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FIFTH CANADIAN EDITION

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EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS

AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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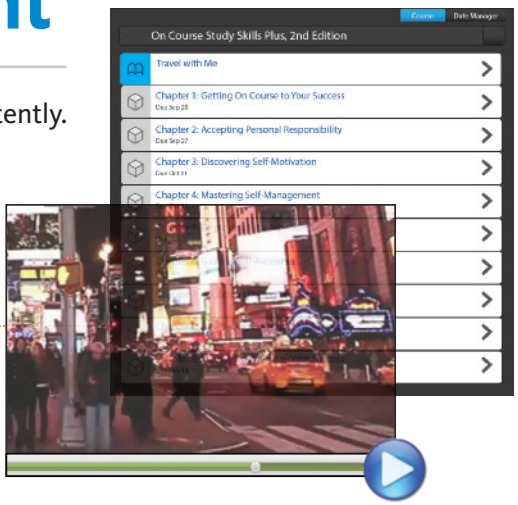

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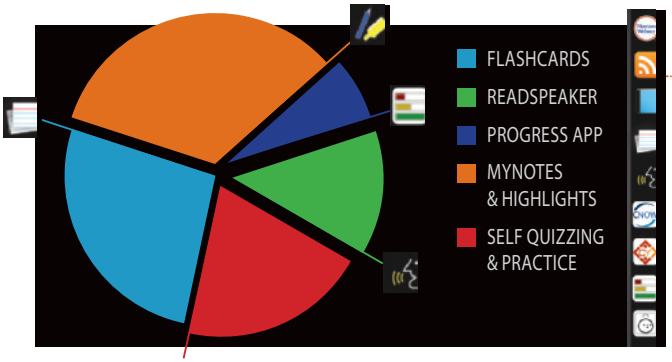

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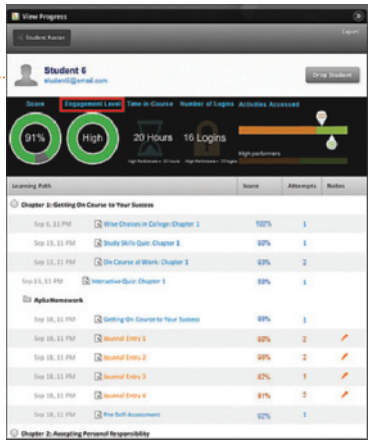

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Everyday Encounters

An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

FIFTH CANADIAN EDITION

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An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

FIFTH CANADIAN EDITION

Julia Wood
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Ann Schweitzer
University of Western Ontario

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by Julia Wood and Ann Schweitzer

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Preface

Everyday Encounters: An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication, Fifth Canadian Edition, offers a distinct alternative to existing textbooks for the introductory course in interpersonal communication. This book is unique in its emphasis on theories, research, and skills that are anchored in the field of communication and in its attention to significant trends in Canadian social life. This Canadian adaptation of the US textbook reflects the obvious things that distinguish Canada from the United States—spelling; currency; and economic, geographic, demographic, and political differences. It also reflects changes in language that represent the more subtle differences in values and approaches that mark Canadians. Canada's cultural diversity is represented in the many voices in the text. Familiar Canadians, whether in research, art, media, politics, or sport, give the text a unique flavour; unfamiliar voices of "common folk" provide a regional perspective. In addition, this Canadian adaptation offers added pedagogical supports that make it very accessible to students and very helpful to instructors.

FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND THEORY

In the 1970s, when interpersonal communication was a very young intellectual area, research was limited. Because theoretical and research foundations for courses were not abundant, the content of most textbooks and courses either extended general principles of communication to interpersonal contexts or relied primarily on research in fields other than communication.

Although interpersonal communication continues to draw from other disciplines, it now is a substantive field in its own right, complete with a base of knowledge, theories, and research. The maturation of interpersonal communication as an intellectual area is evident in the substantial original research published in academic journals, as well as in the steady stream of scholarly books. It is clear that interpersonal communication is no longer a derivative field.

Textbooks for introductory communication courses no longer need to rely primarily on research and theories developed by scholars outside the communication field. *Everyday Encounters* reflects a strong focus on research in the communication discipline. Woven into each chapter, for example, are discussions of relationships that highlight the extensive research on relational dialectics—the emergent knowledge of differences in communication that are influenced by gender, economic class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and race.

