

TEEN

**MENTAL HEALTH
AND LIFE SKILLS**

WORKBOOK



Teen

Communication Skills

Workbook

**Facilitator Reproducible
Self-Assessments, Exercises
& Educational Handouts**

**Ester R. A. Leutenberg
& John J. Liptak, EdD**

Illustrated by Amy L. Brodsky, LISW-S

**Whole Person**

210 West Michigan Street
Duluth, MN 55802-1908

800-247-6789

books@wholeperson.com
www.wholeperson.com

Teen Communication Skills Workbook

Facilitator Reproducible Self-Assessments,
Exercises & Educational Handouts

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Using This Book *(For the professional)*

Interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving messages with another person. It sounds easy, but it is not. For teens, communicating effectively can be a very difficult process. The reason is that successful communication involves a very complex set of skills, as complex as those necessary for driving a car or reading a map. Part of the reason for this complexity is that messages can be communicated and received in a variety of ways, i.e. listening, speaking, signing, touch, eye contact. Teens need adequate communication skills in order to survive and thrive in our challenging society. Effective communication skills are critical in many walks of life including:

- Developing and maintaining friendships
- Participating in the community
- Doing well in school
- Functioning successfully in a group or family
- Maintaining and succeeding on a job
- Relating well with siblings
- Maintaining close relationships

Teens these days do not have adequate practice at communicating with others because of the use of texting, social networking, email and instant messaging. Teens rely on impersonal communication means and often lack the skills to engage in face-to-face communication. They may also lack an ability to read verbal and non-verbal cues and to understand tone.

The better the communication skills, the more prepared and successful teens will be. The good news is that communication skills can be taught, learned and improved through practice. Most teens typically learn their communication skills from their family, teachers and friends and thus bad communication habits arise when these people are poor role models. When teens do not have good communication skills, it is important for them to identify their areas of needed improvement and areas for growth, learn better ways of communicating with other people, and find ways to practice critical positive skills.

Over the last century, many different workbooks, workshops, and self-help systems have been designed to help people explore communication issues and blocks to skillful communication. In the past twenty years, many research studies have focused on the value of self-reflection and journaling as a way of exploring personal characteristics, identifying weak behaviors, and examining thoughts and feelings that lead to ineffective behaviors. This book is unique because it combines both powerful psychological tools designed to enhance communication skills: self-assessment and journaling.

The *Teen Communication Skills Workbook* contains five separate sections. In each, participants will learn more about themselves as well as the impact of skillful and non-skillful communicating:

- **Active Listening Scale** helps individuals determine how well they listen when communicating.
- **Nonverbal Communications Scale** helps individuals examine how their body language is affecting their interpersonal communications.
- **Communications Skills Scale** helps individuals measure how accomplished they are at using communication skills to initiate, build and maintain interpersonal relationships.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication Scale** helps individuals explore how well they communicate with people who are culturally different.
- **Negotiation Skills Scale** helps individuals explore how well they negotiate to get what they want without manipulating or alienating other people.

(Continued on the next page)

Using This Book *(For the professional, continued)*

These sections serve as avenues for individual self-reflection, as well as group experiences revolving around identified topics of importance. Each assessment includes directions for easy administration, scoring and interpretation. In addition, each section includes exploratory activities, reflective journaling activities and educational handouts to help participants discover their habitual, ineffective methods of communicating with others and to explore new ways for enhancing interpersonal communication.

By combining reflective assessment and journaling, participants will be exposed to a powerful method of communicating. Teens will become more aware of their strengths and areas needing improvement in using these skills.

Preparation for using the assessments and activities in this book is important. The authors suggest that prior to administering any of the assessments in this book, you complete them yourself. This will familiarize you with the format of the assessments, the scoring directions, the interpretation guides and the journaling activities. Although the assessments are designed to be self-administered, scored and interpreted, this familiarity will help prepare facilitators to answer questions about the assessments for participants.

Use Codes for Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a term for any action that preserves the privacy of other people. Because teens completing the activities in this workbook might be asked to answer assessment items and to journal about and explore their relationships, you will need to discuss confidentiality before you begin using the materials in this workbook. Maintaining confidentiality is important as it shows respect for others and allows participants to explore their feelings without hurting anyone's feelings or fearing gossip, harm or retribution.

