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Interaction & Core Conditions: The Basics

Not for wimps

(This article is complementary material for Tutorials 1 & 4, a basic knowledge of core conditions is also necessary if you want to make the most of the forum.)

"This process of the good life is not, I am convinced, a life for the faint-hearted. It involves the stretching and growing of becoming more and more of one's potentialities. It involves the courage to be. It means launching oneself fully into the stream of life". (Rogers, 1961)

"It's not who I am underneath, it's what I DO, that defines me" (Batman, in Batman Begins).

Quick-Start Summary (followed by longer version with more explanation)

What interaction is: It is possible to create, in terms that are clearly definable and measurable, the psychological conditions that bring about constructive beneficial personality and behavioral

changes, improvements to relationships, communication, health and intelligence. The technique that creates these conditions is called interaction.

What interaction achieves: Beneficial changes in the personality structure of the individual, at both surface and deeper levels, in a direction that produces greater integration, less internal conflict, more energy utilizable for effective living, and a change in behavior away from behaviors generally regarded as immature or dysfunctional and toward behaviors regarded as mature and healthy.

Process Necessary for Interaction:

1. Yourself and another/others are in psychological contact, communicating (via any means).
2. You have an awareness of what anxiety is and how it causes behavior tending towards incongruence ("nonuse" or "wronguse"), and knowledge of the difference between interaction and action/reaction (this is explained below).
3. You communicate with genuineness, honesty and respect.
4. You adopt a position of unconditional positive regard toward whoever you communicate with.
5. You adopt an empathic understanding of the other person's frame of reference.
6. You endeavor to communicate this to them in a meaningful way.

The "Core Conditions":

1. Genuineness
2. Unconditional positive regard
3. Empathy

Expect the "beneficial changes" to occur in YOU, not in the other person. We do not practice interaction to try to change others, but to improve ourselves.

Only Three Types of Outcome to Any Event

Any behavior by any person in any situation can only ever achieve one of three personal and overall outcomes:

1. A change for the better
2. A change for the worse
3. No change

None of us want to achieve a change for the worse on purpose, but of course, most of life's complex factors are not in our control in most situations. The important thing to grasp first though is that there are NO other options. Every single event, including all of our behavior, the things we say, the way we say them, the moves we make, the decisions we take, our behavior, the choices we weigh, all the way down to every single thought we think, always has one of these three outcomes; it either improves a situation, makes it worse, or is ineffectual.

Most of the time we perceive no fundamental changes as a result of our behavior. We see life as fairly routine but subject to random 'bad luck', mistakes, or 'good fortune' and successes now and again, just as we ourselves are subject to good moods or bad moods at different times. The effect of our own behavior on others and on the world in general is seen as somewhat unpredictable; like the weather. If you ask most people, they'll usually assess their own behavior as most of the time causing "no change" and this seems a pretty rational, realistic point of view.

It's also dead wrong, because the reality of life is that a situation of 'no change' hardly ever happens. Changes hardly ever manage to be 'ineffectual'. Everything you do, there will be some change, however slight, to something, and if it is not a change for the better it will be one for the worse; in simple terms, if anything you do, think or say is not part of the solution, it becomes part of the problem.

The 'problem' here is failure, and the solution to failure is interaction.

Failure is bad news for a creature whose health relies on success in order to thrive. ANY failure; (for example failure of relationships, failure of communication, heart failure, marriage failure, failure to make friends, career failure, failure to understand, failure to remember, failure to take due care and attention, emotional failure, kidney failure, social failure, failure to think ahead,

failure to explain, failure to eat, sleep or breathe and even things like engine failure or power failure or failure of your parachute to open in time). Wherever there is failure it is followed by either breakdown, or sub-optimal performance. Failure in communication leads to breakdown in communication, which, depending on the context, can lead to divorce or war (or in some cases both). Failure to take care of yourself leads to the body's breakdown. Failure to take care of your car leads to it's breakdown, and so on.

Science has now proved that failure to use the brain healthily leads to mental decline, and failure to use intelligence leads to the inability to do so. Thought processes themselves can break down, and this is exactly what happens when we get mental problems like anxiety or senility. Interaction enables us to do the opposite –to improve our mental health and intelligence and prevent decline.

Mistakes when learning, by the way, are not failure. Mistakes are part of the solution -an essential part of learning because they teach us how not to do things. Without falling over, you would never have learned how to walk. So mistakes are taken on board as part of the path to success.

