



Human Relations and Interpersonal Skills

Warm-up

Reference answers

❶

In our lives, there are relationships with our family members, relatives, love / lover, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbors, classmates, roommates, and the strangers we meet.

- My relationship with my boyfriend is like a journey. It has twists and turns, ups and downs. Sometimes the road is smooth, sometimes it is rough, and sometimes there are even accidents on the road. But we have made it here all the way and I believe it has been a worthy journey.
- My relationship with my friends is like a book. It takes a long time to write, but only a minute to tear up.

❷

TEACHING TIPS

If there are three students left after all the students have been paired up, let one student describe the picture, and the other two draw pictures.

The purpose of this activity is to let students know that many things may go wrong in one-way communication in our life. Good interpersonal relationships need great efforts from both sides, so constant two-way communication is necessary.

In Step 2, the communication is one-way. Student A only gives directions, but does not give any feedback to Student B. B may not get the entire message, or A may have sent an unclear message. Since the sender of the message does nothing to correct the misunderstanding, mistakes may occur. The final drawing may be far from what the original picture is like.

In Step 3, since there is constant communication, the sender can adjust his / her message and the receiver can adjust his / her understanding. The communication is more effective.

Step 4

Student A: When I was giving instructions in the first drawing, I wish I could give you feedback. Sometimes my message was not clearly understood, but I could not correct you. The way you followed my directions showed that I did not convey the message clearly enough. You inferred a totally different meaning than what I intended to convey. We made mistakes, and misunderstood each other. So it was not a

successful outcome. In Step 3, I did the drawing. You gave me constant feedback, so I knew whether I was doing correctly or not. It was much easier. And the drawing was very close to the original.

Student B: The process of drawing the first picture was frustrating and difficult. Sometimes the directions were very confusing. I misunderstood you. What's worse, I had no idea whether I was doing correctly or not. I wish I could get some feedback from you. When we were doing the second drawing, we learned our lesson in the first drawing and communicated fully. So two-way communication is much more effective.

Student A: In our daily life, if there is only one-way communication, the same problems may occur. We may not get the full message, or we may get the wrong message. But if there is two-way communication, we can immediately adjust our understanding, and correct the situation.

Listening and Speaking

1 How to apologize

Scripts

We all do things that require an apology from time to time. But eating humble pie is a skill in itself. We spoke to an etiquette expert Richard Holland to show you how to apologize.

Step 1: Prepare. Take time to consider your apology. What exactly are you apologizing for? What effect did your actions have on the other person? How could you make amends for what you've done?

Step 2: Approach. Depending on the gravity of the situation, it's often a good idea to apologize one-on-one. Choose a quiet moment to make your approach. Ask if you could have a word with the person, and then take them to one side.

Step 3: Lower your voice. You should not be looking for an argument. Remain non-confrontational by lowering your voice. "I owe you an apology." Speak clearly but gently. Avoid raised dominant sounding tones as these would make you seem aggressive. "And ... well, apparently, I need to apologize for what I said the other night. So, sorry."

Step 4: Make eye contact. It's important that your apologizee knows that you are sincere. Make plenty of eye contact, particularly when you are making important points. If you look away at the key moments, or refuse to meet their gaze at all, they may think you are holding something back.

Step 5: Give the apology. Get straight to the point and be specific. "I'm so sorry. It was totally out of order, and ..." Make clear you understand the effect your actions had on the other person, and make an effort to empathize. "I can understand that it might have really upset you." If necessary, be prepared to make amends for your actions. If you don't know how to do this, ask them. "Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?"

Step 6: Take the wrap. The other person may still be angry with you. And in order to clear the air, they might need to communicate this. If so, you need to face the music. "It was not even true. And it was just hurtful. And Sam was there as well. And we argued all night about it because of you, because you told a lie." Let them express their anger. Don't fight back. This will make things worse.

Step 7: Finish on a positive. Close the conversation by looking to the future. "OK, so can we just put it behind us and move on, yeah?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course." Finish with a handshake, a hug, or whatever seems appropriate. Then walk away. Don't let the conversation linger as this could provide an opportunity for old wounds to resurface. Move on cleanly and accept that you have been forgiven.

Done.

Reference answers

Listening and understanding

❶

- Step 1: Prepare.
- Step 2: Approach.
- Step 3: Lower your voice.
- Step 4: Make eye contact.
- Step 5: Give the apology.
- Step 6: Take the wrap.
- Step 7: Finish on a positive.