In order to maintain confidentiality, explain to the participants that they need to assign a name code for each person they write about as they complete the various activities in the workbook. For example, a friend who they like named Debbie might be titled ILD (I Like Debbie) for a particular exercise. In order to protect their friends' identities, they cannot use people's actual names or initials, just codes.

The Assessments, Journaling Activities and Educational Handouts

The Assessments, Journaling Activities, and Educational Handouts in the *Teen Communication Skills Workbook* are reproducible and ready to be photocopied for participants' use. Assessments contained in this book focus on self-reported data and can be used by psychologists, counselors, teachers, therapists and career consultants. Accuracy and usefulness of the information provided is dependent on the truthful information that each participant provides through self-examination. By being honest, participants help themselves to learn about unproductive and ineffective patterns, and to uncover information that might be keeping them from being as happy and as successful as they might be.

An assessment instrument can provide participants with valuable information about themselves; however, it cannot measure or identify everything about them. The purpose of an assessment is not to pigeon-hole certain characteristics, but rather to allow participants to explore all of their characteristics. This book contains self-assessments, not tests. Tests measure knowledge or whether something is right or wrong. For the assessments in this book, there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask for personal opinions or attitudes about a topic of importance in the participant's life.

When administering assessments in this workbook, remember that the items are generically written so that they will be applicable to a wide variety of people but will not account for every possible variable for every person. Use them to help participants identify possible negative themes in their lives and find ways to break the hold that these patterns and their effects have.

Advise the participants taking the assessments that they should not spend too much time trying to analyze the content of the questions; their initial response will most likely be true. Regardless of individual scores, encourage participants to talk about their findings and their feelings pertaining to what they have discovered about themselves. Talking about listening, non-verbal communication, cross cultural relationships and negotiations skills can help teens in every aspect of their lives. These wellness exercises can be used by group facilitators working with any population who want to strengthen their overall wellness.

A particular score on any assessment does not guarantee a participant's level of communication skills. Use discretion when using any of the information or feedback provided in this workbook. The use of these assessments should not be substituted for consultation and/or wellness planning with a health care professional.

Thanks to the following professionals whose input into this book has been so valuable!

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Special thanks to Bill Hannes who reminds us that within diversities, people with physical disabilities as well as mental health issues are capable, bright and wise in many ways. We just need to take time to be aware of what they offer.

Layout of the Book

The *Teen Communication Skills Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an integrated curriculum. You may administer one of the assessments and the journaling exercises to an individual or a group with whom you are working, or you may administer a number of the assessments over one or more days.

This Book Includes the Following Reproducible Pages in the Five Sections:

- **Assessment Instruments** – Self-assessment inventories with scoring directions and interpretation materials. Group facilitators can choose one or more of the activities relevant to their participants.
- **Activity Handouts** – Practical questions and activities that prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors.
- **Quotations** – Quotations are used in each section to provide insight and promote reflection. Participants will be asked to select one or more of the quotations and journal about what the quotations mean to them.
- **Reflective Questions for Journaling** – Self-exploration activities and journaling exercises specific to each assessment to enhance self-discovery, learning, and healing.
- **Educational Handouts** – Handouts designed to enhance instruction can be used individually or in groups to promote a positive responsibility for communication at home, in the classroom, and in the community. They can be distributed, scanned and converted into masters for overheads or transparencies, projected or written on boards and/or discussed.

Who Should Use This Program?

This book has been designed as a practical tool for helping professionals, such as therapists, psychologists, guidance counselors, teachers, group leaders, etc. Depending on the role of the professional using the *Teen Communication Skills Workbook* and the specific group's needs, these sections can be used individually or combined for a more comprehensive approach.

Why Use Self-Assessments?

Self-assessments are important in responding to various teen safety issues because they help participants to:

- Become aware of the primary motivators that guide their behavior.
- Explore and learn to “let go” of troublesome habits and behavioral patterns.
- Explore the effects of unconscious childhood messages.
- Gain insight and “a wake-up call” for behavioral change.
- Focus their thinking on behavioral goals for change.
- Uncover resources they possess that can help them to cope better with communications.
- Explore their personal characteristics without judgment.
- Be fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

Because the assessments are presented in a straightforward and easy-to-use format, individuals can self-administer, score and interpret each assessment at their own pace.

