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# UNIT 17 ANALYSING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

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## Objectives

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate the need for interpersonal competence
- understand how the self-concept operates and is protected
- understand how interpersonal needs, orientations and attractions affect behaviour
- understand how an interpersonal relationship is created, developed and maintained
- develop a set of interpersonal skills

## Structure

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Understanding Determinants of Interpersonal Behaviour
- 17.3 Developing Interpersonal Relationship
- 17.4 Developing Interpersonal Skills
- 17.5 Summary
- 17.6 Self-assessment Test
- 17.7 Further Readings

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## 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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Think about yesterday. Out of the total number of hours while you were awake, how much time did you spend all by yourself with nobody around to talk to or deal with? How much time did you spend in a "dyadic" relationship, that is, with another person? How much time did you devote in a small group upto eight persons? Finally, how much time did you interact with a large group?

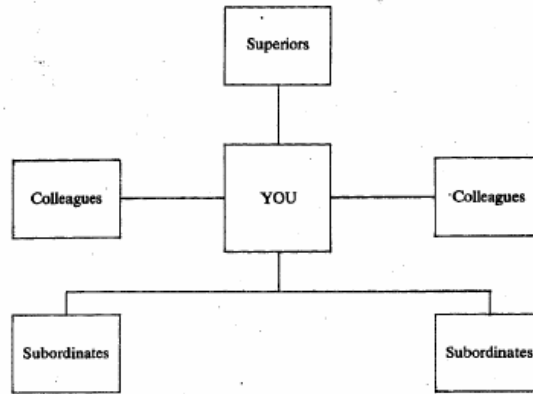
Chances are high, that most of your daily time is spent in some sort of interpersonal situation-rather than all by yourself or being just a member of a large group. Most of your daily experiences involve interactions with other human beings. Some such experiences have been quite joyful resulting into relationships which have flourished overtime. Some experiences have hurt you, upset you, resulting in relationships which have remained stagnant or have worsened or have even been abandoned. Understanding how and why these have happened to you will help you develop and improve your relationships with others. You' are likely to feel more competent in interpersonal situations and be happier.

Your "interpersonal competence" refers to the degree to which you are accurately aware of your impact on others and of the impact of others on you. It is your ability to engage in any mutually helpful relationships. It enables you to achieve your personal goals as well as task goals in the organisations where you are a member.

What are the effects of your interpersonal competence on your managerial behaviour? Interpersonally incompetent managers create an organisational environment in which members act very defensively to protect their own interests. Since everybody acts defensively in the organisation, where roles and relationships are basically interdependent, neither the personal goals of the members, nor the task goals can be fully realised. Problems are not confronted and are kept hidden from each other for fear that exploring the problems will only aggravate the situation. In course, of time, issues which were avoided and swept under the rug assume gigantic proportions and overwhelm the members. On the other hand, interpersonally competent managers allow their subordinates to challenge their views and to question the organisation's norms, policies, rules and objectives. When these kinds of behaviours are tolerated, people are likely to discover problems and commit themselves to their solutions. Organisational effectiveness increases.



Your role in the organisation can be viewed as a central role surrounded by at least three other types of roles: Superiors, Colleagues and Subordinates.



Besides these three types of roles, you may have to interact with a lot of other people from different positions: consumers, suppliers, people from regulatory agencies, general public, etc. Interactions with different interest-groups demand different type of specific skills and competencies. Possession and understanding of these skills may not guarantee successful human relations, but it can increase your interpersonal sensitivity and help you take appropriate action to improve relationships. But remember: any attempt to improve interpersonal competence must begin with knowing oneself more accurately.

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### Activity A

Check your understanding of the concept of "interpersonal competence" by indicating whether the following statements are True (T) or False (F).

An interpersonally competent manager:

- i. is able to engage in any mutually helpful relationship
- ii. achieves personal goals but not the task goals of the organisation where he is a member
- iii. is more accurately aware of his impact on others and others' impact on him,
- iv. creates an environment in which members act very defensively to protect their own interests
- v. allows subordinates to challenge his views and to question the organisation's norms, policies, rules and objectives

Answers: (i) T, (ii) F, (iii) T, (iv) F, (v) T

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## 17.2 UNDERSTANDING THE DETERMINANTS OF INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

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### Self-Concept: What am I?