❷

- 1 eating humble pie (**eat humble pie**: admit that you were wrong, especially in an embarrassing situation)
- 2 make amends (try to make a situation better after you have done sth. wrong)
- 3 have a word (have a short conversation or discussion, usually without other people listening)
- 4 looking for an argument (**look for an argument**: behave in a way that looks like you expect to argue with sb.)
- 5 holding something back (**hold sth. back**: keep sth. secret)
- 6 make it up to (**make it up to sb.**: do sth. good for sb. you have upset, in order to become friends with them again)
- 7 clear the air (discuss a problem or difficult situation with sb. in order to make it better); face the music (accept criticism or punishment for sth. you have done wrong)
- 8 move on (finish or stop one activity and start doing sth. different)
- 9 old wounds to resurface (**old wounds resurface**: sb. remembers an unpleasant event or situation that happened in the past)

Thinking and speaking

❸

Useful expressions for making and accepting an apology:

Making an apology	Accepting an apology
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm so / awfully / terribly sorry about that.• I apologize.• My apologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That's all right.• That's OK.• Never mind.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I owe you an apology.• I hope you will forgive me.• It's all my fault. I really feel bad about it.• I honestly didn't mean it.• I wish I could take it back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's not your fault.• It really doesn't matter at all.• Don't worry about it.• Think no more of it.• No problem. We all make mistakes.

Situation 1

A: Hey, guys, I made a terrible mistake. I hope you will excuse me.

B: What's wrong?

A: I forgot to bring my laptop for the presentation!

B: Jesus! You promised that you would!

A: It's all my fault. I was in such a hurry this morning.

B: Have you made backups or something?

A: No, it never occurred to me to do that. Well, is there anything we can do at present?

B: You have no time to return to your dorm to get it. The class begins in five minutes. Maybe we have to apologize to the teacher and tell her that we have to postpone it till the next class.

A: It seems that there is no other choice. I will explain it to the teacher. It's all my fault. I really feel bad about it.

B: Maybe in the future we all need to be prepared for such an emergency. For example, each of us will have a copy of it and store it on our own memory sticks.

A: You are right. We have all learned a lesson from this.

Situation 2

A: Hey, Li Ming, I'm awfully sorry!

B: What happened?

A: I'm afraid I accidentally deleted a file on your memory stick!

B: Oh, no! Which file?

A: Er, the one on Biology 201. I hope it's not some information that is valuable to you!

B: Oh, Biology 201. No, no, never mind. It's not that important. I don't think I'll need that. If I do, I can copy it from my classmate.

A: Oh, are you sure?

B: Yes, don't worry about that. I won't need it for the course.

A: Anyway, I apologize for my mistake. I will be more careful in the future.

Situation 3

A: Hi, Mary, may I have a word with you?

B: Yes, sure.

A: Shall we go outside? I want to talk to you alone. I hope you will excuse me. I owe you an apology.

B: What for?

A: I was talking with my friends about your popularity that day, and I said that you really tried hard to be popular.

B: I'm afraid I don't know what you mean by "try hard to be popular".

A: Well, I meant that you are quite an optimistic girl and want to make friends with more people.

B: Isn't it what we all do, being nice to others and making more friends?

A: Yes, but maybe people misunderstood me when I said that you sent gifts to people you don't know so well. They might take it as implying that you are giving them petty favors.

B: Oh, I heard that. That was really hurtful. I couldn't believe you would say such words about me!

A: I wish I could take them back. Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?

B: Well, think no more about it. Next time, you'd better talk to me before you make a judgment.

A: Thank you for your patience with me. You are very understanding. I hope we can still be good friends.

B: That's all right. We all make mistakes.

2 Making new friends

Scripts

Carla Madrigal knew nobody in Seattle when she moved there after 38 years in San Francisco. She wanted to make new friends. "It was pretty devastating to be so anonymous," the 68-year-old artist says.

To meet people, Ms. Madrigal made herself get out of the house every day. She joined a gym and a community garden, took yoga classes and visited a teahouse. And although she considers herself a shy person, she struck up conversations on the bus and at the grocery.

But she still had trouble making lasting relationships. Many people were nice, but she had nothing in common with them. Others resisted getting close.