Introduction for the Participant

You are going to have many different relationships throughout your life. Some of these relationships are with friends, family members, other students in your school, co-workers on your job, and with people in your community like your teachers, grocery store clerks, religious leaders, and members of clubs and organizations to which you belong. As you can see, you will be interacting with some people who have similar communication patterns as you, and some who have very different ways of communicating. You will form some of these relationships very easily, but for some, you may have to work. In order to get along and develop relationships with the various people currently in your life and those you have yet to interact with, you will need a set of communication skills that you can rely on to establish and maintain effective relationships in your life.

Because these relationships are a necessity, not a luxury, you will need to be prepared in order to develop and maintain these critical relationships. Positive, supportive relationships can help you cope with any difficult times you may encounter, reduce the amount of stress you have, and increase your general happiness and life satisfaction. Communication can be described as the center of all interpersonal relationships. The problem is that communication can be very difficult to initiate, develop and maintain. Managing the dynamics of personal relationships can be quite challenging and communication is definitely a skill that takes considerable learning and practice to gain a sense of mastery. Personal relationships are at times difficult to maintain because they are extremely complex, constantly changing and very fragile. That is why it is beneficial to use effective communication skills in personal relationships. Effective communication skills ensure that you will listen actively to what the other person is saying, communicate clearly, negotiate to ensure win-win situations, maintain effective body language and be aware of the cognitive distortions that may block clear communication between two people.

The good news is that if you feel like you are not a good communicator, you can learn and practice the skills that will help your interpersonal relationships grow in effective ways. This book relies on a self-reflective method that is both therapeutic and fun. The *Teen Communication Skills Workbook*, is designed to help you learn about all the various skills that can be used to enhance or block effective communication between you and other people.

Teen Communication Skills Workbook

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SECTION I:

Active Listening Scale



Name _____

Date _____

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Active Listening Directions

Active listening is a critical piece of any conversation you have with your friends, family, teachers, and anyone else with whom you talk. The Active Listening Scale was designed to help you examine how effective you are in identifying, assessing and overcoming blocks to listening.

This scale consists of two parts; each contains 32 statements.

ACTIVE LISTENING I – You will think about a person with whom you believe YOU DO NOT COMMUNICATE well.

ACTIVE LISTENING II – You will think about a person with whom you believe YOU DO COMMUNICATE well.

Read each of the statements and decide whether or not the statement describes you. If the statement describes you, circle the number next to that item under the TRUE column. If the statement does not describe you, circle the number next to that item under the FALSE column.

In the following example from the Active Listening I scale, the circled number under FALSE indicates the statement is not true of the person completing the inventory.

Name a person with whom you believe you DO NOT communicate well.

(use name code) MJK

When I am communicating with this person . . .

	TRUE	FALSE
I try to understand what the other person is trying to say	2	(1)

This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time thinking about your answers. Your initial response will likely be the most true for you. Be sure to respond to every statement.

(Turn to the next page and begin)

Active Listening Scale I

Name a person with whom you believe you *DO NOT* communicate well.

(use name code) _____

When I am communicating with this person . . .

	TRUE	FALSE
1. I try to understand what the other person is trying to say	2	1
2. I am constantly comparing myself to this person	1	2
3. I try to read this person's mind	1	2
4. I put aside my judgments of this person	2	1
5. I listen for feelings as well as what is being said	2	1
6. I ask for clarification if I do not understand something	2	1
7. I usually disagree with this person	1	2
8. I agree with what this person says, even if I don't	1	2
9. I go on and on to prove I am right	1	2
10. I make appropriate eye contact.	2	1
11. I hear only what I want to hear	1	2
12. I plan my response while this person is talking	1	2
13. I often repeat what this person says.	2	1
14. I listen with my full attention	2	1
15. I do not concern myself about this person's feelings	1	2
16. I often find myself lying	1	2
17. I attempt to understand the meaning of the words being said.	2	1
18. I finish this person's sentences	1	2
19. I think about other things while this person is talking	1	2
20. I jump in and give advice before this person stops talking.	1	2
21. I make jokes or mock the person talking	1	2
22. I ask questions to get further information	2	1
23. I judge this person ahead of time	1	2
24. I reassure and support this person	2	1
25. I try to solve this person's problems for him/her	1	2
26. I am easily distracted	1	2
27. I focus on specific points and shut out the rest of the message.	1	2
28. I notice this person's body language and tone of voice	2	1
29. I find myself daydreaming	1	2
30. I always seem to understand this person's position clearly	2	1
31. I often interrupt this person	1	2
32. I let this person know I heard what was said	2	1

TOTAL = _____

(Continued on the next page)



Active Listening Scale II

Name a person with whom you believe you **DO** communicate well.