Mankind is unique because only a human being has the capacity for thinking about his or her behaviour and appearance. Each person has an attitude toward himself or herself and this attitude comprises the self or self-concept. The self-concept has three aspects-beliefs, feelings and behaviours. The **belief** component represents the content of the self. This is illustrated by such thoughts as "I am intelligent, sociable, sincere, overweight" etc. The **feeling** component about one's self is reflected in feelings of self-worth or in general as 'I'm O.K.' or 'I'm not O.K.' Finally, the **behavioural** component is the tendency to act toward one's self in a self-deprecating or self-enhancing manner.



established and specific patterns of behaviour are adopted, it tends to resist change. This resistance to change also gives you a degree of stability that prevents you from regarding yourself as worthless at one moment and worthy at the next. As your activities are organised and integrated in relation to your self-concept, you can expect to develop a relatively consistent life-style. Also, you achieve a stable interpersonal environment by maintaining a consistent relationship between your self-concept and your beliefs about how others behave and feel toward you with regard to your self-concept. In order to maintain your interpersonal environment and to maximise congruence or harmony, you (like any other individual) actively use certain mechanisms to stabilise interactions:

1. **Misperception:** When the actual expectations of others are not congruent with your self-concept or behaviour, you may simply misperceive how others see you.
2. **Selective Interaction:** You may choose to interact with those persons with whom you can most readily establish a congruent state.
3. **Selective Evaluation of the Other Person:** You maximise congruency by favourably evaluating those who behave congruently towards you and devalue those who do not.
4. **Selective Evaluation of Self:** You maximise congruency by altering the values placed on various aspects of your self-concept so that the aspects that are in agreement with the perception of your own behaviour and those of others are most highly evaluated.
5. **Response Evocation:** You, intentionally or unintentionally, behave in a way that results in others' behaving toward you in a congruent fashion. A person in interaction controls the cues provided to others to ensure that he or she will be categorised in certain ways and not in any unexpected way.

The mechanisms, mentioned above, are some of the means used by any person to protect one's self-concept and maintain an interpersonal environment.

#### **Interpersonal Needs: What do you want from me?**

People need people, but for what? Schutz (1966) maintains that there are three interpersonal needs—inclusion, control and affection—that cause one, to establish and maintain relations with others. These needs are defined as follows:

- 1 Inclusion—the need for interaction and association.
- 2 Control --the need for control and power.
- 3 Affection—the need for love and affection.

Individuals differ, however, in the strength of their interpersonal needs.

For each interpersonal need, there are two behavioural aspects—expressed and wanted. **Expressed** behaviour is the behaviour that we initiate toward others., whereas **wanted** behaviour is the behaviour we want or prefer from others toward us.

Expressed Behaviour	Need Dimension	Wanted Behaviour
I initiate interaction with people	Inclusion	I want to be included
I control people	Control	I want people to control me
I act close and personal towards people	Affection	I want people to get close and personal with me

Compatibility is a property of a relationship between two or more persons that leads to the mutual satisfaction of interpersonal needs and harmonious coexistence. If what is wanted and what is expressed is equal for both interacting persons, mutual needs are satisfied. For example, those who wish to dominate and control activities, work well with those who want to be controlled or directed. However, if both parties want to dominate, some degree of conflict may be expected.

When you compare these interpersonal needs with self-concept, you will find that the need for inclusion is to feel that the self is significant and worthwhile; for control; the need is to feel one's self as a competent and responsible person; for affection, the need is to feel that self is a lovable person.



**Activity B**

Write eighteen simple sentences about yourself starting with "I am" or "I want others to," or "I like" Write these sentences as frankly and spontaneously as possible without exercising much caution. Analyse the sentences yourself to determine your self-concept and interpersonal needs. You may find some of the sentences cannot be put into any of the categories we have discussed so far.

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**Interpersonal Orientations: How do you influence me?**

Individuals vary greatly in how they relate to and influence others. Three basic types of persons have been identified-the tough battler, the friendly helper, and the objective thinker. These three styles and associated behaviours are outlined in Chart 1.

The interpersonal orientations are shown in terms of extremes, but they are typical descriptions of familiar behaviour. Many people are more oriented to one style than another and feel more comfortable with its associated behaviours. While one's style is related to his or her personal needs and self-concept, a style can be overdone and distorted. Each style reflects behaviour that, in varying degrees, is ineffective in some situations.

The Tough Battler would relate better to others, if he or she were more sensitive to others, could accept his or her own inevitable dependence on others, and recognise that some situations will not yield to pressure. The Friendly Helper would be more satisfied if he or she could stand up for his or her own interests and face conflict. Like-wise, the Objective Thinker could relate to others more effectively, if he or she were more aware and accepting of his or her own feelings and those of others. One does not have to assume that his or her behaviour is fixed or impossible to control.

