Ass 3 InterP: Letter of Advice to a Newly Engaged Couple

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Dear Jack & Selina,

I hope this letter finds you well. I was immensely pleased at hearing about your engagement and congratulate both of you. I feel honored for being asked to advise the two of you on interpersonal communication to help you in maintaining a healthy relationship. During my coursework in communication, I have obtained some valuable insights regarding the subject and hopeful that the insights I share with you would help you develop a joyous, positive and a lasting relationship. In the following parts of my later, I would discuss with you some basic elements of interpersonal communication and divide different sections of the letter for each element so that you could easily follow the information. Some of the common obstacles to a successful interpersonal communication would be identified along with discussions on nonverbal communication, the importance of self-esteem, and the various social influences, such as gender and culture, that shape the way we communicate.

# Barriers to effective interpersonal communication

# The human being is a highly communicative species, and interpersonal communication is a highly critical and important element of their lives. Interpersonal communication refers to the interaction we have with each other through face to face or mediated channels. We communicate in anticipation of how the other would interpret or respond to that information. Although it looks simple, however, it requires effort to develop an understanding of it to be able to communicate successfully and build a satisfying relationship.

# Some of the most important interpersonal communication principles include treating the other person with respect and not to interrupt when the other person is communicating. Another principle is this regard is the right to pass and not participate when one does not wish to. The third principle in this regard is to speak only for one’s oneself, and not assume that the other person would feel the same way about something as one does (Beebe, Beebe, & Ivy, 2008). Moreover, we should not speak too often or too long since that can lead the other person to lose attention. Furthermore, it is not correct to challenge the other person but rather their behavior. Respecting the other person’s privacy and confidentiality is yet another principle, you must remember, to maintain trust with them. In addition, you must remember that we all can make mistakes in communication, but that should be an opportunity for insight, learning and connecting rather than condemnation (Beebe, Beebe, & Ivy, 2008).

There are a number of barriers to successful interpersonal communication. For instance, our preconceptions often lead us to create misconceptions about the other individual, or it often happens that we fail to acknowledge the other person's perspective. Words carry a lot of power, and our choice of words can carry real-life positive or negative consequences. Furthermore, you should be careful of selective hearing in which the other person pays attention only to those parts of a conversation that they want to hear. A key barrier that I want you two to take note of is power struggles within communication. At times, we think we are in a position of power or authority and want the other person to respect that power and listen to us (Bevan & Sole, 2014). Lastly, it is important to pay attention to our non-verbal gestures and practice using them to avoid giving the other person a wrong impression.

# Communication and Self-Esteem

A number of factors that are related to our self-concept, self-image, and self-esteem affect the way we communicate. Our self-esteem, in particular, serves a major role in our communication, and it is something that is subjective and can change based on external information or feedback, but sometimes it resists change and becomes conservative. In contrast, our self-image can be affected by the media, our parents or friends and can sometimes not be based on reality. In contrast, our self-esteem is the regard and respect we hold for ourselves and links to feelings of optimism and positivity (Sampthirao, 2016). It is possible for people to change their natural communication habits or styles and force themselves to adopt another if they see perceive some deficiency in their personality. Likewise, poor communication too can build a negative self-image, because our body image, dislikes or likes are often influenced by other people’s opinions. Our self-esteem also determines how assertively we are able to communicate to deal with a certain situation, whereas extroversion helps us approach strangers, talk in large groups and appear more friendly. Appreciation can serve as a powerful boost to the other person's self-esteem, and therefore you both have to practice frequently appreciating your partner, which, in turn, will help them feel happy, valued, important and loved. You should also cheer-lead the other person and brag about them in front of your friends and families to boost their self-esteem. Self-esteem is also linked to empathy and kindness that we show each other. A study found that open communication and positive self-esteem in the wife, predicts higher sexual satisfaction in the husband and leads to overall marital satisfaction in women (Larson, Anderson, Holman, & Niemann, 1998).

# Significance of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Disclosure

Human beings value their sense of privacy, and all of us have certain boundaries and rules determining what we share about us with the other. Appropriate self-disclosure is a key element of interpersonal relationships. It refers to that information that the other person cannot typically know or discover about us unless we tell them. Too much of self-disclosure can increase the other person’s vulnerability while appropriate self-disclosure helps foster better communication (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). Mutual self-disclosure can lead both of you to understand each other in a more deeper way and enhance your trust, but remember inappropriate, or early self-disclosure can also create complications.

Another related element of interpersonal communication is emotional intelligence. This is our ability to identify and manage the other person’s emotions and our own (Bevan & Sole, 2014). It comprises of five characteristics: self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, social skills, and empathy. When you are able to understand the emotions of the other person, it can help you learn more about your own self and help you sympathize with the emotions of the other person. Emotional intelligence also helps regulate self-disclosure as you learn how to set boundaries and a relationship in which both partners are emotionally intelligent is more lasting as a result of the partners regulating or deflecting negative emotions (Kaur & Junnarkar, 2017).

# Culture and Gender-based influences on communication

This is another aspect of interpersonal communication that is important for you to learn to gain an appreciation of how the other person may think or react to a conversation or a situation. Gender theorists are of the view that the interaction of different physical attributes and social arrangements in a society lead to gender differences in communication, which lead to different social expectations from each gender. For instance, the male is associated with competition, autonomy, and power and thus emotions related to displaying vulnerability are discouraged. Conversely, the female is expected to demonstrate powerless emotions because this maintains relational and social harmony and reduces hostility within a relationship, in which power dynamics play a role. It was found in a study that in Western culture, the different social expectations from men lead them to develop a restrictive emotionality, and the patterns in male behavior and communication remain unchanged even when a society moves towards greater gender equality, while the linguistic styles of women are often reflective of their roles in the social order and they are more likely to make use of tag questions, fillers, and qualifiers to soften their conversations. Moreover, Gender equality still does not develop feminine associated emotions and characteristics in men (Fischer, Mosquera, Vianen, & Manstead, 2004).

Therefore, our notions and cultural notions of gender have a key role to play in our communicative practices, which can also be seen in our non-verbal behavior, or how we spatially associate with the other person within our culture (Bevan & Sole, 2014). The female gender identity typically focusses more on interconnectedness to socialize in relationships, whereas men typically engage in informative and less emotional topics that are mostly purpose driven. I would advise you that you learn about these different areas of communication such as issues related to language, non-verbal gestures, assumed similarity, preconceptions, and stereotypes that we typically associate with genders (Mulvaney, 1994). Our acknowledgment of the other person's cultural and gender-based influences would help us develop an enhanced appreciation of the other person and improve our day to day interaction. Knowing how masculinity or femininity, along with our cultural practices, intertwines with communication within our social order will help you orient yourself to work through any potential problems arising from these differences.

# Conclusion

To conclude, I believe it is important for the two of you, who have just entered into a new phase of your relationship, to remember that interpersonal communication in marriages and relationships take time, skill and practice. The barriers that I have identified in interpersonal communication and its overall principals would make you empathic, active and conscious communicators. Moreover, your emotional intelligence will help you appreciate and understand the other person’s emotions and help you maintain appropriate self-disclosure. In addition, I would like to once again stress on the importance of upholding the other person’s self-esteem while being aware of how cultural and gender-based influences can influence our emotions along with our non-verbal and verbal communication. I am hopeful that the insights I have shared would help you maintain a smooth and joyous relationship, and avoid any potential conflicts. I wish you both a happy and blissful life ahead, and I look forward to meeting the two of you soon.

Yours Sincerely,

Ronald Lubin

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