

Final paper: letter of advice

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Final Paper: Letter of Advice COMM 200 Interpersonal Communication

Professor: Donna Mills February 3, 2013 Final Paper: Letter of Advice Dear

Tim and Sara, my advice to you for a successful relationship is; being able to communicate effectively. Even though men and woman communicate in different ways, effectively using interpersonal communication in a relationship requires an understanding of each other's perceptions, emotions, and the nonverbal expressions. It is also essential to be able to describe strategies for managing interpersonal conflicts. Communication between husband and wife involves expectations, and problems occur when people behave in ways that are inconsistent with the relationship. People in relationships are interconnected and interdependent, and when you communicate it is important to make the other person feel valued.

Understanding how perceptions, emotions and nonverbal expression affect interpersonal relationships. Researchers have shown that we have a tendency to overestimate our ability to communicate with people that are close to us. " People commonly believe that they communicate better with close friends than with strangers. That closeness can lead people to overestimate how well they communicate" (US News 2011). So just because Sara says " Its getting hot in here", that is not necessarily your cue to rush to the bedroom. You have to be able to read between the lines, and understand what she means when she says something, just because you take it one way, doesn't mean that's the correct interpretation. The things that we say with our nonverbal communication are just as vital as what we say out loud. Not being able to accurately read the nonverbal cues that your spouse sends can become a big problem in a marriage. Collins English Dictionary defines

nonverbal communication as “ those aspects of communication, such as gestures, and facial expressions, that do not involve verbal communication but which may include nonverbal aspects of speech” (Collins English Dictionary 2009). When we listen to other we focus on what they say, but we also make judgments based on their actions and their body language. It is very easy to misread someone when they are saying one thing, but their body language portrays a different meaning. So it is essential to be able to understand each other’s words and just as importantly, what they are not saying. Also our emotions play a big factor in maintaining a successful relationship. Researchers have found that when feelings are not expressed, they have a tendency to “ leak out” in some ways (Sole 2011). For example, if you get angry and try to repress those feelings of anger, ultimately you will no longer be able to do so, and even though it may be subconscious, it is going to show in either the way you talk or act towards the other person.

Define emotional intelligence and its role in effective interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to understand, communicate, and manage emotions and feelings and to respond to the feelings of others (Sole 2011). Being able to respond and communicate with someone depends in large part on the type of emotions that are being used. It is critical to be able to effectively handle our emotions, as they can be both positive and negative influences on our relationships. Being able to read the emotions of your spouse will ensure that you have a successful marriage. For instance letting negative emotions hang around and influence how you communicate with each other can be a recipe for disaster, but being able to recognize those emotions and know when to deal with them is an example of

emotional intelligence. Our moods often directly influence our emotions as well. If you are in good mood, then things seem to be going very well, everyone is happy and getting along. All it takes is just one bad mood, handled the wrong way and things are vastly different. If your mood starts to affect certain situations, like normal everyday decisions; what to have for dinner, what to watch on television etc, it can be very hard to maintain a good line of communication with that person. We all have bad mood, it's inevitable, however the best things to do when your spouse is having one is not to try and break through, but to wait and let it pass. Then you can work on whatever was affected by the mood. " Most serious relationship problems turn out to be nothing more than two partners who have made a habit of taking each other's low moods too seriously" (Sole 2011). Evaluate appropriate levels of self-disclosure in relationships. The social penetration theory says that after awhile we begin to talk more about personal and revealing things about ourselves, instead of just the basic superficial and safe topics that precede a serious relationship (Sole 2011). Being that the two of you are newlyweds, I am sure that self-disclosure isn't something new to either of you. However just because you are married doesn't mean that you will no longer have to disclose certain information, and there maybe even some things that neither of you has told the other person. My advice to you is to always be open and truthful with your spouse. We all have dreams and desires, and its natural for us to keep those inside, out of fear or rejection. If you can't share these feelings with your spouse, whom can you tell them to? The most important characteristic of a deep interpersonal relationship is the self-disclosure of our innermost thoughts and feelings

(Sole 2011). When you have open self-disclosure in a relationship it helps build and maintain a bond, if both of you have vested so much in this marriage it will give it a better insight into your spouse and will ultimately lead to better communication overall. Also knowing that your spouse values your opinion enough to share the intimate details of their self, can be very comforting, especially in the bad times. In 1987, a review in the Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy found that higher rates of self-disclosure were tied with higher rates of marital satisfaction (Schoenberg 2011). So even if it seems like it doesn't matter, or if you are afraid of what your spouse will think, it is better to share with them what you are thinking, after all you made the decision to spend your life with this person, a little self-disclosure will go a long way. Describe strategies for managing interpersonal conflicts. Being able to effectively deal with interpersonal conflicts is a very valuable skill to have, especially in a relationship. It is not if, but when you will have some type of conflict arise in your marriage. The key for maintaining a successful relationship is, knowing the best way to properly handle those conflicts when they arise, and keeping them from becoming something bigger and worse. People in relationships are interconnected and interdependent. The way that you act and talk to your spouse will affect the dynamic of your marriage. Conflict can be dangerous because it has a tendency to grow and worsen, but it can also have important benefits that can strengthen a relationship (Sole 2011). It's normal to get upset with your spouse from time to time, especially if you are living together for the first time. Living with someone can cause a lot of headaches and often leads to many arguments. For example, if it's Tim's job to clean the kitchen after