**Chart 1**

**Three Interpersonal Orientations and Associated Behaviours**

	Tough Battler	Friendly Helper	Objective Thinker
Emotions	Accepts aggression Rejects affection	Accepts affection Rejects aggression	Rejects both affection and interpersonal aggression
Goal	Dominance	Acceptance	Correctness
Judges others by	Strength, power	Warmth	Cognitive ability
Influences others by	Direction, intimidation, control of rewards	Offering understanding, praise, favours, friendship	Factual data, logical arguments
Value in organisation	Initiates, demands disciplines	Supports, harmonises, relieves tension	Defines, clarifies, gets information, tests, criticises
Overuses	Fight	Kindness	Analysis
Becomes	Pugnacious	Sloppy, sentimental	Pedantic
Fears	Being "soft" or dependent	Desertion, conflict	Emotions, irrational acts
Needs	Warmth, consideration, objectivity	Strength, integrity, firmness, self-assertion	Awareness of feeling, ability to love and to fight



### Activity C

Draw an equilateral triangle and name three **vertices** with three interpersonal orientations. Note where you think you are and put a dot at that space within the triangle which will depict your position. Get the opinion of a close friend and ask' him to place you within the triangle. Do you agree on his assessment of your interpersonal orientation? Explore, with him, the differences in perception.

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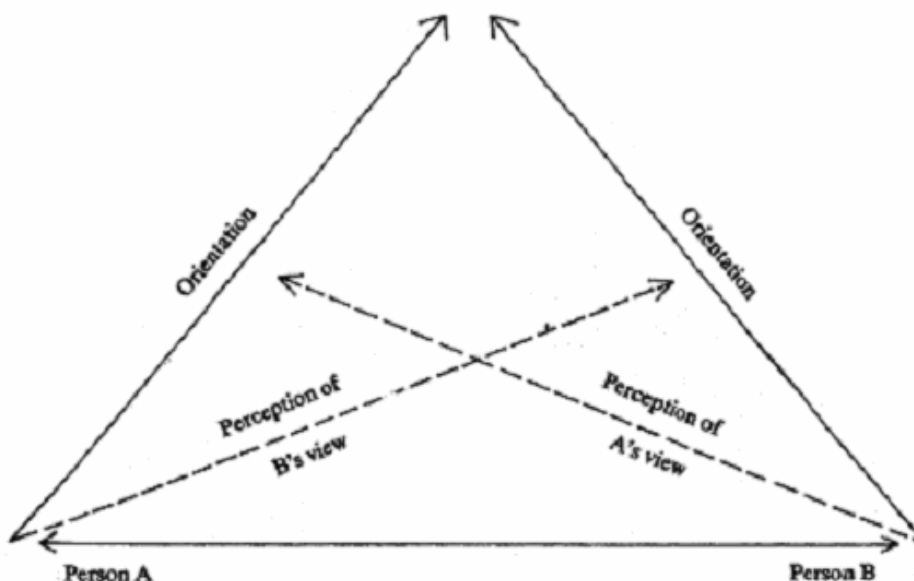
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### Interpersonal Attraction: Why do we like each other?

You are not passive in your interpersonal interactions with others but seek to structure these relationships. You will choose to interact with others with whom you can most readily establish a harmonious relationship. For example, if you regard yourself as very intelligent, you will interact with others who respect your intelligence or allow you to use it. By choosing such persons as friends, an important and durable source of harmonious interactions is created. So, remember: people interact more frequently with those who are perceived as confirming their self-concept to the greatest extent.

The greater the importance and common consequences of an "object" for two people, the greater the attraction between both persons. An "object" may refer to any focus of perception-including physical objects, symbols, the other person's self-concept or to one's own self-concept. This relationship is depicted in Figure I.