Then two months ago, Ms. Madrigal was in a store when a woman complimented her hair. They began to chat and discovered that they both liked to work with textiles and to write. After a few minutes, Ms. Madrigal took a risk, "Would you like to come over to my house for coffee ... now?" she asked.

The woman accepted her invitation – and the two are now close pals.

"I thought all friendships had to be 'slow cooking', taking years of experiencing life together," Ms. Madrigal says. "This experience was a marvelous revelation."

Is it possible to forge an intimate friendship quickly? Research psychologists say yes. To study friendship in the lab, many use a protocol called "Fast Friends", which helps strangers establish "interpersonal closeness" in 45 minutes. The key? Both subjects need to gradually disclose personal information.

Here's how it works: Researchers give people working in pairs three sets of 12 questions written on index cards. The questions must be answered in order, with partners taking turns answering each question.

Questions in the first set are only slightly personal – "Before making a telephone call, do you ever

rehearse what you are going to say?" In the second set, they are a little more personal – "What is your most terrifying memory?" The last set is personal – "When did you last cry in front of another person?"

"You want to be slow and reciprocal," says Arthur Aron, professor of psychology at Stony Brook University in New York, who developed the protocol. "If you disclose too much too fast, you put someone off."

"The only way to establish intimacy is to be willing to open up about yourself," says David Bakke, an editor at a personal finance website. "Once both parties see an initial connection, it's quite easy to open up about more intimate details."

When Ms. Madrigal's new friend, Susan Hanover, 61, came to her house on the day they met, they talked about art and their creative projects. "The more she talked about herself, the more I realized she is like me," Ms. Madrigal says.

Before long, Ms. Hanover hinted about a sad time in her own life. Then Ms. Madrigal shared a story she doesn't often tell, about the end of her first marriage and how she had to rebuild her life afterward. It has been exciting, Ms. Madrigal says, to discover she could make a deep friendship so quickly. "I learned that life can be shared in the moment and be just as alive as if it had been experienced together," she says.

Questions:

- 1 Which is one of the reasons why it was so difficult for Ms. Madrigal to make new friends?
- 2 Where did Ms. Madrigal meet Susan Hanover?
- 3 When did Susan Hanover visit Ms. Madrigal's house?
- 4 What is the name of the experiment on making friends?
- 5 What were the subjects in the experiment supposed to do?
- 6 Which of the following is the most personal question in the experiment?

Reference answers

Listening and understanding

①

1 B 2 A 3 A 4 B 5 D 6 C

②

- 1 She felt anonymous and it was a devastating feeling.
- 2 She joined a gym and a community garden, took yoga classes and visited a teahouse.
- 3 She complimented her hair.
- 4 They both liked to work with textiles and to write.
- 5 She invited the woman to her house for coffee.
- 6 To find out whether it is possible to forge an intimate friendship quickly.
- 7 In a slow and reciprocal way. If we disclose too much too fast, we put someone off.
- 8 Ms. Hanover hinted about a sad time in her own life and Ms. Madrigal shared a story about the end of her first marriage and how she had to rebuild her life afterward.

Thinking and speaking

③

- 1 • If I am working there, I will most probably make friends with my workmates who I get along with. Besides work, I may join a community or a club, where I naturally meet a lot of people with whom I have something in common. It will be much easier than making friends with a total stranger. I will attend gatherings, make one or two acquaintances first, then get to know the friends of those acquaintances, and circulate in larger social groups. I will try to strike up conversations with them, and find out who I might get along with better. I think I may invite some of them to do something together with me, like hanging out, playing ball games, visiting places, going to a restaurant to try some special dishes there, etc. It's a slow process. It takes time to know someone and develop strong relationships. But I think if we want to make friends, we have to go make it happen, not just sit and wait.
 - I am a shy person. Making new friends is not easy for me. It's not that I don't want to have friends, but I just don't know what I can talk about with someone whom I don't know very well. Would they like who I am? Would they be interested in what I say? If I invite someone out, but he or she refuses me, that's a very bad experience.
- 2 I would disclose my intimate details to a trustworthy friend. He or she won't tell my secrets to other people. But if it is a stranger, I won't know what he or she may think of me. What will he or she do with my intimate details? They don't need to empathize with me, whether the details are about happy feelings or sad feelings. So I won't reveal my intimate details to a stranger.
- 3 • I find making friends in the virtual world easier than in real life. I am shy about meeting people. I find it very difficult to initiate a talk with someone I don't know very well. I don't know what to say and how to keep the conversation going if we have not much in common. The virtual world is a great place to meet people who share my interests. For example, I have made several very good friends online. We always have a lot to talk. In the real world, it is not so easy to find so many people with similar interests and passions.