We are using the scientific definition of 'success'; the same thing intelligence, life and evolution mean by 'success' –survival and thriving through adaptation. To thrive (develop and improve) we need a balanced yet dynamically adaptable intelligence, and supporting it must be a balanced yet dynamically adaptable neurochemistry. Without the hormones that interaction produces, it's hard to achieve that balance. To thrive, we need good mental and physical health and an absence of anxiety. (If you are not sure about the difference between anxiety and stress, read [Anxiety & Input Control: The Basics](#) , in the library)

With interaction we can 'preset the stage' with a program for success. It can be used in varied fields, for example learning, creative endeavor and problem-solving, but one of the main areas for affecting beneficial change with interaction is in communication with other people.

Interaction and the Core Conditions

Interaction is the practice of certain core conditions in communication, relationships and behavior that result in a high degree of "changes for the better".

The 'core conditions' are a guide for attitude, communication and behavior. They were elucidated by psychologist Carl Rogers [1] whose work in implementing them in healthcare, education and international relations led to his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. (If you want to know more in-depth info about the background psychology, read the article [Biological Psychology & Personality Theory: The Basics](#) in the library)

The core conditions are skills that we aim to develop in ourselves to improve our ability to interact.

Rogers' achievement was to state in clear definitive and measurable terms the psychological conditions which are necessary to bring about constructive (beneficial) personality change.

By 'beneficial personality change' we mean "Change in the personality structure and behavior of people, at both conscious and unconscious levels, in a direction which produces greater integration, less internal and external conflict, more energy utilizable for effective living, and a change in behavior away from behaviors generally regarded as immature and towards behaviors generally regarded as mature."

We should practice the core conditions to achieve these improvements in ourselves, not in an attempt to try to change other people (although acknowledging that it is feedback from others that helps those changes take place). So in order to develop interaction skills, you must desire to improve yourself. (You may not yet know how, but you must want to learn.) This is important. It's possible to interact with anyone whether or not they are interested in improving their minds, but if you are not interested in improving yourself you are wasting your time.

The core conditions are:

- Genuineness (honesty, integrity, spontaneity, responsiveness)
- Unconditional positive regard (respect for the others' intelligence, attentiveness, warmth and rectitude.)
- Empathy (understanding, compassion, awareness and perception of others' emotions, situations and needs)

These apply as follows:

1. They must be used all together. They are interrelated. If one gets left out, interaction will be limited and outcomes may not be beneficial.
2. They are used universally. They apply to all types of person, all types of situations, and all types of relationship.
3. They are sufficient. There is no 'play acting' or role play, no script to follow, nothing needs to be contrived, and nothing more is needed for a beneficial outcome.

The core conditions are skills; abilities you can develop. Regardless of what you know about the other person, the behavior is what counts in interaction, and behaviors can be learned, skills can be developed. Ways of thinking and talking and even thinking are also habits of behavior that you can apply the core conditions to.

To explain interaction fully we need to tell you how it is used as a framework for thought and behavior in everyday practice. We'll also explain how it impacts the nature of relationships and communication processes, and what helps or hinders the core conditions.

Interaction As a Process

Interaction in communication is a six-stage process:

1. You communicate. A minimal relationship; a contact, must exist. The ability to interact with people does not develop except in relationships.

2. You need a basic understanding of anxiety, its effects on health, intelligence and relationships and how to control it. When a person has no awareness of anxiety in themselves, they are vulnerable to mental incongruence and neurochemical imbalance. Anxiety is the thing that most hinders interaction, and it's important to know how (if you don't know anything about this read [Anxiety and Input Control: The Basics](#) in the library) You also need a basic understanding of the difference between interaction, action and reaction and how they tie in with emotion and sentiment, which we'll explain below. You'll then be able to recognize when someone's using the core conditions (they're interacting) and when they're not (they're acting or reacting).

3. You present yourself with an attitude of genuineness and without anxiety. (You are honest, you share facts, experiences and ideas spontaneously, you can be freely and deeply yourself and you are responsive to others). This sounds easy, but the art of good interaction is to express what you mean in a way that enables the most beneficial response. That is the skill we are learning. Because the best way to predict the future is to create it 🧐

4. You communicate with an attitude of unconditional positive regard (you always assume the best of whoever you are talking to, respecting their intelligence and never pushing your beliefs, opinions or criticisms unless they are specifically asked for. You behave with attentiveness, loving warmth and respectful politeness.) Your regard for the person is not conditional. ('Conditional' regard means that there are conditions of acceptance; for example 'I like you only IF you are doing what I want'). Unconditional regard means caring for a person but not in any kind of possessive way or in order to impose your own opinions on. We do not seek to change other people (that's their job!) we seek to change ourselves and make ourselves better at interaction, because that enables the most beneficial response.