Communication scholars' strong interest in ethics is also woven into this book. Ethical issues and choices are integral to the discussion of the range of topics that are part of interpersonal communication. These and other topics in current communication inquiry are integrated into this book. As a result, students who read it will gain an appreciation of the scope and depth of scholarship in the field of communication.

Attention to Significant Social Trends

Social diversity is not merely a timely trend, a new buzzword, or a matter of political correctness. Rather, social diversity is a basic fact of life in Canada, a country (like many others) enriched by a cornucopia of people, heritages, customs, and ways of interacting. *Everyday Encounters* reflects and addresses social diversity by weaving it into the basic fabric of interpersonal communication.

Addressing diversity adequately requires more than tacking on paragraphs on gender or race to conventional approaches to topics. Awareness of race, economic class, gender, age, and sexual orientation is woven into discussions of communication theory and skills throughout *Everyday Encounters*. For example, in exploring self-concept, detailed attention is given to race, gender, and sexual orientation as core facets of identity that shape how individuals communicate and interpret the communications of others. In examining patterns

of interaction in families, research on families that are not White and middle class is included. Discussion of romantic relationships includes research on gay and lesbian relationships as well as heterosexual ones. Rather than highlighting the attention to diversity with diversity boxes or separate features, diverse social groups, customs, and lifestyles are blended into the book as a whole.

Social diversity is not the only significant social trend that affects and is affected by interpersonal communication. *Everyday Encounters* addresses communication challenges, confusions, and issues that are part of personal and social life in our era. Attention is paid to friendships, which have assumed greater importance in the face of increasing numbers of broken marriages and geographically dispersed families. Discussion of romantic relationships addresses abuse and violence between intimates, managing long-distance relationships, and the use of communication to negotiate safer sex in an era shadowed by HIV and AIDS. The final chapter examines current topics in workplace health, such as how to bring soul to the workplace and how to deal with sexual harassment and difficult people.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS

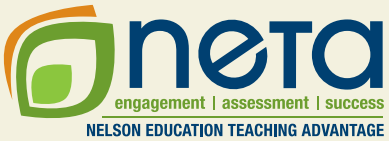
The emphasis on communication research and theories and attention to social diversity are two distinctive features of *Everyday Encounters*. In addition, other facets of the book are designed to make it appealing and useful to students and helpful to instructors. First, the authors have adopted a conversational tone that invites students to interact with ideas on a personal level. Each chapter is also enhanced by commentaries written by students in interpersonal communication classes. Their voices add a broader perspective to the scholarly material and remind the reader that the topic of interpersonal communication is about the lives of real people.

Everyday Encounters also includes pedagogical features that promote the development of interpersonal communication skills. Each chapter includes several Apply the Idea exercises, which encourage students to apply concepts and principles discussed in the text to their own lives. Coupled with these exercises are Reflective Exercises that help promote reflective thinking and personal examination. Each chapter also includes a number of Communication Notes features, which highlight interesting research and examples of interpersonal communication in everyday life. Many of these are drawn from the Canadian landscape and offer a snapshot of communication ideas, foibles, and challenges in Canada.

Clusters of concepts are placed in the margin for quick reference, summary, and review. One of these sidebars is called Concepts at a Glance; the other, Review. These pedagogical features allow the student to capture key concepts in point form, which will assist study and recall. Interspersed in each chapter are photographs of people in everyday interactions. Many photographs have captions that pose questions or invite reflection. This is particularly helpful for the visual learner to capture the salient concepts of the chapter; it also alleviates the denseness of the written text.

Following each chapter are several questions that invite students to engage in further reflection and discussion of ideas covered in the text. For most chapters, at least one question focuses specifically on ethical issues in interpersonal communication, and at least one question suggests an activity using information from the Internet.

Instructor Resources



The Nelson Education Teaching Advantage (NETA) program delivers research-based instructor resources that promote student engagement and higher order thinking to enable the success of Canadian students and educators. Visit Nelson Education's Inspired Instruction website at http://www.nelson.com/inspired to find out more about NETA.

The following instructor resources have been created for *Everyday Encounters*, Fifth Canadian Edition. Access these ultimate tools for customizing lectures and presentations at www.nelson.com/instructor.