In a sense, the virtual world has made me more social. It has opened up more possibilities for me, because it has changed the way I interact and maintain friendship with others.

I also find that the ease with which I make friends in the virtual world helps me when I make friends in real life.

- I think that the ways you make friends online and in real life are basically the same. So it is difficult to say which is easier. Firstly, you should have something in common. Then, you both want to maintain the relationship. You should be honest, helpful and tolerant to be friends in both worlds. But friendship in the virtual world is not based in real life. In real life, we get to know somebody in our study, at work, or in our neighborhood. This happens naturally. We talk about our study, our work, and our family. It makes me feel safer to know that the person I am interacting with has a certain true identity. This makes the relationship stronger. All my good friends are made in real life.

The greatest danger with making friends in the virtual world, I think, is that the information you get about that person may be all fake. When problems come up, it is easier to break up because you don't need to meet that person again, because that is a virtual world after all, unlike real life.

3 Family relationship

Scripts

I was shopping at the grocery store one day, and I ran into a stranger as he passed by.
 "I'm so sorry!" was my reply.
 Then he said, "Excuse me too ...
 I wasn't even watching for you."
 We were very polite, this stranger and I.
 Then we went on our separate ways after saying goodbye.
 But at home, a different story is told –
 How we treat our loved ones, young and old.
 Later in the kitchen, as I cooked our meal,
 My little daughter crept up on me, very still.
 When I turned, I nearly knocked her down.
 "Get out of the way!" I barked at her with a frown.
 She sauntered away, I guess, with her little heart broken.
 However, I didn't even realize how harshly I'd spoken.
 Late that night, as I lay awake in bed,
 God's quiet voice spoke to me and said,
 "While dealing with a stranger, you're calm and polite.
 But with those you love, you're quick to excite ...

Go look right now on the kitchen floor.
 You'll find some flowers there by the door.
 Those are the flowers she brought for you.
 She picked them herself – pink, yellow, and blue.
 She stood there quietly, not to spoil your surprise,
 And you never saw the tears in her eyes."
 By this time, I felt sad and small.
 And now my own tears had begun to fall.
 I quietly went into her room.
 She was already asleep.
 I knelt by her bed.
 "Wake up, sweetheart, wake up," I said,
 "Are these the flowers you picked for me?"
 She smiled, "I found 'em, out by the tree.
 I wrapped 'em in a napkin, just for you.
 I knew you'd like 'em, especially the blue."
 I said, "I'm so sorry that I missed them today ...
 And I shouldn't have fussed at you that way."
 And she whispered, "Mommy, that's OK ...
 I still love you anyway."
 I hugged her and said, "I love you too ...
 And I love my flowers, especially the blue."

Reference answers

Listening and understanding

①

- 1) ran into
- 2) reply
- 3) watching for
- 4) still
- 5) barked at
- 6) little heart broken
- 7) harshly
- 8) calm
- 9) spoil
- 10) knelt
- 11) picked
- 12) napkin
- 13) whispered
- 14) hugged

Thinking and speaking

②

I was shopping at the grocery store one day, and I ran into a stranger as he passed by.

"I'm so sorry!" was my reply.

Then he said, "Excuse me too ...

I wasn't even watching for you."

We were very polite, this stranger and I.

Then we went on our separate ways after saying goodbye.

But at home, a different story is told –

How we treat our loved ones, young and old.

Later in the kitchen, as I cooked our meal,

My little daughter crept up on me, very still.

When I turned, I nearly knocked her down.

"Get out of the way!" I barked at her with a frown.

She sauntered away, I guess, with her little heart broken.

However, I didn't even realize how harshly I'd spoken.

Late that night, as I lay awake in bed,

God's quiet voice spoke to me and said,

"While dealing with a stranger, you're calm and polite.

But with those you love, you're quick to excite ...

Go look right now on the kitchen floor.

You'll find some flowers there by the door.

Those are the flowers she brought for you.

She picked them herself – pink, yellow, and blue.

She stood there quietly, not to spoil your surprise,

And you never saw the tears in her eyes."

By this time, I felt sad and small.