5. You develop empathic understanding. (You become aware of the needs of others and help to provide them, thus providing your own needs for interaction – neat innit?) 🧐
Empathy is also a skill that can be developed. To understand when someone is feeling anxious and how that's affecting their behavior without getting anxious yourself is a big help here.

6. You practise expressing this empathy in ways others can understand. Being able to sense someone else's circumstances and experiences as if they were your own and express how you would respond in their situation obviously aids communication. By achieving empathy, you 'cross the bridge' to another person's situation, and by expressing your own response you 'bridge the gap' of understanding.

These conditions provide all that is necessary for constructive personality change to occur, if they continue to exist over a period of time, because they provide a "matrix" (a matrix is a set of conditions required for any growth or development; a safe space in which development can take place, energy, and input for interaction).

The more often the core conditions are used, the more marked will be the constructive personality change.

Interaction, Action and Reaction

An 'action' is an anxiety-based behavior usually of offense, directed at another person or group, or at yourself.

A good example of an action is your being rude to someone or swearing at them.

A reaction is an anxiety-based behavior in the service of defense. It can include any behavior from crying to punching you on the nose.

Both these ways of communicating and behaving lead to changes for the worse, (or at best no change) and one tends to lead to the other as inevitably as it does in physics.

An interaction is an anxiety-reducing exchange that leads to a change for the better. The ability to interact adaptively is the highest measure of intelligence. It is an ability we are born with, but that we need to develop in order to use, and there are not many good examples of interaction in current societies to teach us as children! So most of us end up not terribly good at it, or not aware of it at all. Fortunately our natural ability to interact can be developed at any age, by following the core conditions. This is very important, because good mental health in human beings depends on successful interaction.

Think again about the three possible outcomes of everything; change for the better, change for the worse, or no change.

As well as being true about our circumstances, these outcomes are also true of our brains and minds. Everything we do, think, pay attention to or say has an effect on our brain and mind that either improves them or causes deterioration (depending on what chemicals are released). Interaction contrasts with "action" or "reaction" in alignment with these three possible outcomes.

Outcome 1: Change for the better: Interaction happens. This is a set of events resulting in an improvement in the intelligence, wellbeing and behavior of any agent involved in those events. Since predictive strategy and adaptability are what strong intelligence is all about, an interaction is always the best outcome to aim for, for your own benefit and everybody else's. The practice of interaction also allows growth and development to take place in your brain, because the chemicals it releases stimulates the brain to grow new network connections. This means you'll begin to see improvements in your memory, speed of learning, and other abilities.

Examples of healthy interactive behaviours:

Contentment, comfort, disgust, curiosity, desire, alarm, friendliness, affection, empathy, optimism, pride, courage, prudence, joy, love, pleasure, satisfaction, relief, sadness, gregariousness, fun, learning, exploration, creativity, play, argument, debate, cooperation, respect, self-esteem, confidence, autonomy (self-reliance).

All these behaviors are healthy and necessary in appropriate circumstances. They correlate with healthy emotions and strong intelligence.

Outcome 2: Change for the worse: Action/reaction happens. This is a set of events resulting in deterioration in the intelligence and behavior of any agent involved in the events. Actions & reactions both fall into two categories; known as "wronguse" and "nonuse". In action/reaction brain networks are either being used for the wrong things, or they are not being used. Both are caused by chronic (often unconscious) anxiety, and

are known in Rogers' theory as "Incongruence". Incongruence happens when anxiety warps perception and our psychology becomes misaligned with our biology.

Examples of wronguse-based action/reaction behaviours:

Arrogance (unjustified confidence), obsession, addiction, possessiveness, aggression, jealousy, anger, hysteria, melodramatics, coercion, prudery, prejudice, sarcasm, unkindness, pomposity, authoritarianism, bossiness, conceit, mania, biased assumption (jumping to conclusions without proof) projection (blaming others for faults or problems in ourselves), stereotyping, hatred.

These behaviors are unhealthy and are never appropriate. They correlate with unhealthy sentiments, mental and physical illness.