NETA Test Bank

This resource was written by James Tomasson of the Southern Institute of Technology. It includes over 480 general Multiple Choice questions and 528 discipline-specific Multiple Choice questions written according to NETA guidelines for effective construction and development of higher order questions. Also included are 180 true/false

questions, 12 short answer questions, and 60 essay questions.

The NETA Test Bank is available in a new, Cloud-based platform. Nelson Testing Powered by Cognero® is a secure online testing system that allows instructors to author, edit, and manage test bank content from anywhere Internet access is available. No special installations or downloads are needed, and the desktop-inspired interface, with its drop-down menus and familiar, intuitive tools, allows instructors to create and manage tests with ease. Multiple test versions can be created in an instant, and content can be imported or exported into other systems. Tests can be delivered from a learning management system, the classroom, or wherever an instructor chooses. Testing Powered by Cognero for *Everyday Encounters* can also be accessed through www.nelson.com/instructor.

NETA PowerPoint

Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides for every chapter have been created by Jennifer Wraight of Nipissing University. There is an average of 15 slides per chapter, many featuring key figures, tables, and photographs from *Everyday Encounters*. NETA principles of clear design and engaging content have been incorporated throughout, making it simple for instructors to customize the deck for their courses.

Image Library

This resource consists of digital copies of figures, short tables, and photographs used in the book. Instructors may use these jpegs to customize the NETA PowerPoint or create their own PowerPoint presentations.

NETA Instructor Guide

This resource was written by Jennifer Wraight of Nipissing University. It is organized according to the textbook chapters and addresses key educational concerns, such as how to link theory to application. Some other features include discussion ideas, activities, journal writing suggestions, panel ideas, and essay questions.

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- Self-quizzing allows you to assess your understanding.

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Julia Wood's Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this book. I am especially indebted to Deirdre Cavanaugh, my editor at Wadsworth. From start to finish, she has been a full partner in this project, and her interest and insights have greatly enhanced the book. Deirdre was also most generous in providing personal support, enthusiasm, and encouragement to me.

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Writing this book was not only a professional activity but also a personal engagement that benefited from the generous support of individuals who make up my family of choice. At the top of that list is Robbie Cox, my partner in love, life, and adventure for 25 years. He cheered me on when writing was going well and bolstered my confidence when it was not. He provided a critical ear when I wanted a sounding board and privacy when I was immersed in writing. Along with Robbie, I am fortunate to have the support of my sister Carolyn and my special friends Nancy and Linda Becker. And, of course, I must acknowledge the four-footed members of my family—Madhi, Sadie Ladie, and Wicca. Unlike my two-footed companions, these three willingly keep me company when I am writing at 2 or 3 in the morning.

Ann Schweitzer's Acknowledgments

When I was first approached by Nelson Education to author previous Canadian editions of *Everyday Encounters*, I had been using the earlier editions with students for five years. I brought to the task a great deal of admiration for the scholarship and pedagogical style of the previous authors.

In creating subsequent editions I invited students who had recently completed the Communication course to join me as a consulting focus group. Students stepped forward to meet with me over a period of many weeks to go through the text page by page. Their suggestions for clarifications, updates, vocabulary, and, of course, Student Voices features were invaluable.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the team at Nelson Education. Heartfelt thanks to Roberta Osborne, senior developmental editor, who has once more deftly and patiently steered this manuscript into its finished form. Appreciation also goes to Fiona Drego, production project manager, and Matthew Kudelka, copy editor. Thank you also to the following reviewers, who provided helpful suggestions:

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Charlene Mahon, **Lambton College**
Margaret Toye, **Bow Valley College**
Helen Ziral, **Seneca College**

I am indebted to my extended family and friends, who enrich my life and help me learn more about communication on a daily basis. Special thanks to Iris Rountree, who was a great help in preparing this manuscript.

Skillful communication enriches our individual lives and is our key to a fulfilling future for our planet and world peace.

Chapter 1

Exploring Interpersonal Communication

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Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

—author unknown

You've been interviewing for two months, and so far you haven't had a single job offer. After another interview that didn't go well, you run into a close friend, who asks what's wrong. Instead of just offering quick sympathy, your friend suggests that the two of you go to lunch and talk. Over pizza, you disclose that you're starting to worry that you won't find a job, and you wonder what's wrong with you.