And now my own tears had begun to fall.
I quietly went into her room.
She was already asleep.
I knelt by her bed.
“Wake up, sweetheart, wake up,” I said.
“Are these the flowers you picked for me?”
She smiled, “I found ‘em, out by the tree.
I wrapped ‘em in a napkin, just for you.
I knew you’d like ‘em, especially the blue.”
I said, “I’m so sorry that I missed them today ...
And I shouldn’t have fussed at you that way.”
And she whispered, “Mommy, that’s OK ...
I still love you anyway.”
I hugged her and said. “I love you too ...
And I love my flowers, especially the blue.”

Sample poems

One doubt can start a hating
One rumor can block / deafen our hearing.
But one seed can start a garden
And flowers grow on the heart barren.

A Red, Red Rose (abridged)

—Robert Burns

O, my love’s like a red, red rose,
That’s newly sprung in June;
O, my love’s like the melodie,
That’s sweetly play’d in tune.

First Love (abridged)

—John Clare

I ne’er was struck before that hour
With love so sudden and so sweet,
Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower
And stole my heart away complete.

3

Step 2

1 My parents express their love to me by their actions and words. When I was little, they would take me to school every day on their bikes, wait for me outside the school gate when school was over, listen to me talking about activities in the school, and share my joys and sorrows. They would help me with my schoolwork, praise me for my good performance, and encourage me when I failed. They let me know my potential. They support me spiritually and financially. They have done practically everything on the list, but they never expect a reward. I can always feel their immense love for me.

I think that parents are our best teachers. Their way of communicating love has influenced me greatly. I greet people happily when I meet them. I am a good listener. I compliment people for what they have done well. I encourage them when they meet with difficulties. When friends feel down, I comfort them. I learned all this from my parents.

2 A few days ago, my mom called me when I was having an English class. I didn't answer it. Then the phone rang a few times. After the class was over, I asked Mom what she called me for. She said she just wanted to tell me that the next day was going to be cold, and I had better put on more clothes. I was annoyed. I told her I was no longer a kid and I could take care of myself. Besides, she should not call me when I was having lessons! Mom was silent, sighed and hang up.

A few minutes later, I got a message from Mom: Honey, I am sorry if I bored you. I just missed you so much that I wanted to hear your voice. The weather and the clothes were just an excuse. And I will try to remember your schedule. After reading the message, my tears began to fall. I came to realize then that my ignorance of my parents' love was a grave mistake. I immediately rang her back and made amends somehow.

Viewing and Speaking

1 My long-distance relationship story

Scripts

Once upon a time, well, more like a few years ago, it was a beautiful summer day in Paris, and I was exploring the city after work. This was my first time in Paris, and I felt like being a little adventurous, so I went off to see the magic of "The City of Love".

I went just about everywhere: the museum, the Eiffel Tower, but I wanted to try a real Parisian café. So I stumbled upon one and decided to have a cup of coffee. It didn't take me too long to figure out that this was an authentic French café as the menu had no English translation, and you guys know how "awesome" my French is. The server, however, politely asked me something in French, well, at least I think he did, so I was really embarrassed and I felt really bad. And just when I was about to bring out my phone to look up some translations, someone tapped me on the shoulder, and asked, "Excuse me, miss, do you need help? I can speak French for you." Oh my gosh, I was so awkward and shy. He was so sweet and ordered everything for me in French, and we ended up staying at the café for a few hours, talking about everything. Before we left, we decided to keep in touch and exchanged our emails and numbers.

The next day, I had to fly home. But he was on my mind the entire ride home.

If you are in a long-distance relationship, here is how you can maintain it:

Dom and I made sure to always find time to talk. We found ways to have fun with it. We were able to share our favorite moments. I kind of went overboard and pretty much showed him every single meal I ate. Food is where the heart is. Well, to me it is. And he would share his favorite moments with me, too, who (which) was almost like a window to his life. I really felt like I was there. We also shared our favorite songs to each other. He'd dedicated a playlist for (to) me, and I'd listened to it on my way to work. I made him listen to cheesy love songs. Besides sharing messages, songs, videos or other links, we'd share real tangible things. He would send me his favorite T-shirts and spray his cologne on them. When you have something you can hold, it doesn't really feel like a dream anymore.