Outcome 3: No change: A situation of no change in the brain leads to what we call 'nonuse' or atrophy in some brain networks.

In nonuse, nothing occurs which changes anything in any way significant to survival or adaptation. Nothing gets better or easier, nothing gets noticeably worse. However when the brain is left in this situation it begins to atrophy, and you will suffer from the below "nonuse" behaviours after a time.

Examples of nonuse-based action/reaction behaviours:

Shyness, embarrassment, lack of personal hygiene, scruffiness, carelessness, apathy, depression, attention problems, alienation, neglect, lack of emotion, lack of empathy, fear, panic, worrying, guilt, shame, lack of humor, pessimism, self-pity, approval-seeking, lack of self-esteem, cowardice, self-deprecation, phobias, paranoia.

These behaviors are also unhealthy and are never appropriate. They correlate with unhealthy

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sentiments, mental and physical illness.

References

1 Rogers, Carl, "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change", The Journal of Consulting Psychology 21: 95-103, as quoted in "Communication, relationships and care", Routledge 2004.

Inner Life: Interaction in Our Thoughts, Beliefs, Attitudes and Opinions

Our inner mental behavior is just as susceptible to nonuse or wronguse thoughts and beliefs, and just as responsive to interaction (yes you can interact with yourself –just adopt the core conditions when you think about yourself!)

The thing about thoughts and beliefs is that the brain responds chemically to all of them, conscious or unconscious, fact or fiction. Our brain chemistry deeply affects our behavior and awareness. The brain responds to all signals. And all thoughts are like little emails with chemical attachments. In the attachments are hormones, and the input-processing parts of the mind open all attachments that come from your own brain, because why shouldn't it? (After all, you don't want it labeling half your perception as "spam, delete".)

We can have nonuse conscious thoughts or beliefs, such as: "Ooh, I don't think we should interfere..." "After all, what can we do?" "Don't rock the boat"; "I daren't do that"; "I might as well not bother; who cares?"; "Whatever would other people think?"; "We're just the little people";, "Not at my age";, and so on....And we can also have nonuse UNconscious beliefs of the same nature, (that we're not aware of).

The hormonal attachments to nonuse thoughts, conscious or unconscious, have long complicated names like adrenocorticosterone which don't help your understanding of interaction at all so we'll just call them "nonuse hormones".

All hormones cause bodily changes, and they cause emotions or feelings that we perceive (although we may not also be conscious of the bodily changes, sometimes we are). Nonuse hormones change the body and brain chemistry in a way that makes us very tired, fatigued and weary (burnout), makes us feel like victims; like we cannot cope, or numbs us out. It is very difficult to think clearly or even to be bothered to think. Anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure) increases, and we stop really caring about anything, including ourselves. Nonuse thoughts usually stem from an attitude of helplessness or indifference.

If you inject a rat with these hormones it becomes a lazy, slothful, scruffy animal which does little else but feed itself. It won't play with toys and it won't explore. It becomes totally apathetic,

or depressed, or both. The world appears uninteresting in the extreme. If given the choice, it will continually take morphine, cocaine or alcohol, and becomes addicted.

Such animals reproduce less often and avoid each other most of the time, and fail to nurture successful litters that are born. Their brain chemistry causes faulty gene transcription and they suffer respiratory diseases, immune deficiency and cancers, become senile at an early age and then die through self-neglect unless there is intervention.

Wronguse beliefs have led to a lot of 'famous last words,' such as, "I believe all the bears that came in here went out again... -I didn't really take much notice -aaaaaaagh!" or "Ah, sit down, there's no problem...they couldn't hit a planet at this dist..." or most often, "Oh shit."

Wronguse thoughts and beliefs are such things as "They should jolly well do as I say!" "Respect my authority!" "It's their fault!" "You're going out with me now, and therefore should do what I want!" "You have to tell people what to do or things have no sense of structure!" "It's for your own good!" "I am never wrong!". Wronguse thoughts often end with exclamation marks (and are often voiced loudly and dictatorially, or in upper case in emails), and betray an underlying attitude of assumed self-superiority, arrogance and authoritarianism.

Wronguse thoughts and beliefs lead to conflict, rows, resistance (action-reaction), resentful children, war, estranged friends, chronic stress and divorce.