Your friend listens closely and lets you know that he cares about your concerns. Then he tells you about other people he knows who also haven't yet had job offers. All of a sudden, you don't feel so alone. Your friend reminds you how worried you felt last term when you were struggling with your physics course and then made a B on the final.

As you listen to him, your sagging confidence begins to recover. Before leaving, he tells you about a website called *Virtual Interview* that allows you to practise interviewing skills, and he works with you to come up with some new strategies for interviewing. By the time you leave, you feel hopeful again.

Interpersonal communication, a selective, systemic, ongoing process in which unique individuals interact to reflect and build personal knowledge and to create meanings, is central to our everyday lives. We count on others to care about what is happening in our lives and to help us sort through problems and concerns. We want them to share our worries and our joys. In addition, we need others to encourage our personal and professional growth. Friends and romantic partners who believe in us often enable us to overcome self-defeating patterns and help us become the people we want to be. Co-workers who give us advice and feedback help us increase our effectiveness on the job. And sometimes we just want to hang out with people we like, trust, and have fun with.

We communicate to develop identities, establish connections, coordinate efforts with others, deepen ties over time, and work out problems and possibilities.

The International Baccalaureate Program (IB) is a worldwide educational organization that has a hard-earned reputation for excellent student quality, for high standards, and for leadership. There are 348 IB schools in Canada promoting intercultural understanding and respect as an essential part of life in the twenty-first century. It is not surprising that communication is at the heart of the *IB Learner Profile*. The goal for students is to "understand and express ideas and information confidently . . . work[ing] effectively and willingly in collaboration with others" (www.ibo.org).

Interpersonal communication is equally important in the workplace. Waldeck, Helmuth, and Marcia (2012) have identified specific communication competencies that are important in contemporary business and professional environments. These competencies represent a mix of traditional and contemporary communication skills. The influence of collaborative communication and global interconnectivity permeates each theme. These competencies underscore the need for each of us to develop a skill set that transcends specific work-related divisions and that encompasses technology, intergroup relations, nonverbal and relational competence, and more.

The importance of interpersonal communication to professional success has been confirmed by another study in which executives placed the most weight on candidates' interpersonal skills when making promotion decisions (Reinsch & Gardner, 2013).

Clearly, interpersonal communication is central to our everyday lives. It is the lifeblood of meaningful relationships in personal, social, and professional contexts.

In this chapter, we take a first look at interpersonal communication. We start by considering how communication meets important human needs. We then

distinguish interpersonal communication from communication in general. Next, we examine models of communication, define interpersonal communication, and identify principles and skills of effective interpersonal communication. After reading this chapter, you should understand what interpersonal communication is (and is not), why it matters in our lives, and what skills and principles comprise competent interpersonal communication.

CONCEPTS AT A GLANCE

Good Listeners

- Help us sort through problems.
- Share our feelings.
- Facilitate our growth.

THE INTERPERSONAL IMPERATIVE

Have you ever thought about why we communicate with others? Psychologist William Schutz (1966) developed *interpersonal needs theory*, which asserts that our tendency to create and sustain relationships flows out of three basic needs. First, for affection—that is, the desire to give and receive love and liking. Second, for inclusion—that is, the desire to be social and to be included in groups. Third, for control, which is a desire to influence the people and events in our lives.

Expanding Schutz's ideas, Abraham Maslow (1968) proposed that we communicate to meet a range of human needs. According to Maslow, our basic needs must be satisfied before we can focus on those that are more abstract (Figure 1.1). Communication is a primary means of meeting needs at each level. Although Maslow's theory is now making way for more complex and holistic models, it will help us understand how integrated communication is in our daily lives.

Physiological Needs

At the most basic level, humans need to survive, and communication helps us meet this need. To survive, babies must alert others when they are hungry or