I know it's tough, but it's OK. Long distance was not meant to be easy. It's hard for a reason. That's why having sentimental things like a T-shirt, sweater, handkerchief, even a plushy (toy) can make you feel closer to your love. I sent Dom my favorite plush bunny. I even made sure to spray my perfume on it, so that he really felt like he was sleeping next to me.

I can't stress how important it is to communicate. Right, when you wake up and before you go to bed, you always want to have the first and last words for your love. Come on, it doesn't take much effort to

say “hello” or “good night”.

And the most important tip: Always have a date to meet. This isn't pen pal stuff. This is a loving relationship. So if you are ready to commit, make a date. I can't think of a better feeling than knowing you are about to see the person you love. Those butterflies in your heart, that anxiousness, savor it. And when you see that smile, cherish each moment.

And when you are together, be yourself. Don't put your best foot forward. Show all your flaws. Show your bad habits. Heck! Get into a fight every once in a while. There is no such thing as a perfect relationship, only a strong one. And the only way to grow stronger is to overcome challenges. Like I said, cherish each moment. Be yourself and love freely. Don't hold back.

Two years later, Dom and I were finally able to see each other and funny enough, we were reunited in Paris.

Someone once told me, “The good things come to those who wait.” But I believe that dreams are really waiting for you. And my dream was waiting for me in Paris. So I went after it. We had our first kiss under the Eiffel Tower.

Love is not always about being with someone. Love is about discovery. You will discover new parts about yourself that you never knew. Love will change you. But it's up to you if you let yourself change for the better or worse. I know for me, I'm always ready for an adventure, and I'm not holding back. Love knows no boundaries. So keep your heart open, and stay strong. Good luck!

Questions:

- 1 Why was the speaker in Paris?
- 2 What was the speaker going to do when she could not understand the French server?
- 3 Which of the following is true of the speaker when she was flying back home?
- 4 How did the speaker feel when her boyfriend shared his favorite moments?
- 5 Which of the following is a tangible thing according to the speaker?
- 6 What does the speaker mean by “be yourself when you are together”?
- 7 How long did the speaker wait before she met her lover again in Paris?

Reference answers

Viewing and understanding

①

1 C 2 B 3 C 4 A 5 B 6 B 7 D

②

The ways that the speaker used to maintain a long-distance relationship are 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9.

Thinking and speaking

③

- I agree with the statement. I think that I should be honest and open with my boyfriend so that he can see the real me. I don't need to hide my flaws or true feelings. I can't live a life doing what other people want me to do. I will express myself and let him know what kind of things I like to do, my values, and my attitude toward life. Nobody is perfect. And I believe that true love means letting a person be what she or he really is. If he points out my flaws, I will try to correct them. If he thinks that's fine, it means that he loves me in spite of my imperfections. I think “being yourself” is very important in a love relationship.
- “There is no such thing as a perfect relationship, only a strong one.” No one is perfect, and so is a relationship. For various reasons, sometimes the bond in the relationship may become somewhat weaker, so we need to put in small amounts of effort every day to nurture it, like what the girl in the video clip does, for example, sharing

feelings, sending sweet messages, having quality time together, listening carefully, etc. I believe that the more we put in, the stronger the relationship will be.

- I think the sentence “Love knows no boundaries. So keep your heart open, and stay strong.” means “If you love someone, nothing can stand in your way.” I think the word “boundaries” refers to things like long distance, money, status, family background, etc. Love goes beyond these barriers.

2 Should we trust our first impressions?

Scripts

Imagine you’re at a football game, when this obnoxious guy sits next to you. He is loud, he spills his drink on you, and he makes fun of your team. Days later, you are walking in the park, when suddenly it starts to pour rain. Who should show up at your side to offer you an umbrella? The same guy from the football game. Do you change your mind about him based on this second encounter? Or do you go with your first impression and write him off?

Research in social psychology suggests that we are quick to form lasting impressions of others based on their behaviors. We manage to do this with little effort, inferring stable character traits from a single behavior, like a harsh word or a clumsy step. Using our impressions as guides, we can accurately predict how people are going to behave in the future. Armed with the knowledge the guy from the football game was a jerk the first time you met him, you might expect more of the same down the road. If so, you might choose to avoid him the next time you see him.