**Figure I: Factors and Dynamics of Interpersonal Attraction**





The attraction of 'A' towards 'B' is affected by the similarity between A's attitude towards 'X' and his or her perception of B's attitude toward 'X'. Moreover, A's own attitude towards 'X' and his or her perception of B's attitude are influenced by the degree to which he or she is attracted to 'B'. For example, assume that 'A', who is attracted to 'B', discovers a difference between A's and B's attitudes towards their common supervisor 'X'. Assume that 'A' likes the supervisor but B' does not and holds many unfavourable views about him. Since 'A' is attracted to 'B', even while holding divergent views, a strain is created that must be resolved. Return to a state of balance may take several forms:

1. 'A shift in A's perception of B's attitude may occur. 'A' may decide that he or she was mistaken in attributing to 'B' a negative attitude towards the supervisor. If 'B' actually does have a negative attitude, this would be a misperception.
2. 'A' might change his or her own attitude in the direction of 'B' and develop a negative attitude towards the supervisor (X)..
3. 'A' might try to convince 'B' that 'B' is mistaken about the supervisor. If 'B' is attracted to 'A' and is also experiencing a strain, 'B' might be susceptible to such persuasion.
4. 'A' might restore balance to the relationship by reducing his or her attraction towards 'B'.

These actions indicate how people seek to validate their attitudes by seeking agreement with others-consensual validation.

When a group begins to interact and acquire information of other's views and attitudes, bonds of attraction form most strongly between those who hold similar views toward things that are important and relevant to both. Also, a person likes others who have the same feeling toward him or her as that person has toward himself or herself. This reinforces one's self-concept and facilitates interpersonal relations.

**Activity D**

Recall a situation where you had differences of attitude with your very close friend about somebody whom both of you knows well. How was the difference in attitude reduced? Reflect on the process of returning to the state of balance and prepare a small introspective note.

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**Activity E**

Select three to four close friends with whom' you are mutually attracted. Prepare a list of similarities and differences of values, attitudes, needs and expectations between you and your friends. How does the list look like? Do similarities outweigh differences or the way round?

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The development of successful working relationships takes time. No one can cultivate such a relationship with another person without going through a long arduous process that usually takes months or years to develop. The development of a working relationship occurs in the following sequences:

1. The initial contact produces a set of impressions and attitudes in each towards the other. A favourable mutual impression is needed to develop a long-term relationship.
2. A positive impression opens the door for a long-term working relationship. When this occurs, the interacting parties develop a set of mutually agreeable expectations regarding their roles, performance and relationships.
3. The interacting parties make continuous attempts to meet each other's expectations. Failure to carry out this psychological contract will probably terminate the relationship.
4. Mutual trust and influence develop as a result of meeting the psychological contract, and these ensure the continuation of the relationship.

In this section, we are going to discuss, in brief, the four stages of developing interpersonal relationship:

1. Forming first impressions
2. Developing mutual expectations
3. Honouring psychological contracts
4. Developing trust and influence.

### Forming First Impressions

First impressions, though often inaccurate, are lasting impressions. First impressions are lasting because they influence the way in which people see subsequent data about the perceived object or person. So, whether or not first impressions are correct, it is important for us to make favourable impressions on other people. Initial impressions do not guarantee long-term relationships, but they are essential for entering into enduring relationship with others. Many studies have shown that much of the groundwork for subsequent relationships with others is laid in the very first stage of socialisation.

The first stage of socialisation has a significant implication for those who are looking for jobs. When an organisation searches for a new manager, it will probably contact between 10 to 40 potential candidates. Of these, it will probably interview between three to eight people, but only one will be selected for the position. What factors help the employer to narrow down the list? The initial selection is probably based on substantive qualities such as educational achievement, job experience and specialisation, references, etc. as described in the resume, But the next selection most likely results from the impression the candidates make during the job interview. Image consultants list the following qualities which help make a good first impression (Thompson, 1977):

1. **Poise:** One should maintain composure by being diplomatic and personable. Nervousness disturbs one's poise.
2. **Articulation:** One should speak naturally and fluently, use proper language and add deep tones in the voice to create an impression of maturity.
3. **Conservative Dress:** Conservative dress in classic styles are appropriate for a business engagement such as job interview. Extremes in fashion should be avoided.
4. **Positive Attitude:** Without being a naive optimist, one should show a positive outlook towards life, for people generally prefer a prudent optimist to a pessimist.
5. **Knowledgeability:** Learning something about the organisation and its products, > services and people before an interview demonstrates one's interest.



- 6. **Thoughtfulness:** One should be alert and responsive, yet weigh each question before responding. A hasty response can be seen as indicative of immaturity or lack of wisdom.
- 7. **Self-confidence:** In order to make other people have confidence in him or her, the person needs to appear self-confident. An erect posture, head held high and an assertive tone of voice can help show self-confidence with requisite humility.