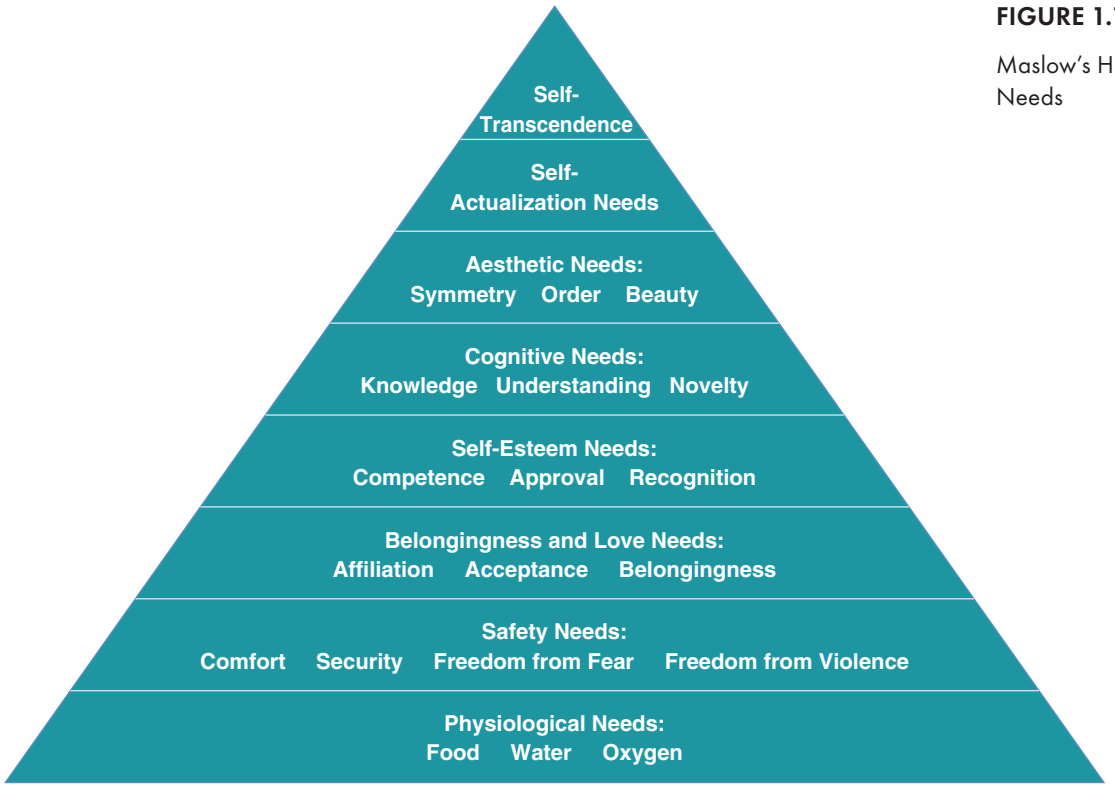

FIGURE 1.1

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

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To survive, babies must alert others when they are hungry or in pain.

in pain. And others must respond to these needs, or those babies will die. Beyond survival, children need interaction if they are to thrive. Linda Mayes (2002), a physician at the Child Study Center at Yale University, reports from a multi-site study that children can suffer lasting damage if they are traumatized early in their lives. Trauma increases the stress hormones that circulate through infants' fragile brains. One result is inhibited growth of the limbic system, which controls emotions. Adults who have suffered abuse as children often have reduced memory ability, anxiety, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness.

Furthermore, good communication between doctors and patients is related to effective treatment and to patients' mental well-being (Fleishman, Sherbourne, & Crystal, 2000). Noted Canadian researcher Dr. Fraser Mustard (1994) tied infant brain development to social and physical environments, emphasizing the impact of early infant care on learning, behaviour, and health throughout the life span.

As we grow older, we continue to rely on communication to survive and to thrive. We discuss medical problems with doctors to stay healthy, and our effectiveness in communicating affects what jobs we get and how much we earn to pay for medical care, food, housing, and leisure activities. Furthermore, researchers have amassed impressive evidence to document the close link between physical health and relationships with others (Kupfer, First, & Regier, 2002; Lane, 2000; Segrin, 1998). Heart disease is more common among people who lack strong interpersonal relationships (Ornish, 1998). Arthritis patients who have strong social support experience less severe symptoms and live longer than patients without such support (Whan, 1997).

Safety Needs

We also meet safety needs through communication. If your roof is leaking or if termites have invaded your apartment, you must talk with the property manager or owner to get the problem solved so that you have safe shelter. If someone is threatening you, you need to talk with law enforcement officers to gain protection. If your friend has been drinking and you take the car keys and say, "I'll drive you home," you may save a life. We may go online to research symptoms we have or to learn about medical conditions that our friends or family members have developed. To avoid sexually transmitted diseases, couples must talk to each other about safer sex. The ability to discuss private and difficult issues having to do with sex is essential to our safety, although it may be embarrassing, as Aara comments.