That said, we CAN change our impressions in light of new information. Behavioral researchers have identified consistent patterns that seem to guide this process of impression updating. On one hand, learning very negative, highly immoral information about someone typically has a stronger impact than learning very positive, highly moral information. So, unfortunately for our new friend from the football game, his bad behavior at the game might outweigh his good behavior at the park. Research suggests that this bias occurs because immoral behaviors are more diagnostic, or revealing of a person’s true character. OK, so by this logic, bad is always stronger than good when it comes to updating.

Well, not necessarily. Certain types of learning don’t seem to lead to this sort of negativity bias. When learning about another person’s abilities

and competencies, for instance, this bias flips. It’s actually the positive information that gets weighted more heavily. Let’s go back to that football game. If a player scores a goal, it ultimately has a stronger impact on your impression of their skills than if they miss the net. The two sides of the updating story are ultimately quite consistent. Overall, behaviors that are perceived as being less frequent are also the ones that people tend to weigh more heavily when forming and updating impressions – highly immoral actions and highly competent actions. So what’s happening at the level of the brain when we’re updating our impressions? Using fMRI, or functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, researchers have identified an extended network of brain regions that respond (responds) to new information that’s inconsistent with initial impressions. These include areas typically associated with social cognition, attention and cognitive control. Moreover, when updating impressions based on people’s behaviors, activity in the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex and the superior temporal sulcus correlates with perceptions of how frequently those behaviors occur in daily life. In other words, the brain seems to be tracking low-level statistical properties of behavior in order to make complex decisions regarding other people’s character. It needs to decide, “Is this person’s behavior typical, or is it out of the ordinary?” In the situation with the obnoxious football-fan-turned-good-Samaritan, your brain says, “Well, in my experience, pretty much anyone would lend someone their umbrella, but the way this guy acted at the football game – that was unusual.” And so, you decide to go with your first impression.

There’s a good moral in this data: Your brain, and by extension you, might care more about the very negative, immoral things another person has

done compared to the very positive, moral things, but it's a direct result of the comparative rarity of those bad behaviors. We are more used to people being

basically good, like taking time to help a stranger in need. In this context, bad might be stronger than good, but only because good is more plentiful.

Reference answers

Viewing and understanding

①

1 T 2 F 3 T 4 F 5 F 6 T

②

- 1) lasting impressions
- 2) stable character traits
- 3) consistent patterns
- 4) very positive, highly moral
- 5) true character
- 6) abilities and competencies
- 7) miss the net
- 8) less frequent
- 9) weigh more heavily
- 10) inconsistent with
- 11) out of the ordinary
- 12) bad behaviors
- 13) basically good
- 14) more plentiful

Thinking and speaking

③

- I agree with this distinction. If a person displays the immoral behavior like this obnoxious guy does at the football match, it makes me think that on other occasions, this guy will repeat this kind of obnoxious behavior. It seems that he disregards other people's feelings. He does not respect other people. Can I expect him to be a totally different person and behave very politely off the football field?

For another example, I know of some students who cheat on exams. I think that if they are audacious enough to defy the school rules when they are students, it is very likely that they will go against laws when they hold a job, or a certain position. Can I expect them to be morally strong officials, merchants, lawyers in the future? Therefore, I agree that one immoral behavior would really change my impression of a person.

On the other hand, a competent action is weighed more heavily than an incompetent action. For example, a student may be just a C student in most subjects. But if he excels in one subject and gets a prize in a national competition, that competent action may well change my entire view of him. It makes me think that his incompetence in other subjects may be caused by his lack of interest or efforts.

The reason why an incompetent action is not weighed so heavily as immoral behavior, I think, may be that immoral behavior is more social. It affects other people while an incompetent action is more individual, more

related to professional skills, and affects that individual more than it affects others. So an incompetent action is less harmful from a social perspective.

- I think that defining an action as moral or immoral is not always easy. In this case, I would not define the guy's behavior at the football match as highly immoral.

The guy is watching a game in which his favorite team is playing. As its fan, he is very excitedly cheering for his team, as any fan would. He gets overexcited and cannot control himself, so he is waving his hands and jumping up and down. He spills his drinks on you without even noticing it. It's true that he makes fun of your team, but making fun of the rival team is a very common phenomenon during games. The fans would even pray, or hold a kind of religious ceremony to wish for the victory of their own team. This shows their love for their team.

But then this guy gives me his own umbrella in the pouring rain. I think this is good, moral behavior. When somebody needs help, you provide it. Not everyone would do this to a total stranger. This moral behavior weighs more heavily to me than his behavior at the match. Judging from this moral behavior, I will write off my bad impressions of him.