Remember that in forming first impressions, your non-verbal behaviour plays as important a role as your verbal behaviour. Read the theme paper of transactional analysis and you will appreciate that the body-language associated with different "ego-states" (like Nurturing Parent, Adult, Adapted Child and Natural Child) play a very important part in the process of exchange of positive "strokes" to each other.

**Developing Mutual Expectations**

When people are mutually impressed, they are more likely to enter into a long-term relationship. When this happens, they develop certain expectations about each other. In work organisations, managers may expect new employees to be competent, productive, reliable and loyal and to conform to organisational norms. New employees, on the other hand, expect their superiors to be fair, supportive and considerate of their needs.

Many of these expectations are unwritten and unspoken. People usually do not have clear ideas about what they expect from other people or from organisations, especially at the beginning of a relationship. Initial expectations are usually very general and tend to be unrealistic. Unrealistic expectations often develop because people promise more than they can deliver at the initial stage in order to impress the other party.

Parties must go beyond the stage of establishing general expectations in order to determine whether or not the relationship is satisfactory. Unless they work out more realistic expectations, the relationship becomes superficial and less meaningful. The process of working out mutual expectations involves a series of exchanges and adjustments to each other's expectations.

A set of mutual expectations that is worked out, and understood by the parties is called a **psychological contract**; it governs the relationships between them in day-to-day interactions. Although this contract is neither formally stated nor legally binding, it serves as the basis for evaluating the quality of the relationship.

**Activity F**

What is the nature of "psychological contract" between you and another person (your employer or your friend or your life partner)? What do you expect the other party to do? What do you believe the other party expects you to, do? Find out the areas of expectations where you think both the parties mutually but tacitly agree.

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**Honouring Psychological Contracts**

An effective interpersonal or work relationship cannot develop and be maintained unless the participants are willing to honour their psychological contracts. Each party expects the other to be faithful in the relationship, not to take arbitrary actions and to





be honest with him or her. There will, of course, be times when some of these expectations cannot be fully satisfied. But when this happens, each party must be reassured that the other is acting in good faith.

What do people expect from others in working relationships? In one study (Gabarro, 1978); executives expected three things from their colleagues: reliable character, professional competence and good judgment.

The **character-based expectations** include:

1. **Integrity:** Maintaining personal and moral honesty in the relationship.
2. **Motive:** Having good intentions and acting in good faith.
3. **Consistency:** Showing consistency in behaviour.
4. **Openness:** Levelling and being honest with another person.
5. **Discretion:** Maintaining confidences.

The **competence-based expectations** include:

1. **Technical competence:** Having the ability to perform the assigned task.
2. **Interpersonal competence:** Being able to maintain effective interpersonal relationships.

The **judgment-based expectations** include:

1. **Business sense:** Making good business judgment.
2. **Interpersonal judgment:** Making an accurate perceptual judgment of other people.

Each of us has a minimum acceptable level of satisfaction. If the actual fulfilment of expectations is below that level, the situation will be viewed as a violation of the contract. When this happens the affected member will send out signals of dissatisfaction in the form of joking, complaining or showing anger (sometimes through withdrawal). If these signals are received and honoured by the other person, the relationship can be restored or the contract may be renegotiated. Otherwise, the association will suffer chronic discontent, strife, alienation and eventual termination.

### Activity G

Think of a situation where the other party violated the "psychological contract" you had with him or her. In what way did you send your signal of dissatisfaction? What happened to your signals?

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### Developing Trust and Influence

The result of meeting the psychological contract is an increased level of trust and influence. When the parties to the contract are able to meet their mutual expectations, the relationship produces mutual trust and favourable sentiment. The more satisfactory the association becomes, the greater the influence the parties have on each other. Since the relationship is fulfilling, the parties will continually rely on it to satisfy their needs. This dependency permits them to exert influence on each other.

The increased level of influence enhances each party's ability to affect the behaviour and thinking of the other. When a person is able to influence others, the person



becomes more effective in performing a task. The person's effectiveness is especially increased when the task requires a high degree of interaction with other people, for the influential person is capable of enlisting the necessary support and cooperation from others.

