

Tool: **Interpersonal Communication Skills**

Timing: Periodically, on some regular basis

Purpose: For reflection--to become aware of communication behaviors. Awareness is the first step in change.

Take time to reflect—What behaviors do I exhibit?

- Do I show acceptance by acknowledging, verbally and/or nonverbally, what is said?
- Do I avoid being judgmental in responding to others?
- Do I encourage and support what others are saying?
- Do I avoid being too aggressive in talking with others (saying “well, not really,” interrupting, changing the subject abruptly)?
- Do I avoid being self-indulgent (by *not* telling a long, even though related story and thus focusing more on my needs rather than on the concerns of others)?
- Do I go beyond the limits of my own personal experiences by attempting to understand what is being said from another perspective?
- Do I exhibit openness to new ideas, opinions, and personal perspectives rather than blocking the opinions of others (by pronouncing mine as the only “right” one)?
- Do I avoid dominating conversations by eliciting contributions and participation of others?
- Do I maintain focus on the conversation by ignoring distractions, keeping eye contact, and exhibiting engaged nonverbal behaviors?
- Do I show empathy by attempting to fully understand what is being said by clarifying, paraphrasing, and summarizing?
- Do I refrain from contributing my opinion or suggestions until I fully understand the situation?
- Do I help others put problems in perspective by addressing them directly rather than glossing over them?
- Do I refrain from and discourage gossip, rumor, and negative stereotyping or labeling?
- Do I refrain from and discourage frequent complaining and griping?
- Do I provide adequate, specific, and meaningful (rather than vague, nonspecific, or generalized) information in response to requests for information or assistance?
- Do I avoid saying “I told you so” even when it applies?
- Do I show *mutual respect* when engaged in conversations with others?

Adapted from: Blank, M.A. & Kershaw, C. (1998). *The designbook for building partnerships: Home, school, and community*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Press.