Self-Reflection and Self-Disclosure

Inquire: Talking to Others? Talking to Yourself?

Overview

When people think about communication, they often think about what it takes to talk to others. Yet, this isn’t the only part of communication to consider. This lesson will cover intrapersonal communication, including talking to yourself and self-reflection. Once you have an understanding of these concepts and how they work, you will learn about interpersonal communication, including talking to others and self-disclosure. These tools are vital in understanding how and why we talk to others in our daily lives.

Big Question: Is talking to yourself a useful way to correct your mistakes?

Watch: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication

Think of a time when you realized you were muttering to yourself. Were you driving in your car? Doing household chores? What about in the middle of a conversation? This muttering to yourself actually has a name within the Communication field; it’s called intrapersonal communication. Those little words spoken to yourself, along with your internal thoughts and feelings you have about yourself, all fall under intrapersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication also includes the thoughts you have about what you should say to someone or how to navigate any given situation.

How do you think intrapersonal communication affects your daily life? It might be more than you think. The way you talk to yourself can have a major impact on how happy you live your life, or how confident you feel in yourself. If your intrapersonal communication is constantly negative, you probably have a very negative opinion of yourself. Try to monitor your intrapersonal communication today, and reflect on how you communicate with yourself.

The opposite of intrapersonal communication is called interpersonal communication, which is communication with other people. This is probably what you think of when you hear the word “communication” normally. Think about someone who holds a conversation well. That person has great interpersonal communication skills! This is an incredibly important skill to practice, as you probably need it everyday. Interpersonal communication skills can benefit you when you’re interviewing for a job, developing a relationship, or defusing a conflict. Clearly and effectively expressing your thoughts to other people can be integral in achieving successful interpersonal communication.

Think about how these two types of communication, intrapersonal and interpersonal, coincide everyday. Do you plan out sentences in your head before saying them aloud? Do you think comments to yourself without actually saying them? Have you ever regretted accidentally saying something aloud before you
thought about it? In this lesson, we will learn about these two types of communication and how to use them to their fullest potential.

Read: Talking to Yourself and Others

Overview

People talk to other people every day. But, few people realize that one of the best ways to learn how to talk to other people is by talking to yourself. This lesson will discuss intrapersonal communication and self-reflection. Once you have learned how to effectively talk to yourself, you will be much more confident talking to others. This lesson will also discuss interpersonal communication and self-disclosure. Knowing what to tell others about yourself can be scary, but this lesson has some tips to help make the process easier.

What is Intrapersonal Communication and Self-Reflection?

Intrapersonal communication is communication you have with yourself. Your thoughts, your feelings, or even spoken conversations you have with yourself are all examples of intrapersonal communication. Good intrapersonal communication skills help you regulate the things you say, as well as help you think through different options when making decisions. However, intrapersonal communication gets disrupted based on your emotional state. When you are in a negative emotional state, your intrapersonal skills start to fail, and your decision-making becomes worse.

Self-reflection is the process of looking at your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs with the purpose of finding things you can improve. There are several ways you can improve self-reflection. First, be honest with yourself; you don’t have anyone to impress but yourself when it comes to self-reflection, so having an honest appraisal of yourself is important for knowing what you should work on. Second, ask for help if you need it. Sometimes it’s hard to be honest with yourself about bad habits you have. Ask someone that you trust to help you with the process. They can either point out things that need work or hold you accountable when you identify what you want to work on. Finally, give yourself some grace. You’re not perfect, but no one is. You inevitably will have things to improve and things to reflect on, but so does everyone else. Understand that you are not, and cannot, be perfect. Acknowledge that sometimes it’s okay to admit you don’t have it all the way together all the time.

What is Interpersonal Communication and Self-Disclosure?