dinner, and it doesn't get done chances are Sara won't be too happy about it. However this is not by any means a type of conflict that should end in a shouting match, or one or more of you getting hurt feelings. Situations like this are bound to arise from time to time, and it is very important that they are dealt with in a constructive manner. If your spouse does or in this case doesn't do something, that action should be brought to their attention in a way that doesn't feel like an attack. In happy marriages, instead of always responding to anger with anger, the couples found a way to lighten tension and de-escalate conflict (Sole 2011). It never hurts to try and take a negative situation and try and find some fun or humor in the situation that you both can laugh at and hopefully move on. For me when I find myself in those situations, being able to make fun of myself is a very effective way to lighten the mood. " In any relationship the two participants are interdependent, i. e. the behavior of each affects the outcome of the other" (Blumstein & Kollock 1988). Once the atmosphere is less hostile it is immensely easier to talk about what went wrong, and how to fix it. Understanding the impact of gender and culture on interpersonal communication. The gender differences play a large part in communication as well, especially in a marriage. No doubt by now you have both noticed some differences in the way that the other person does or says things. Cultures generally consider some behaviors to be masculine and some behaviors to be feminine, and behavior that is appropriate for one sex might be inappropriate for the other (Sole 2011). Trying to understand the opposite sex can be like reading a foreign language, and there are many things that are normal to men, but strange to woman and vice versa. Men and woman tend to communicate differently

because of how they were brought up at a young age. When you communicate across gender lines, it would be wise to keep in mind that, like culture, gender may predispose woman and men to interpret messages differently (Sole 2011). Many men will speak their mind; they say exactly what they mean. There is no hidden message in their words; they mean exactly what they say. Often times this can be the opposite for women, when they are communicating with their spouse. For example, if she says that she is bored, it may not only mean that she has nothing to do but also that she wants you to pay attention to her. Conversely if you tell her that you are bored, she might take it as you are calling her boring. There are many subtle difference in the way that men and woman communicate, being able to read between the lines when it comes to your spouse is an essential key to keeping both people in the relationship happy. The culture that we are brought up in also plays a significant role and the development of our interpersonal communication skill. There are many things that can define what our culture is. Every society has a culture, or a number of different culture—a set of traditions, beliefs, values and norms, or standards of behavior that have been passed down from generation to generation (Sole 2011). If for instance Sara comes from a very big, close-knit family who shares everything with each other, more than likely she will translate that into her marriage as well. If you aren't that type of person it is going to feel strange for her because that's her culture. If Tim doesn't come from this type of family oriented culture, it is going to take some to adjust to having Sara's family play such a large role in their marriage. Gender roles also play a part in culture. Many cultures have a more " traditional" sense when it comes to

the various roles of husband and wife. If Tim was raised in a culture that put a lot of emphasis on “ traditional" gender roles in a marriage, it can be a big change and even a shock to Sara if that isn't something she has been accustomed to. Either way or whatever the case me be regarding your spouse's culture, it is important to learn how to be flexible when it comes to things like this. A little compromise will go a long way in a marriage, and will make the other person feel more valued. Indeed men and woman communicate in many different ways. Being able to effectively use interpersonal communication will make for a strong and successful marriage. Knowing how to handle and resolve interpersonal conflicts will ensure that both of you feel valued and respected. Communication involves expectations between husband and wife, and problems will occur when either party behaves in ways that are inconsistent with your marriage. Having a strong sense of emotional intelligence will further help prevent possible conflicts from damaging the bond you two have established. The bottom line for a successful relationship is communication. Maintain good communication and the rest will fall in line; just never take it for granted. Just because you said “ I do" doesn't mean all the work is over. Good luck with your marriage and congratulations! References Blumstein, P., & Kollock, P. (1988), pp 467-490 Personal Relationships (Annual Review of Sociology). Close relationships sometimes mask poor communication. (2011, U. S. News & World Report,, 1. Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/852775455?accountid=32521> Sole, K. (2011). Making Connections: Understanding Interpersonal Communication(Ashford University ed.) Bridgepoint Education, Inc. Nonverbal Communication. (n. d.). Collins English Dictionary - Complete

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