(use name code) _____

When I am communicating with this person . . .

	TRUE	FALSE
1. I try to understand what the other person is trying to say	2	1
2. I am constantly comparing myself to this person	1	2
3. I try to read this person's mind	1	2
4. I put aside my judgments of this person	2	1
5. I listen for feelings as well as what is being said	2	1
6. I ask for clarification if I do not understand something	2	1
7. I usually disagree with this person	1	2
8. I agree with what this person says, even if I don't	1	2
9. I go on and on to prove I am right	1	2
10. I make appropriate eye contact.	2	1
11. I hear only what I want to hear.	1	2
12. I plan my response while this person is talking	1	2
13. I often repeat what this person says.	2	1
14. I listen with my full attention	2	1
15. I do not concern myself about this person's feelings	1	2
16. I often find myself lying	1	2
17. I attempt to understand the meaning of the words being said.	2	1
18. I finish this person's sentences.	1	2
19. I think about other things while this person is talking	1	2
20. I jump in and give advice before this person stops talking.	1	2
21. I make jokes or mock the person talking	1	2
22. I ask questions to get further information	2	1
23. I judge this person ahead of time	1	2
24. I reassure and support this person	2	1
25. I try to solve this person's problems for him/her	1	2
26. I am easily distracted	1	2
27. I focus on specific points and shut out the rest of the message.	1	2
28. I notice this person's body language and tone of voice	2	1
29. I find myself daydreaming	1	2
30. I always seem to understand this person's position clearly	2	1
31. I often interrupt this person	1	2
32. I let this person know I heard what was said	2	1

TOTAL = _____

(Go to the Scoring Directions on the next page)

Active Listening Scale Scoring Directions

The Active Listening Scale will identify how proficient you are at listening to others with whom you are talking. For each of the scales on the previous two pages, add the numbers that you circled and put that number in the TOTAL space at the bottom of each page.

Then, transfer your totals to the spaces below:

ACTIVE LISTENING I – TOTAL = _____

(The person with whom you believe you *DO NOT* communicate well.)

ACTIVE LISTENING II – TOTAL = _____

(The person with whom you believe you *DO* communicate well.)

Profile Interpretation

Individual Scale Score	Indication
56 – 64	You are an active listener with this person. You go out of your way to truly hear what this person is saying, ask questions for more information and repeat important points back to the communicator.
40 – 55	You are an average listener with this person and possibly other people. You could use some help in further developing your listening skills.
32 – 39	You definitely need to further develop your listening skills with this person and probably others as well.

What differences do you notice between your listening skills when you are with someone you get along with and someone you do not.

Better listening skills will help you have better relationships with everyone, whether it's personal, school, work, volunteer or other-related.

Regardless of your score, the exercises and activities that follow are designed to help you increase your listening skills.



Building Your Listening Skills

Active listening sounds easy, doesn't it? Actually, it is quite challenging. It takes commitment, thought and awareness of what keeps you from being a good listener. Effective listening skills will help people to better understand each other.

Being focused on what someone is saying is the most important part of listening.

What Keeps You from Listening Actively?

I. DAYDREAMING

Daydreaming is allowing your attention to wander somewhere else. They are roadblocks to positive communication. It is a time when you stop listening and drift away into your own thoughts. (use name codes)

In what situations have you found yourself daydreaming?

(Ex: Classes that I don't like.)

1. _____
2. _____

What was the person talking about?

(Ex: MYT is giving a history lecture.)

1. _____
2. _____

How do you feel about the other person?

(Ex: She's nice – I'm just not interested in history.)

1. _____
2. _____

How do you think the other person feels?

(Ex: She probably feels bad when she sees me daydreaming.)

1. _____
2. _____

What can you do to prevent this?

(Ex: Maybe I can read ahead and become more interested. Then I can participate.)

1. _____
2. _____

(Continued on the next page)