Rats injected with wronguse hormones squabble, fight, posture, bully and dominate. On a long term basis (constantly on the hormones) they rape and kill each other, setting up a society of 'Might is Right' and Aggressively crafty/deceitful/greedy is what is Respected. They attack or run from anything new or unexpected. They reproduce at a normal rate but mistreat (and sometimes eat) their young, and many of them of course also die in fights. The survivors again suffer faulty gene transcription, also take readily to drugs and also suffer early senility, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, heart and lung disorders and cardiovascular diseases.

Interaction thoughts are things like, "right, how can I solve this then?" "something new...let's have a look..." "I wonder whether there's a safer way to

catch dinner?" "Hey, if I can find something that floats, I can..." and, on the whole, "I wonder..." type of thoughts. Interaction thoughts often end with question marks, followed by more interaction thoughts that answer them.

These events lead to the development of new ideas, rational argument, exploration, inventions, and solutions to problems.

The hormonal attachments to thoughts of an interactive nature trigger the emotions of excitement, interest, inspiration, alertness, friendliness and attraction. They change the body in a way that makes us energetic and attentive, creative, imaginative, able to concentrate, and ready to learn. The end result of this is behavior beneficial to survival and adaptation, but, for us personally, the end result (also caused hormonally) is happiness, and later a relaxed and satisfied calm. Proper sex is an interactive event and that's why it should make you feel relaxed and fulfilled afterwards.

Rats injected with interaction hormones literally grow new brain cells (you can see this online under a digital microscope), which makes sense if the organism is preparing to learn/learning. They have high self confidence and perform well in tests and games. They play with each other and with their young, and at all ages remain inquisitive, learn fast and want to explore. They are a real pain in the ass to work with because they escape a lot more often than other lab rats. They are sociable and not aggressive unless threatened. The world appears interesting and exciting, and also satisfying.

They live long, healthy lives, have a strong immune system and reproduce successfully and often. (Fascinatingly, if you allow them to become overcrowded, a greater percentage of the population becomes homosexual and the birth rate drops). They do not go senile. And while they're happy to try drugs, or indulge now and again, they do so rarely and don't become addicted.

Nonuse and wronguse hormones are anxiety hormones. Anxiety hormones push the point that if you take life too seriously, the first life it will take is your own.

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Practical Interaction

A simpler way of viewing all this for putting it into practice is:

Core Conditions + Interaction = Behavior that leads towards things beneficial for life & intelligence and away from things harmful to them.

Wronguse or Nonuse = Behavior that leads towards things harmful to life & intelligence and away from things beneficial.

Using Interaction in Real Life Situations

If you use the core conditions for interaction it becomes possible to both predict and beneficially modulate outcomes via your own behavior.

For example, if you come home and your house is on fire, standing around watching it burn or crying or saying, "Ah, well, there was nothing I could have done, "are options for "nonuse". This is taking a 'helpless victim' stance and is a reaction of 'nonaction'.

Options for "interaction" are to move to a safe distance and phone the fire brigade, to attack the fire yourself if you have equipment, to warn the neighbors and rustle up any help you can. These are all sensible, justified behaviors.

Options for "wronguse" are to panic and start screaming, kick the door in and try to attack the fire without equipment, or go charging in to rescue your photos. You are taking a proactive stance but these are bloody stupid actions.

Going in to get your kids out is however an interaction option because although you might die, you might save others with the greatest ability/potential. Interaction always favors the agents of greatest ability or potential in any situation. That's what evolution by adaptation is all about; developing the greatest ability in as many situations as possible.

Since humans are supposed to be the organisms with the greatest ability/potential for survival and adaptation on this planet, it's worthwhile looking at how many levels this applies to us on.

Even a simple thing like eating a nutritious meal is an interaction. Interaction tends to develop things from simple to complex, from concrete to abstract, and during eating molecules move from a simple to a complex system, more options open up to them and to the diner, as nutrients are transformed into fuel and building blocks and used for energy, growth and repair. The result is certainly beneficial to survival and thriving, and the energy spent is less than that acquired.

...You might think, "But if I ate a chicken, it certainly wasn't beneficial to the survival of the chicken!" –and you would be correct...Interaction always benefits the agents with the greatest ability/potential for survival and adaptation, and in this case that happens to be you. That's why it's in your interest to fulfil your potential! The more you improve, the more you are able to improve.