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As we grow older, we continue to rely on communication to survive and to thrive, both physically and emotionally.

Communication also helps protect us from dangers and harms. When foods are determined to be unsafe, news media inform the public. Car manufacturers send owners recall messages when defects in a model are found. Workers persuade managers to do something about unsafe working conditions, and

professionals communicate with one another to do their jobs. Communication is needed, too, to protect us from environmental toxins. Residents in communities with toxic waste dumps must communicate with officials and the media to call attention to environmental toxins that endanger their physical survival and safety. Later, the officials and the media may communicate to compel corrective action from those responsible for dumping toxic wastes.

Belonging Needs

The third level in Maslow's hierarchy is belonging (or social) needs. All of us need others in order to be happy, to enjoy life, to feel comfortable on the job, and to fit into social groups. We want others' company, acceptance, and affirmation, and we want to give acceptance and affirmation to others.

We communicate to meet belonging needs by talking with others, sharing thoughts and feelings online, watching films together, and working on project teams. Also, interpersonal communication introduces us to ideas that broaden our perspectives. Perhaps, after talking with someone, you've thought, "I never saw it that way before" or "Gee, that really changes my attitude." In his commentary, Chad notes the importance of this type of communication.

Student Voices

Aara:

It is easier to have sex than to talk about it. I'm having to learn how to bring up the topic of safety and how to be assertive about protection. I didn't use to do that because it's embarrassing, but I'd rather be embarrassed than dead.

Student Voices

Chad:

I'm not usually a really social person, but after one of our classmates died in a freak accident, I needed to be around other people. I think a lot of my friends did. We needed to connect with others. It was almost like we felt our class had been endangered and we were trying to rebuild it by talking with others.

The connection between belonging needs and well-being is well established. One study found that people who lack strong social ties are 200 to 300 percent more likely to die prematurely than those whose social ties are strong (Narem, 1980). Other reports conclude that heart disease is far more prevalent in people lacking strong interpersonal relationships than in those who have healthy connections with others (Cowley, 1998; Kupfer, First, & Regier, 2002; Ornish, 1999; Ruberman, 1992).

Belonging is also important in our careers. We want to feel that we're a part of work groups, and we want to be part of the formal and informal communication networks in organizations.

Most of us take socialization for granted. We are born into families, and they socialize us as members of the human world of meaning and action. But what if there were no humans around to socialize you? Would you still be human?

A particularly dramatic finding is that people who are deprived of human interaction for a long time may fail to develop a concept of themselves as humans. Two such cases were documented by sociologist Kingsley Davis (1940, 1947). Anna and Isabelle, two girls who were not related to each other, received minimal human contact and care during the first six years of their lives. Authorities who discovered the children reported that both girls lived in dark, dank attics. Anna and Isabelle were so undeveloped intellectually that they behaved like six-month-olds. Anna was startlingly apathetic and unresponsive to others. She did not progress well despite care, contact, and nutrition. She died four years after she was discovered. Isabelle fared better. When she was found, she communicated by grunts and gestures and was responsive to human interaction. After two years in systematic therapy, Isabelle's intelligence approached normal levels for her age.

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A lack strong of strong social ties makes people more vulnerable to threats to their well-being.

How do we explain the difference between these two isolated children and what happened to them? There was one major difference. Anna was left alone all the time and had no human contact. Food was periodically put in her room, but nobody talked to her or played with her. Isabelle, on the other hand, shared her space with her mother, who was deaf and mute. The family had renounced both of them and sequestered them with each other.

Although Isabelle didn't have the advantage of normal family interaction, she did have contact with a mother who loved her. Because the mother was deaf and mute, she couldn't teach Isabelle to speak, but she did teach Isabelle to interact with gestures and sounds that both of them understood. Thus, Isabelle suffered less extreme deprivation than Anna.

The need for social contact continues throughout our lives. Even people who have been raised with normal social interaction can be affected if such interaction is lacking later in life. People who have few friends are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and fatigue (Jones & Moore, 1989; Segrin, 1998).