## 17.4 DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

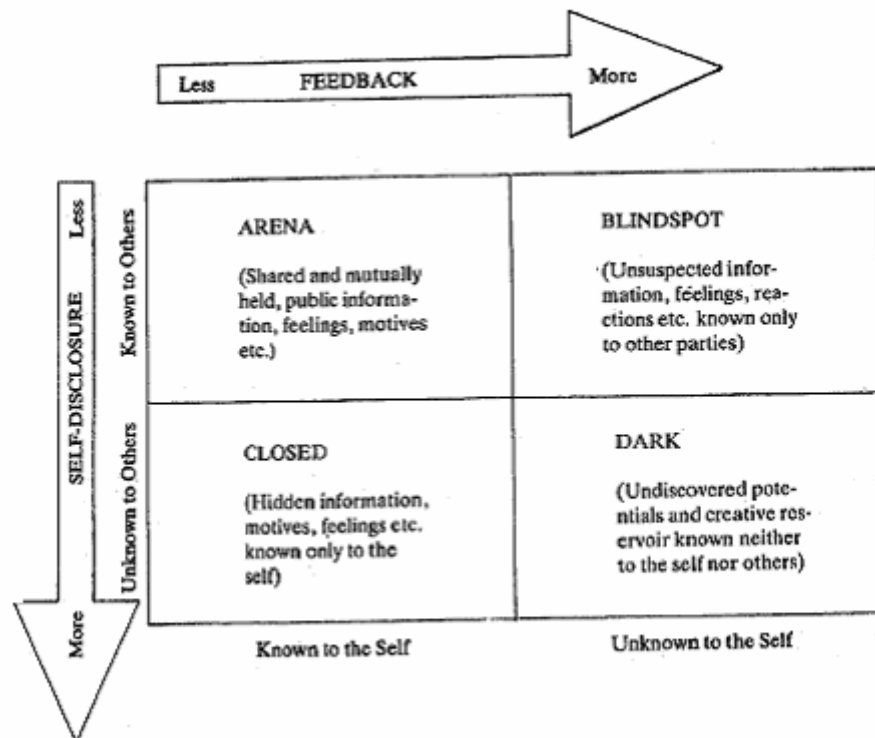
The quality of interpersonal relationships is largely affected by the way the parties relate to each other. How we relate to another person reflects our own personality. As you have seen earlier, some people have a greater desire to maintain close - relationships, others are relatively insensitive. But the ability to create, develop and maintain such relationships is not inborn. More often than not, this ability involves the way a person listens, questions, cares and responds to others. In order to develop a close and binding relationship, parties must expose themselves to each other so they can really get to know each other. Unless they know each other well, they cannot develop a trusting relationship.

### Increasing Interpersonal Awareness: The Johari Window

The Johari Window is a conceptual model for studying interpersonal awareness. It was developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (the name Johari combines their first names). It is a schematic model that shows how people expose themselves to others and receive feedback from others in their interpersonal relationships. As shown in Figure II, the Johari Window has four parts: Arena, Blindspot, Closed and Dark. Arena represents the "Public self" that is known to the self and others. The Blindspot area is known to others, but not to the self. The Closed area is the "private self" which is known to the self, but not to others. The Dark area is neither known to the self nor to others.

Figure II: The Johari Awareness Model of Interpersonal Process

(Source: Jay Hall, 1975)



The implication of this model is that if Arena is very small, there is very little free and spontaneous interaction. On the other hand, the larger the Arena, the greater the chance for participants in any relationship to make correct perceptual judgments about each other. This accurate perceptual judgment helps them to develop realistic . . . mutual expectations. Meeting these expectations increases their level of trust and



influence, and it helps them maintain a mutually satisfying relationship. As Arena expands, the closed area or private self shrinks and it becomes less necessary to hide or deny things one knows or feels. The Blind spot takes longer to reduce because self concept protection mechanisms are involved.

Arena can be expanded by means of self-disclosure and feedback. These two variables are shown as two large arrows in the figure and range from less to more. Self-disclosure means revealing oneself to another person and sharing one's own "feelings, emotions, facts and knowledge with that individual. Self-disclosure is **an** act of showing respect for, and sharing intimacy with another person. Such an act requires trust in another person and is likely to encourage the other person to follow suit. But self-disclosure involves both rewards and costs. Being open (more self-disclosure) offers the possibility of self-understanding, growth and better interpersonal adjustments. On the other hand, when we disclose ourselves to another, we are taking the risk of being rejected, misinterpreted or short changed. However, unless someone takes the risk and initiates self-disclosure, the relationship will not develop.

Feedback reduces the Blindspot area and helps us increase our self-awareness, since we often do not know how others view us. We can guess how they see us by their reactions, but these reactions are often not clear and likely to be misperceived. Unless we receive feedback as to how they see us, or what kind of effects our behaviours have on them, we are likely to be blind to their feelings and reactions.

