levels:
  - Physical: athletic events, emergencies
  - Intellectual: exchange of important ideas
  - Emotional: exchange of important feelings
  - Shared activities

Intimacy and Gender

- Women value emotional expression as a path to intimacy. Men value doing things, such as activities, other than talking.

Intimacy and Culture

- Differences in culture can lead to problems in intimacy in terms of both the need for it and how to reach it. Different disclosure rates can impact this variable.

Relational Development

Knapp's Developmental Model: A ten stage model, separated into coming together and coming apart sections, that explains relational development.

1. Initiating: Making contact with another person
2. Experimenting: emergence of "small-talk"
3. Intensifying: expression of feelings; spending more time together
4. Integrating: Identity as one social unit is created
5. Bonding: symbolic public gestures to show commitment
6. Differentiating: re-establish individual identity
7. Circumscribing: shrinking interest and commitment
8. Stagnation: boredom
9. Avoiding: when stagnation becomes unpleasant
10. Termination: ending

Characteristics of Relational Development & Maintenance

- Relationships are constantly changing
- Movement is always to a new place

Self-Disclosure

- Definition: deliberately revealing information about oneself that is signification and that would not normally be known to others
  - Deliberate: purposeful
  - Significant: revealing important information
  - Not known to others

Self-disclosure

- Reciprocation and development of a relationship are the most common reasons for self-disclosure

Social Penetration Model (Altman & Taylor)

- Concerned with two factors that determine the intimacy of interpersonal relationships
  - Breadth: range of subjects being discussed
  - Depth: shift from nonrevealing messages to more personal ones

Johari Window
(Luft & Ingham)

- Four components that make up what one knows about him/herself and what others know about him or her
  - Open: both you and the other are aware of
  - Blind: you are unaware, but the other is not
  - Hidden: you are aware, but aren't willing to share with others
  - Unknown: both you and the other are not unaware

Characteristics of Effective Self-disclosure

- Influenced by culture
- Usually occurs in dyads
- Usually symmetrical
- Occurs incrementally
- Large amounts of self-disclosure are usually unnecessary
- Self-disclosure is usually scarce

Guidelines for Appropriate Self-disclosure

- Is the other important?
- Is the risk of disclosing reasonable?
- Are the amount and type of disclosure appropriate?
- Is the disclosure relevant to the situation at hand?
- Is the disclosure reciprocated?
- Will the effect be constructive?
- Is the self-disclosure clear and understandable?

Alternatives to self-disclosure

- Lies
  - White lies: harmless or even helpful
- Equivocation
  - Intentionally vague
  - Two or more equally plausible meanings
- Hinting
  - More direct that equivocal statements
  - Get a desired response from others

SOME SHOTS OF OUR CLASS