Self-Esteem Needs

Moving up Maslow's hierarchy, we find self-esteem needs, which involve valuing and respecting ourselves and being valued and respected by others. As we will see in Chapter 2, communication is the primary way we figure out who we are and who we can be. We gain our first sense of self from others who communicate how they see us. Parents and other family members tell children they are pretty or plain, smart or slow, good or bad, helpful or difficult. As family members communicate their perceptions, children begin to form images of themselves.

This process continues throughout life as we see ourselves reflected in others' eyes. In elementary school, our teachers and peers influence our perceptions of how smart we are, how good we are at soccer, and how attractive we are. As we date and form romantic relationships, our partners reflect their views of us as loving or unloving, generous or selfish, open or closed, and trustworthy or untrustworthy. In professional life, our co-workers and supervisors communicate in ways that suggest how much they respect us and our abilities. Through all the stages of our lives, our self-esteem is shaped by how others communicate with us. People who lack strong interpersonal communication skills are unlikely to rise to the top of their field, and many of them suffer lowered self-esteem as a result (Morreale, 2001).

Cognitive Needs

Maslow (1968) later inserted two more growth needs into his hierarchy—cognitive and aesthetic needs. We have a cognitive need to know, to understand, and to explore. As humans, we seek more than survival, safety, belonging, and esteem. We also thrive on growth. Each of us wants to cultivate new dimensions, enlarge our perspectives, engage in challenging and different experiences, and learn new skills.

Others help us through inspiration and teaching. Gandhi, for instance, was a model of strength that did not depend on aggression. Watching him embody passive resistance with grace inspired thousands of Indians to define themselves as passive resisters. The teachings of religious leaders such as Lao-tzu, Confucius, Jesus, Muhammad, and Buddha also inspire people to grow personally. In a similar

Communication Notes

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

Communication in business organizations has changed due to new technologies, the demand for intercultural communication skills, and changing person–organization relationships. As a result, new communication competencies are required. Waldeck, Helmuth, and Marcia (2012) identified specific competencies important in the contemporary business and professional environment.

The three most important competencies were:

1. Skills in maintaining or disengaging from inter-organizational and external relationships. Such skills are needed in civility, conflict management, and rapport building.
2. Using communication technologies effectively and appropriately, in terms of online communication etiquette and online social networking.
3. Intergroup communication skills, which focus on intergenerational and intercultural sensitivities.

We will explore these competencies and how to develop the skills in later chapters.

vein, consider the accomplishments of Canadians who inspire us and help create a Canadian identity—Pierre Trudeau, Margaret Atwood, Terry Fox, and Sidney Crosby, to name a few. As we interact with teachers and leaders who inspire us, we may come to understand their visions of the world and of themselves and perhaps weave those into our own self-concepts.

Aesthetic Needs

Many individuals find that they experience a sense of personal fulfillment when they have beauty, symmetry, and order in their lives. Music, art, athletics, and an appreciation of the wonders of nature often bring a richness and joy to our spirits. Communication fosters our growth as individuals. It is often in interaction with others that we first recognize possibilities for who we can be—possibilities that hadn't occurred to us. Perhaps you can recall someone who first noticed you had a talent and encouraged you to cultivate it. Who was that person? What messages did you receive that encouraged you to nurture your talents?

Self-Actualization Needs

According to Maslow, the seventh human need is *self-actualization*. Maslow defined self-actualization as fully developing and using our unique "talents, capacities, potentialities" (1954/1970, p. 150). To achieve this, we need to refine talents that we have already developed to some degree, while also cultivating new potential in ourselves. As humans, we seek more than survival, safety, belonging, and esteem. We also thrive on growth. Each of us wants to cultivate new dimensions of mind, heart, and spirit. We seek to enlarge our perspectives, engage in challenging and different experiences, learn new skills, and test ourselves in unfamiliar territories. To become our fullest selves—to self-actualize—we must embrace the idea that we are always evolving, growing, and changing.

Student Voices

Adam:

Mr. Bentley really helped me when I had my first job. It wasn't much—just serving at a sandwich shop—but he mentored me. He noticed I was awkward interacting with people, and he said I could learn social skills. He showed me how to be more effective—how to make customers feel comfortable, how to notice subtle cues that they needed something. Before that job, I'd thought of myself as kind of an introvert, somebody not very good with people. But Mr. Bentley saw a possibility in me that I hadn't seen in myself, and, as a result, I developed social skills and confidence that I never had before.