The second point the video clip makes is that a highly competent action is weighed more heavily than one's incompetency. In real life, our daily work is mostly routine, detailed and conforms to rules or standards. If a person is consistently slow and incompetent at his work, messes things up, is irresponsible, and is not highly motivated, does a single highly competent action of him carry so much weight? I doubt it.

Project

Reference answers

Step 2

- I am doing very well, i.e. very satisfactorily, in my relationship with all the people in the table except with strangers sometimes. I tend to keep a distance from them, because I don't know them. For those I trust, I am considered a friendly and helpful guy.
- I need to improve my relationship with my teachers. I never chat with them, especially the professors in college. I don't mean I don't want to be friends with them. I do respect them. But I just regard them as authorities in class, and not our equals. And I am not sure whether they want to stay close to us.

Step 3

Healthy relationships ensure a supportive social network. Firstly, bad relations like misunderstanding and distrust bring a lot of conflict and confusion to one's life and work. Secondly, we all need others to appreciate us and motivate us. We also need feedback on our mistakes so that we can improve ourselves. When we meet with difficulties, we need others' help and encouragement. If we do not have a healthy relationship, we can't expect others to do these. Thirdly, teamwork is essential in a lot of situations. While students at school can often finish their schoolwork alone, it is nearly impossible at the workplace, not even at home. Therefore, healthy relationships play a critical role in our daily life.

Step 4

For healthy relationships to develop, there are some qualities that are essential: respect for others, self-discipline, responsibility, politeness, good listening skills, good communication skills, being considerate of others, not being too critical, treating other people as equals, fairness, tolerance, cooperation, etc. If we can learn to develop these important qualities, I am sure that our interpersonal relationships will improve greatly.

As young men, we easily find fault with others. But we should realize that we ourselves have a lot of shortcomings. For example, we often want things our own way. We are often inconsiderate of others. We criticize, condemn or complain about others too quickly.

We should realize that relationships are two-way rather than one-way. It is about both sides. So firstly we should respect other people. Find out why people do what they do. Listen more. Learn to appreciate people. When we start appreciating the good things in a person, it builds up a platform to develop healthy relationships.

We should learn to tolerate ideas and behavior which are different from ours. Do not simply dismiss a person because they did nothing or said something we do not like. Even if we are right from our standpoint, we shouldn't impose our ideas on others. And if we are wrong, we should admit it and take responsibility for it.

We may also try to put ourselves in others' shoes. Try to imagine how they would feel in this situation.

Sharing is very important. We may share our happiness and sorrows with the other person, or talk openly about the problems that come up in our relationships.

Trusting each other builds up strong bonds. If we make others believe that they will live up to our trust, this will make them more committed to the relationship.

Step 6

Good relationships are the key to satisfaction in our life. In order to effectively interact with others, we need to know ourselves and know others.

As young people, we may not know ourselves perfectly well. Sometimes, others know us better because they can judge us more objectively. Therefore, to know ourselves better, we may seek feedback from our family and friends. As we know ourselves more, we see our strengths and weaknesses better. We try to overcome our weaknesses, improve ourselves and we will get along with others better.

To understand others, we should be open-minded. We should not let our first impressions deceive us. Many of our assumptions about others' behavior and attitudes are biased. That would discriminate against other people who are different from us. To prevent bias, two-way communication is important in getting messages across to other people in the relationship.

Good qualities help develop and maintain healthy relationships. According to the discussion of our group, the most important qualities are respect, self-discipline, responsibility, politeness, good listening skills, good communication skills, being considerate to others, not being too critical, treating other people as equals, fairness, tolerance, and cooperation. All these qualities are important not only in dealing with the relationship between family members, but also with our friends and classmates. With such qualities, if anything goes wrong in a relationship, people involved will be able to deal with the problems positively. For example, in our relationship with others, all of us want to be respected. Therefore, we ourselves should respect others in the first place. Respect is more than using polite words; it also means being considerate to others and treating them as equals. Respect brings the other person a feeling of being equal to us and being important to us. This is very helpful to the maintenance of a good relationship.

Finally, good relationships come from constant nurturing. Even between family members, expressing our love and care for them is necessary. Compliment people when they deserve it. Show our support when necessary. Trust our friends.

Know myself, know others – this is essential to improve our interpersonal relationships.