Interpersonal communication is communication that happens between people; conversations with friends, coworkers, or your boss are all interpersonal. The uses and benefits of interpersonal communication seem obvious but are still worth pointing out. Good interpersonal skills can help you be a more effective worker and have stronger relationships. Interpersonal communication is more than just your ability to make small-talk. It’s your ability to convey ideas, read a situation to know what is appropriate to say, and also provide information when it’s needed. Ineffective interpersonal communication can lead to all sorts of confusion and potential problems. The best way to practice and improve your interpersonal skills is to simply have more interpersonal interactions. The more you talk to people, the easier it becomes.

Self-disclosure is when you share details about yourself with other people. It’s similar to self-reflection, but involves you talking to other people instead of just talking to yourself. However, all of the tips for self-reflection still apply! Being honest, asking for help, and giving yourself grace when you have to admit something awkward or embarrassing are all still important things to keep in mind.
On top of those things, you should also be open, comfortable, and trusting. Being open relies on your ability to share things when it is appropriate. You can’t have self-disclosure if you don’t share details about yourself, yet you also shouldn’t dominate a conversation and tell everyone every little thing about yourself. Instead, be open to sharing relevant details about yourself when a conversation calls for it or it is important. Similarly, you should only self-disclose in an environment you are comfortable in. If you do not feel comfortable sharing information, you don’t have to. It is your information, use it when you need, or want, to. Finally, it’s important to be trusting. This doesn’t necessarily mean trust everyone, but rather, when you are with people you do trust you can trust them to keep your information confidential. When you trust the people you are sharing with, it becomes much easier to share information.

Reflect Poll: How Useful is Self-Talk?

Does talking to yourself ever help you figure out the best way to talk to other people?

- Yes
- No

Expand: Being a Good Confidant

Overview

Self-disclosure can be difficult. It can be difficult to do, and sometimes can be difficult to hear. This section will give you some tips on how to be a good confidant when someone tells you personal information about themselves.

The Vault of Secrets

Sharing information can sometimes be scary. We’re afraid of what people will think of us if they find out sensitive information. We’re afraid someone will spill a secret and that information might get out. We’re afraid to be ridiculed for what we disclose. All of these fears are legitimate; there is no shame in feeling them. However, there are some easy things you can do to help your friends feel better about sharing with you. In return, when your friends feel confident in you it becomes easier for you to feel confident in them.

First, when someone shares information with you, listen to them. Don’t just hear them, but actually listen. Understand what they are saying and don’t just think about what you want to say next. Listening to your friends can be one of the best ways to make them feel heard and to trust that you are helping them. Second, let them know you won’t share what they tell you. Explaining that you will keep secrets can help them feel better. Third, follow through on that promise; actually keep that information a secret. It is not your information to share, so don’t do it. Finally, don’t make a big deal about not sharing information. Often people will say, “I keep lots of secrets!” Don’t do that. Treat it like a normal thing to only share information you have permission to share. If you treat this behavior as normal it will become normal, and therefore easier to keep a secret. The more you mention that you know a secret, the more opportunities you have to accidentally let that secret slip.

Following these steps can make it easier for your friends to self-disclose to you. When they disclose to you, it creates a trusting relationship where it becomes easier for you to disclose to them in return. Self-disclosure is a healthy part of any relationship. Finding ways to feel safe about sharing is important, and these tips can help with that feeling of safety.
Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

An article explaining the benefits of self-disclosure in a relationship
- Link to resource: https://www.verywellmind.com/how-does-self-disclosure-influence-relationships-4122387

An article explaining the importance of self-reflection and providing some tips for the process
- Link to resource: https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-you-should-make-time-for-self-reflection-even-if-you-hate-doing-it

A short video explaining the ins and outs of intrapersonal communication
- Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by7E5qKxepE

Lesson Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<td>when you tell details about yourself to other people</td>
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</tbody>
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Check Your Knowledge

1. Talking to yourself is not a form of communication.
   - a. True
   - b. False

2. Self-reflection is looking at your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs with the purpose of finding things you can improve.
   - a. True
   - b. False

3. Small talk is a kind of interpersonal communication.
   - a. True
   - b. False

Answer Key:

Citations

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