Student Voices

Lashelle:

A person who changed my life was Mrs. Dickenson, my high school history teacher. She thought I was really smart, and she helped me see myself that way. I'd never considered myself all that intelligent and I sure hadn't thought I would go to college, but Mrs. Dickenson helped me to see a whole new image of who I could be. She stayed after school a lot of days to talk to me about my future and to help me get ready for the SAT. If it weren't for her, I wouldn't be in college now.

Communication fosters our personal growth. Therapists can be powerful resources in helping us identify our potential. Often, therapy assists us in our quest to know, understand, and improve ourselves (Maslow, 1959/1970). In addition, friends, family, co-workers, and teachers can help us recognize promise in ourselves that we otherwise might not see. Adam recalls how such a person affected him in his first job.

Another way in which we seek personal growth is by experimenting with new versions of ourselves. For this, too, we rely on communication. Sometimes we talk with others about ways we want to grow. Other times, we try out new styles of identity without telling anyone what we're doing. Some people experiment with their identities in chat rooms, where visual cues won't expose their skin colour, gender, age, or other characteristics. For instance, some people engage in gender swapping in online communication—males present themselves as females, and females present themselves as males (Baym, 2002). Gender swapping allows us to imagine ourselves as the other sex and to try on an identity that is divorced from our physical one. In both online and face-to-face communication, we see how others respond, and we decide whether we like the effects of the new identity or whether we need to go back to the drawing board. We could not assess changes in ourselves without feedback from others. Lashelle's commentary stresses this point.

Self-Transcendence

Maslow's (1969) later writings added an eighth level to the motivational needs pyramid. Self-transcendence helps us connect to something beyond the ego. It can also help us assist others in their efforts to find self-fulfillment. Individuals want to experience communication beyond the boundaries of the self through peak experiences. This self-transcendence (Koltko-Rivera, 2006) may involve mystical experiences, service to others, social justice, certain aesthetic experiences, sexual experiences, and/or a desire to be united to a sense of identity that extends beyond the personal self. Others help us to grow in this way by introducing us to new experiences and ways of thinking. Conversations can enrich our perspective of ourselves and our values, relationships, events, and situations, thus enlarging our understanding of what is possible.

Participating Effectively in a Diverse Society

As we navigate our everyday lives, we need to know how to live effectively in a richly diverse society. Our world includes people of different ethnicities, genders, social classes, sexual orientations, ages, and abilities. Canada is particularly diverse. Geographically, it spans an area rivalled only by Russia. Socially and economically, there are vast differences from north to south and east to west. The First

Nations cultures across Canada are also as diverse as the geography. Participating effectively in a diverse social world is critical to success in professional life, and in this regard, the multicultural mosaic of Canadian life brings many communication challenges. In a study of the most sought-after employability skills in the Canadian workforce, communication skills rank highest, particularly "recognition and respect for people's diversity and differences" (Conference Board of Canada, 1992). Many job applications routinely state, "Must be able to work in a cross-cultural environment." To function effectively in a world of so much diversity, we rely on communication. Through interaction with others, we learn about experiences and lifestyles that differ from our own; in addition, we share our experiences and values with people who seem unlike us in certain ways. Through interaction, diverse individuals come to understand their differences and similarities, and this recognition fosters personal growth.

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Canadian society is particularly diverse.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that has a Multiculturalism Act. Passed in 1988, it is devoted to the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism in Canadian communities. As with the other needs in Maslow's hierarchy, living in a diverse world becomes salient to us only when our more basic needs have been met. When we need food, shelter, and a sense of belonging, appreciating and supporting diversity may not be an issue to us. Once the more basic needs are met, however, we recognize the importance of appreciating diversity. It's also the case, however, that learning to appreciate and support diversity may help us meet some of our more basic needs. For example, our safety may depend on communicating with someone from a different culture, and we may meet belonging needs by joining groups with people who represent a range of ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and so forth. One of the most vital functions of communication is to help us understand and participate in a diverse world.

Apply the idea

COMMUNICATION AND YOUR NEEDS

How do the needs we've discussed show up in your life? To find out, think about your communication over the last few days and classify each interaction according to one of the eight needs we discussed. How much of your communication focused on each need?

_____ physiological
_____ safety
_____ belonging
_____ self-esteem
_____ cognitive
_____ aesthetic
_____ self-actualization/self-transcendence
_____ peak experiences