The feedback given by others can hope to reduce Blindspot only if it has the following characteristics (Anderson, 1970):

1. Intended to help the recipient.
2. Given directly, with real feelings and based on a foundation of trust between the giver and the receiver.
3. Descriptive rather than evaluative.
4. Specific rather than general, with good, clear and preferably recent examples.,
5. Given at a time when the recipient appears to be in a condition of readiness to accept it.
6. Checked with others to be sure that they support its validity.
7. Includes only those things that the recipient might be expected to be able to do something about.
8. Does not include more than the recipient can handle at any particular time.

Interpersonal awareness can be increased in several ways. When you feel that something is wrong with a relationship but the problem area cannot be identified, you may take one of the following actions:

1. Ask the other party how the relationship is working out for him or her (i.e., solicit feedback). Take the initiative in expressing your concerns and feelings (i.e., initiate self-disclosure) and listen to the feedback with empathy and without any attempt to defend. The feedback obtained may not be satisfactory but at least opens the door for improvement.
2. Ask yourself whether you are fulfilling the psychological contract. Take stock of your perceptions of mutual expectation and see if each of you is meeting these expectations. Keeping in mind the characteristics of effective feedback, communicate your concerns to your partner.

### **Taking Interpersonal Risks**

Nothing really happens in a relationship until the participants learn to trust each other. However, trusting another person is not simple because it involves risk of being exploited. If the other person behaves in such a manner that it violates one's trust in him or her, the relationship cannot continue; However, we do not know if we can trust, another person until such an opportunity of violation of trust arises: There are a few things a person can do to create and maintain a trusting relationship:

1. Take the initiative in self-disclosure. This can set the tone for developing and maintaining a relationship of trust.
2. Accept another person's self-disclosure: Appreciate the other person for taking the initiative and the risk of rejection.
3. Reciprocate another's initiative with your own self-disclosure. Failure to do so will be interpreted by the other person's a lack of interest and will arouse the anxiety of



- possible exploitation.
4. Remember that the self-fulfilling prophecy works in an interpersonal relationship. An initial assumption about a person has a way of proving itself. If you assume that the other person cannot be trusted, you will find evidence to that effect. If you assume that other person can be trusted, you are likely to experience the same.

### **Developing Cooperative Relationships**

A relationship will be maintained and will prosper only when it satisfies the participants' needs and expectations. In a mutually helpful relationship, the participants tend to cooperate rather than compete in sharing limited resources or rewards. In work organisations, people compete for limited resources-pay increases, promotions, power and recognition. But those who want to develop mutually helpful relationships with others should make an effort to cooperate rather than compete in such a situation.

However, development of a cooperative relationships is a function of three factors:

1. **Shareable goal:** The perception that the goal is shareable by the parties. In all interdependent relationships, there exists at least one superordinate goal which can be achieved only if the parties cooperate.
2. **Perceived power of all parties:** The perception that all parties have power enough to use in a benevolent or a malevolent manner, depending upon their individual choice. This factor refers to the appreciation of the fact that anybody in a relationship has the power to help or hinder goal achievement.
3. **Trust:** A minimum level of trust prevailing amongst the parties that power of the other party will not be used in a malevolent way. The present level of trust is a product of past experience and self-fulfilling prophecy. The more trusting the parties become, the more likely it is that they will engage in cooperative relationships in future.

### **Resolving Interpersonal Problems**

A close interpersonal relationship is maintained by building trust, acceptance and support. But there are times when one party may become angry with the other for failing to meet the psychological contract. When this occurs, the first party should constructively confront the second. How well the two handle such an interpersonal problem will indicate the depth of the relationship. In a shallow relationship, one party may ignore the destructive behaviour of the other, but in a mature relationship, however, both parties should engage in constructive confrontation in order to improve the quality of the relationship.

Constructive confrontation is defined by Johnson (1972) as a deliberate attempt to help another person examine the consequences of his or her behaviour. It involves providing feedback that is useful and unthreatening to the confrontee. Keeping in mind the characteristics of giving feedback as discussed earlier, you can improve the effectiveness of confrontation by observing the following principles:

