Pinpointing aids social interaction

By ERIC HAUGHTON
People communicate ideas many ways. We talk, write, sing, gesture, as well as tell our ideas and feelings with facial expressions and body movements.

Part of planning to improve effective communication involves defining tool skills, basic and advanced skills that must be developed. Tool skills are simplest elements of a skill, while combinations of two or three elements classify as basic skills. Advanced skills involve the most complex aspects of communication.

Self-awareness is a starting place for the development of genuine sympathy and understanding of others. Therefore a tool skill that supports personal development forms the basis for understanding others. Thoroughly integrated self-awareness and awareness of others supports the advanced skills required in a sensitive and empathetic involvement with others. See the chart below.

There are many ways to increase sensitivity to self and others. Teachers can set up situations where students learn to pay attention to internal signals while also learning accurate identification of their emotions. Some people learn through natural daily experiences. Others amplify their learning through reading, talking to others, marriage, work relationships, school, sensitivity groups and meditation.

Many educators introduce intensified inter-personal experiences to their curricula. Supportive opportunities for children to express their reactions and feelings can help them to communicate better.

Belleville, Ont., principal Ron Caswell holds daily discussions to start kindergarten pupils expressing their feelings about things they like or don't like. They also learn to express their feelings about themselves and others. Carefully developed regular discussions like this throughout school will help people to be more aware and expressive of their inner experiences, feelings and emotions.

Role playing can be a valuable experience both in personal revelation and in developing perspective. To help students understand others with handicaps you could have them simulate blindness by wearing blindfolds, deafness with headsets, paralysis by attaching an elastic band or immobilizing a limb. A day with a wheelchair would be quite a sobering experience for some of our happy-go-lucky children.

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Learning to offer and to help a temporarily handicapped friend could be a valuable experience.

Rounding these experiences out by talking and writing about their feelings will help youngsters to learn more about themselves. Focusing on the important similarities between people and minimizing irrelevant distinctions can be an exciting outcome of these shared learnings.

### Self-Awareness
- events that make one happy or sad
- identifying personal positive and negative reactions
- recognizing feeling of love, fear, joy, anger, hatred, comfort and discomfort
- thoughts of past, present and future
- clear identification of sources of emotions
- pinpointing degrees and intensities of feelings and emotions
- effects of others on us

### Other Awareness
- sensing happy and sad feelings of others
- aware of positive and negative reactions
- accurately identifying the thoughts and feelings of others
- tuning in and out with others
- similarities and differences in emotional sources
- sense the emotional levels of others
- our effects on others

### Sensitive Interactions
- producing happy and sad interactions
- causing positive and negative reactions in social situations
- facilitating various feelings while interacting with others
- degrees of attention during interactions and time focus
- encouraging interactions that support people's strength and uniqueness
- structuring experiences so people can express and control their feelings and emotions
- how people interact