From a physics point of view, the meal provides optimum nutrients for running the body closer to optimal health, (and running on optimal saves energy too.) As a nice side effect the body, knowing it is getting what it needs, releases hormones to make you feel good, satisfied, and occasionally really stuffed. These hormones themselves are good for your health, moving you closer to optimal physical and mental performance. (An interaction often starts a chain reaction or 'cascade' of interactions .)

Practicing Interaction in Communication

What we are feeling changes how the world appears. When practising the core conditions, our mood improves and we inspire better and friendlier responses in our social intercourse. This feedback in its turn boosts our self esteem, anxiety reduces, we are able to think more clearly and confidently, we pay attention where it matters, and do not get distracted by things that don't really matter. We perform competently and with minimal error. We can understand things more easily and learn things faster. This makes every task easier and saves energy too. The more we practise interaction, the faster and more accurate we become, because we are working with biology and not against it. We have "congruence".

Incongruence is the term in personality theory for a mental state in which a person is unable to interact in enlightened self interest due to anxiety. Their behavior is out of alignment with their biology. There will be a fundamental discrepancy between reality and their perceived reality; for example, having a morbid fear of something when there is no actual danger and no real evidence of danger, is incongruence. Hallucination due to illness is incongruence. A conflict between your biological instincts and society's rules is incongruence. Incongruence simply means that what is going on in the real world and what the person (or the society) thinks is going on do not align. (Yes, many of us live in an incongruent society).

If someone recognizes a cat as a chicken, that's obviously incongruence, but it's also incongruence if someone interprets concern as jealousy, or closeness as a threat, or possessiveness for love and so on. Incongruence is about misinterpretation based on warped perception, and most people live in a state of incongruence most of the time, because of anxiety.

Achieving Genuineness

You need to have a genuine desire to interact, and to start with a genuine desire to learn. If you find it hard to achieve this or feel short of motivation, you probably need to understand more about why it's in your best interests to do so –remember this is about improving your intelligence. The more you interact, the smarter you will get. Nothing builds up brains like it. If you don't know how much anxiety affects your intelligence and health, read [Anxiety & Input Control: The Basics](#) in the library.

Achieving Unconditional Positive Regard

It may seem difficult to imagine feeling respect for people who are arrogant or rude. Some behavior is downright unpleasant and disgusting! Well here's the secret: you do not have to have unconditional positive regard for anything except for intelligence. Your attempt is not to communicate with any anxiety-based personality façade on the outside, but to speak directly to the intelligence program you know is in there somewhere and communicate with it; to build a bridge of common ground between yourself and the other and let intelligence flow along it. Interaction is capable of overrunning anxiety programs, as long as we can maintain a state of mind based on the core conditions. Again, you must remember that it is ourselves we are improving here; we are not here to change others or their behavior –that's up to them. What you are learning is how to adapt to stress and respond to it in ways that prevent anxiety and promote conflict resolution.

Organisms who adapt will survive and thrive. Those who cannot adapt to avoid anxiety will (and do) suffer its ills. We are using interaction as an adaptation strategy, because that's what biology does. Creatures whose biology doesn't interface healthily with their environment die out, because incongruence buggers up the immune system (again dependent on that all-important brain chemistry).

Achieving Empathy

You will speed practice by learning to recognize initially which of the three basic positions yourself and others are operating from in real life situations; nonuse, wronguse or interactive. It's easiest to start by categorizing behavior like this so that you can discern the underlying attitudes, and it works very well. You must understand how anxiety works to see where each of these attitudes is coming from, understand what the related needs and problems might be and how you would respond to these problems with a healthy attitude. As you reduce anxiety, you will be able to empathize much more easily (because anxiety hormones restrict the growth of mirror neurons, the type of brain cells you need for empathy). Once you are no longer anxious, all your brain networks will increase in density by themselves. When we have the ability to understand others' actions or reactions from the inside, we gain a more sensitive awareness of the way the process of change and learning seems to them, and then again the likelihood of significant improvement is increased. People feel deeply appreciative when they are simply understood – not evaluated, not judged, simply understood from their own point of view, not yours.

Interaction Online

You can also learn to recognize harmful positions in online communication that block interaction. Obviously avoid using words that correlate with sentiment and anything that is a known cliché. Here are some clues for spotting other communication habits related to incongruence, and obviously avoiding using them yourself! (Some of them have earned amusing nicknames). Finally, always watch out for multiple exclamation punctuations in any mails that are not associated with humor or legitimate surprise (e.g. "What do you mean we're expecting twins??!! F*** me!!" is legitimate surprise and not necessarily indicative of anxiety).