1. **Importance of the relationship:** Do not confront another person unless both parties see the importance of the relationship and truly value it. Otherwise, confrontation may turn into, or be perceived as, criticism.
2. **Ability of the confrontee:** Confront another person only when you perceive that he or she has the ability to act on your feedback. If the confrontee cannot change his or her behaviour, confrontation can lead to frustration.
3. **Use of empathy:** View the problem from the confrontee's perspective. You may even change your perception of the problem as a result of this empathy.
4. **Use of "I" language:** Use "I" language, such as the words "I", "Me" and "My" to reduce the defensiveness of the confrontee. "You" language-use of "You" and "Your" is more closely related to criticism and sermonising.
5. **Focusing on behaviour:** Focus your feedback on specific behaviours rather than on the person. A person-directed feedback produces defensive behaviour and resentment. We can change our behaviour but not ourselves.
6. **Use of descriptive statements:** Describe how you see and feel about the situation. Evaluating in judgmental statements can easily evoke defensive



- behaviours because such statements can be interpreted as criticism.
7. **Exploring alternative behaviours:** Instead of suggesting any specific solution to the problem, help the person explore various means of overcoming it.
  8. **Selection of time:** Since timing is important for an effective confrontation, select a time when the confrontation is relaxed and more open to receiving feedback without being defensive.
  9. **Importance of privacy:** Confront the person in private. Open confrontation will be considered a personal attack rather than a helpful encounter.
  10. **Use of non-verbal behaviour:** Use non-verbal behaviours, which speak louder than words, to express yourself to others. Eye contact, appropriate tone of voice and correct posture can all add to the effectiveness of confrontation.
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**Activity H**

Select a person with whom you would like to develop a closer relationship in a work-related environment. Make a list of the things that you want most from this person. After you have done this, make a list of the things that this person may want from you. Compare what you want from the other person with what you think the other person wants from you, and answer the following questions:

- i) What are the bases for mutual attractions?
- ii) How well can or do you meet the other person's expectations?
- iii) How well does the other person meet your expectations?
- iv) If the relationship is not satisfactory, what do you think is the cause?
- v) How can you improve the relationship?

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**Activity I**

Recollect a situation where you constructively confronted another party by providing feedback effectively. Analyse what exactly did you do and how it worked. Recall another situation where you failed to successfully confront another person. Analyse how and why it happened that way. What would you do in case you get a second chance?

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**Activity J**

Transactional Analysis is a very useful framework for understanding and improving interpersonal behaviour. Read the theme paper on Transactional Analysis and integrate TA concepts with the concepts mentioned in this unit.

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**17.5 SUMMARY**

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In this unit we have discussed the importance of interpersonal competence which is at the heart of social skills required by any manager in any organisation. You have seen that, in order to improve interpersonal competence, one must have a fairly accurate idea about one's self-concept. Self-concept, once formed, resists changes through several protective mechanisms.

Three types of interpersonal needs, i.e. inclusion, control and affection are related with self-concept. But these have two behavioural aspects-expressed and wanted. Concepts of interpersonal orientation tell us how we influence each other. In that section you have seen that three basic types of persons have been identified-the tough battler, the friendly helper and the objective thinker. The concept of interpersonal attraction tells us why we like each other. You have seen that people interact more frequently with those who are perceived as confirming their self-concept to the greatest extent. Bonds of attraction form most strongly between those who hold similar views towards things that are important and relevant to both.

In this unit, we have discussed four stages of development of a working relationship. The first stage of socialisation is forming the initial impression. Initial favourable impressions do not guarantee long-term relationships, but they are essential for entering into enduring relationship with others. In forming first impressions, non-verbal behaviour plays as important a role as verbal behaviour. In the second stage a set of mutual expectations are worked out and understood by the parties. Many of these expectations are unwritten and unspoken. Hence, these are called psychological contracts. An effective interpersonal or work-relationship cannot develop unless the participants are willing to honour their psychological contracts. The result of fulfilling the psychological contracts is an increased level of trust and influence.

In the last section on 'developing interpersonal skills', you have come across a conceptual model called 'Johari Window'. You have seen that interpersonal competence can be greatly enhanced by enlarging 'Arena' with the help of feedback and self-disclosure. Several characteristics of effective feedback have been discussed. It is also emphasised that interpersonal relations cannot flourish unless the parties are prepared to take certain interpersonal risks. Development of cooperative relationships



is facilitated when there are shared goals, mutually perceived power and the minimum level of distrust. Finally, we have discussed the principles of constructive confrontation in resolving Interpersonal problems.

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## 17.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST

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- 1 Explain the various aspects of self-concept. What steps will you take to achieve a stable interpersonal environment?
- 2 What are the specific stages involved in developing interpersonal relationship?
- 3 After going through this unit, do you think that you can enrich your relationship with others? If yes, how?

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## 17.7 FURTHER READINGS

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