

## How to Improve Interpersonal Skills at Every Level

By [Dave Mattson](#) in [Professional Development](#)

Does your workplace make you happy? Some [52.3% of Americans report feeling unsatisfied](#) with their jobs, while 39.4% of people reported disliking the people that they work alongside. If you find a strong correlation between being unhappy at your job and weak relationships with your coworkers, follow these nine rules to develop interpersonal skills and become well liked by your peers.

### Rule #1: Be Happy, Spread Cheer



Happiness in the workplace is contagious. Bring a cheerful attitude, and your coworkers will want to be around you more often. Radiating happiness on a daily basis improves your own self-image while also helping your coworkers feel more positive and upbeat. When everyone feels okay about themselves, the social work environment improves drastically.

Spread cheer in your workplace by offering praise to coworkers that met goals or gained a win for the company. These little victories sometimes go unnoticed, making the person feel unappreciated and apathetic. Offering positive reinforcement and support allows the person to feel more valued and motivated to succeed in the future.

### Rule #2: Consider Coworkers Feelings

Empathize with your coworkers in work and personal situations. Keep in mind that home life can greatly influence work productivity. If you are aware that someone is having a difficult time outside of work, take the situation into account before allowing your frustration to come out in workplace interactions. Considering other perspectives helps you become a more understanding teammate and encourages others to practice supportive behavior.

### Rule #3: Become an Active Listener



Do you actively listen to your coworkers? Many people claim to be great listeners, thinking that this means making sympathetic noises of agreement. However, an active listener does not just sit back and let coworkers talk at them. Responding is critical to active listening. Make the effort to interact in conversation to become a successful listener.

When conversing with your coworker, restate phrases and paraphrase your coworker's dialogue back to him. Reiterating ideas lets your coworker know you heard what was said and have taken the time to digest the conversation. Fully comprehending the points made and being able to restate these ideas shows your coworker you really care about his opinions.

#### **Rule #4: Ask Questions**

After you have taken the time to actively listen to the conversation, the next step is to ask questions that pertain to the discussion. Allow your coworker to finish talking, paraphrase the highlights of the conversation, and then ask insightful questions about the discussion. Asking questions shows your coworker that you are not merely being polite but are dynamically engaged in the situation. No one likes to feel that an opinion goes unnoticed or unappreciated. When this happens, your coworker loses self-confidence, leading to a breakdown in the development of your interpersonal relationship.

#### **Rule #5: Practice Active Participation**

Active listening and asking questions are two strong verbal ways to signal engagement to your coworker. Active participation uses speech patterns, body language, and sensory cues to indicate involvement in the conversation. Listen to your coworker's tone, volume, and tempo and reflect this speech pattern back in conversation. By adjusting your style of speaking to mirror that of your coworker, you make your coworker feel more comfortable and at ease.

Remember, people are most comfortable with their own communication style. If you recognize that a coworker uses a direct, straightforward method in discussion, mirror that style. Another coworker may enjoy a more joking, lighthearted conversation. It is important to note that while humor connects people, jokes are sometimes misconstrued and lead to discomfort in the workplace. Be careful with your use of jokes at work, as some coworkers may not enjoy your particular brand of humor.

Reflective body language is an integral part of active participation. A great salesperson knows how to read facial expressions, posture, the amount of eye contact, and hand gestures. After getting a read on body language, these salespeople reflect these movements back, putting prospects at ease. Use this same skill in the workplace to make your coworkers feel comfortable and improve interpersonal communication.

#### **Rule #6: Include and Respect Everyone**

No one likes to feel left out in the workplace. Excluding coworkers alienates people and creates tension. If your goal is to improve interpersonal skills, try to include everyone. Go out of your way to make small talk with an employee

that you may not have previously bonded with on a personal level. The effort you put into these interactions goes a long way in solidifying a connection with your coworkers.

To stay neutral, avoid favoring certain coworkers over others. If you begin showing favoritism, your coworkers will feel left out and excluded from discussions. Once a coworker begins to notice the effort you make to include him, he will extend the same effort toward you.

Respect all coworkers and treat everyone equally when it comes to business meetings and interactions. During team meetings, be supportive of everyone's ideas, no matter how big or small. Backing your teammates' work lets them feel supported and appreciated. Even if an idea seems weak, simply noting that a person contributes to the conversation prevents them from feeling shut down. Mutual respect creates a stronger bond with your coworkers and promotes strong teamwork skills.

#### **Rule #7: Act as a Moderator**



Help settle ongoing disputes between coworkers by acting as a moderator. Use softening statements to mediate, such as "I understand" or "That makes a lot of sense". Do not precipitate an argument by choosing sides or playing favorites.

Make an effort to understand both sides of a disagreement and walk both coworkers through the opposing position. Reiterate points made so that both sides can hear the facts stated by a neutral third party. Allow your coworkers to hear the discussion objectively before reaching a decision that everyone agrees on.

#### **Rule #8: Think before Speaking**

When communicating with your coworkers, do not blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. Work on your interpersonal communication by carefully thinking things through before verbalizing your thoughts. Problems arise in the workplace when communication breaks down. Giving yourself just a few more seconds to think through interactions prevents hasty, often regrettable statements from escaping your mouth. Thinking before you speak deters disastrous workplace misunderstandings.

#### **Rule #9: Avoid Frequent Negativity**

You do not want to be "the whiner" in your workplace. Constant negativity and complaining is guaranteed to make you the office pariah. Instead, focus on the positive aspects of your job that get you excited to go into work each day. After some practice, highlighting the positives will become second nature, and your habit of negativity in the workplace will turn into a thing of the past.

If you find yourself unhappy at work, examine your professional relationships. Strong interpersonal communication skills set the foundation for a happy and functional office. Building interpersonal skills starts with recognizing the

need for personal and professional growth. Follow these important rules to improve your interpersonal skills and build solid relationships with your coworkers.



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