Nonuse Habits in Online Communication:

Basic Denial (e.g. That's not true/you don't exist, and if I don't reply and never refer to it again, you won't notice).

Freakout Denial: (e.g. That can't possibly be true, because if it were, other unpleasant things that I don't want to face up to would be true as well. These people are full of shit. I'm leaving.)

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Uncanny Valley: (e.g. You people are just fucking sick weirdos!! Devils!! Freaks!! (please god tell me its not true please god tell me its not true please...)).

The Failed Telepath: (e.g. I'm upset because I want you to say something and you're not saying it. I'd tell you what it was if I thought you cared, but if you REALLY cared you'd already know, so I won't.)

The Eternity Winge (e.g. How come you're ALWAYS picking on my beloved country/ politician/ side of the political spectrum/ religion/ theories/ sports team/ taste in music?!)

Self-Deprecation: (e.g. I'm so worried about what others think of me I make sure I remind them all the time I'm such a mess, I'm seriously dysfunctional, I've got all these problems, I'm an addict, etc because that way they won't think I'm just lazy and incoherent).

Neo-Info Denial: (e.g. Aha! But three years ago, in another thread on another site on another topic, YOU SAID...(assuming nobody ever learns anything new or is capable of changing their minds or updating themselves and/or no new info ever becomes available)). A good response to this is "Yes! And it was wrong when I said it then too."

Puritan Withdrawal Method: (e.g. Oh, my goodness, you said something obscene/blasphemous! Well, I'm CERTAINLY not going to bother rebutting anything put forward by an ill bred heathen such as you, although I wrote this anyway to say so. (Always withdraw before the climax.))

Weary Dismissal: (e.g. You're not STILL on about THAT, are you? (when everybody else is mid-discussion)).

Concealed Detour: (e.g.: Yes, quite, absolutely, you're so right. Let me just discuss one small point...at which point the anxious lead the entire argument down an irrelevant (but much safer) side discussion, often involving art or long drawn-out analogies that don't work properly.)

Wronguse Habits in Online Communication:

Denial - The Agent Scully Variant: (e.g. That might be true, but you can't prove it to my satisfaction.)

Agent Mulder's Reversal: (e.g. Oh, YEAH? Well, how can you PROVE that my sources aren't correct, to MY complete satisfaction?)

Righteous Wrath: (e.g. How DARE you even suggest such a thing about our brave troops/ the Pope/ the left/ my favourite sports team/ that band/ me?!)

Blackmail: (e.g. Well I BET there's some things you wouldn't like the people on this group to know about YOU!/ so shut up and grovel or I'll tell them.)

Straw Man: (e.g. So in simple words you believe (insert highly distorted misinterpretation of your opponent's position here, then triumphantly defeat the stance your opponent never took, confusing the hell out of everybody.)

Straw Man with Wig: (e.g. does a 'straw man' but also convinces themselves that it's real; i.e., that their misinterpretation IS what their opponent MEANT (so manages to confuse themselves as well as everybody else)).

Age-Related Pomposity: (e.g.: Well, kid, when you get to be my age, you'll achieve the same level of enlightenment as I have.../ What the fuck do you know, you're OLD!!)

Mock Deference: (e.g. Oh, right, well, (snort, guffaw) because YOU say so (snicker), it MUST be

true (chortle). No need to discuss.)

Loony Alert: (e.g. You f... s..., what kind of ... stupid s... is that, you ... (follow with the string of anatomical particulars and copulatory suggestions of your choice.)

Assertion of Error Without Proof: (e.g. What you are doing/saying/are trying to do is evil/ against gods will/ wrong/doomed to failure/pointless (with no proof offered)).

Projection: (e.g. I'm going to accuse you of all the unpleasant things I actually do myself, and unconsciously fool myself into believing they really are your faults, not mine)

In every case above, people should be given a chance to explain what they mean, because it may be just misunderstanding or misplaced humor. If the explanation isn't satisfactory, you may wish to consider restricting contact with that person. If you detect nonuse or wronguse behavior persisting in communication, either in yourself or another, don't post unless you can both openly address the anxiety issue, because anxiety behaves like a virus –if you make contact you are likely to spread it.

Further Reading (Internal Links)

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[Introduction to Homeworld](#)

[Biological Psychology & Personality Theory: The Basics](#)

[Interactional Analysis Practice](#)

[Anxiety & Input Control: The Basics](#)