THE COMPLETE LEADER

COACHING GUIDE

# INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

A cluster of talents that help someone connect with others in a positive manner.

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LEADERS LEAD OTHERS

One of the 25 leadership competencies

SECTION 01

# WHY INTERPERSONAL SKILLS MATTERS

Interpersonal Skills is one of the 25 core competencies that define a complete leader. As you grow this capability, you'll notice real shifts in how you lead yourself and influence others.

This guide is built for a 90-day journey. You'll explore the foundations, assess where you stand today, practice new behaviors, sidestep common traps, and track your progress, at your own pace or alongside a coach.

### WHAT STRONG INTERPERSONAL SKILLS LOOKS LIKE

- You become accepted as a valuable, approachable resource
- You raise productivity, because communication gets easy and comfortable
- You build substantive networks through win/win interactions

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Why does Interpersonal Skills matter to you personally? How might developing it change your effectiveness as a leader?*

SECTION 02

# FOUNDATIONS OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

THE DEFINITION

**A cluster of talents that help someone connect with others in a positive manner.**

Like any skill worth mastering, Interpersonal Skills rests on a few core building blocks. Understanding them gives you a vocabulary for your own growth.

## THE CORE ELEMENTS

1 **Self-awareness and composure**

Controlling the feelings that emerge in difficult situations and responding appropriately rather than being overwhelmed by emotion. This takes strong intuition, used without prejudice or bias.

2 **Seeing people individually**

Not prejudging others, positively or negatively. Perceiving each person individually, and basing your assessment on realistic observation rather than category.

3 **Sociability and reciprocity**

Being relaxed and available, helping others feel comfortable sharing ideas, and seeking the same in return. Networks grow from win/win interactions and sharing connections for others' benefit.

**REFLECT**

*Which element feels most familiar? Which one feels like a stretch right now?*

SECTION 03

# YOUR STARTING POINT

Before you move forward, take an honest look at where you are today. Read each statement and mark how often it's true of your leadership.

**I am not easily angered.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

**I enjoy knowing and working with people from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

**I find it easy to establish new relationships that are substantive and mutually beneficial.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

**I maintain some type of database of key relationships, and review it regularly to consider how we can help and support each other.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

**I stay composed in difficult conversations instead of being carried by the emotion of the moment.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

**I make people comfortable sharing their ideas with me, and I share mine in return.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Looking at your answers, where is your greatest opportunity for growth? What patterns do you notice?*

SECTION 04

# INTERPERSONAL SKILLS IN PRACTICE

Competencies grow through deliberate practice. Work through the activities below in order, or choose the ones most relevant to your context.

ACTIVITY 01 45 min

## Improving Existing Relationships

Rate the relationships you rely on, then do something concrete about each one.

**TRY IT**

1. List the people you work with regularly and rate each relationship from 1 (best) to 5 (worst).
2. Set a specific goal for improving each relationship, with a due date.
3. Include something positive you can do even for the people you already get along with well.

ACTIVITY 02 45 min

## Ask for Honest Feedback

How you connect is something only the people around you can tell you. Plan on three conversations.

**TRY IT**

1. Ask several people you trust at different levels, management, peers, employees, for a formal conversation.
2. Ask how they'd describe your leadership style, what you do well to connect, and how you could improve.

3. Ask whether you come across as assertive but not overbearing. Stay open, not defensive.

ACTIVITY 03 10 min

## Track Your Trigger Moments

Composure is what makes the rest of this skill usable, and it is built by noticing your own reactions. Note the moments daily for a week.

**TRY IT**

1. For one week, note each moment at work when anger, impatience, or embarrassment started to rise.
2. For each, write what you did next and what you would rather have done.
3. Choose the trigger that recurs most, and decide the response you will use the next time it appears.

ACTIVITY 04 30 min

## Test Your First Impressions

Prejudging costs you the person in front of you. Check your reads against what you have actually observed.

**TRY IT**

1. Name three people you formed a quick opinion about, positively or negatively.
2. For each, separate what you actually observed from what you assumed by category or reputation.
3. Arrange a real conversation with the one you know least, then revise your assessment.

ACTIVITY 05 40 min

## Build the Relationship Database

Substantive networks need maintenance, not just introductions.

**TRY IT**

1. Start or update a record of your key relationships.
2. For each, note how you could help or support them, and where they could help you.
3. Review it regularly and make one introduction that benefits someone else.

**ACTIVITY 06** 10 min

## Practice Tolerance Deliberately

Recognize that others' viewpoints are as important to them as yours are to you. Practice daily for a week.

**TRY IT**

1. In each conversation this week, find the point where you disagree and stay curious instead of correcting.
2. Smile often and maintain a positive attitude: the energy you radiate draws people to you.
3. Note whose perspective you initially dismissed, and what you missed by doing so.

SECTION 05

# COMMON INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TRAPS

As you practice, watch for these common pitfalls. Naming them now makes them easier to catch in the moment.

01 **Prejudging, positively or negatively**

Assessing someone before you have realistic observations to go on leads to overestimating or underestimating them, both costly.

02 **Being overwhelmed by the moment**

Letting emotion take over in a difficult situation overrides your judgment. Composure is what makes the rest of the skill usable.

03 **Deciding without enough data**

If interpersonal reads don't come intuitively to you, you can still judge well, but you need more information and time. Rushing it produces bad calls.

04 **Treating connection as optional**

No amount of hard work or brilliant ideas compensates for failing to connect with the people around you.

REFLECT

*Which trap feels most familiar? How will you stay aware of it as you practice?*

SECTION 06

# YOUR 90-DAY PRACTICE

Lasting change comes from a few focused habits, practiced consistently and tracked honestly. Build your plan below, on your own or with your coach.

## CHOOSE YOUR THREE HABITS

Based on everything above, which three habits will make the biggest difference in growing your Interpersonal Skills over the next 90 days?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

## BUILD IN WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

Write questions you can answer each week to measure progress and surface obstacles. The best ones are answered with “yes,” “no,” or a number.

Q1 _____

Q2 _____

Q3 _____

**Accountability partner**: who will you share these with?

_____

**Completion date**: when will you evaluate & celebrate?

_____

**Measurements of success**

**How will you celebrate?**

SECTION 07

# GO DEEPER

Keep building your Interpersonal Skills with these resources. Explore them, then capture what stands out to you.

BOOK

**The Complete Leader, Ch. 3.6: Interpersonal Skills**

The full framework and examples behind interpersonal skills. Also recommended: Tribal Leadership (Logan, King & Fischer-Wright), The Hidden Power of Social Networks (Cross), The 3rd Alternative (Covey), and How to Become a Power Connector (Robinett).

PODCAST

**The Complete Leader Podcast**

Episode 74 explores interpersonal skills in practice.

ONLINE

**Interpersonal Skills competency library**

Videos, articles, and podcasts at TheCompleteLeader.org.

CAPTURE YOUR INSIGHTS

*As you work through these resources, which ideas most apply to your own growth in Interpersonal Skills?*

KEEP GOING

# YOU'VE GOT THIS

Developing Interpersonal Skills is an investment in yourself and everyone you lead. Return to this guide often: revisit the activities, reread the traps, and celebrate small wins along the way.

*Every complete leader started exactly where you are now.*