MODEL FOR IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Heather Bayne
ATE 550: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace
Dr. Feon Smith
January 25, 2015
The model for improving interpersonal skills follows a five-part sequence which follows a basic model of learning a new behavior. The sequence is goal setting, assessing reality, creating an action plan, obtaining feedback on your actions, and lastly practicing the new behavior (DuBrin, 2015). Each part of this sequence is essential to the next when trying to change a behavior.

The first step to changing a behavior is to set a goal. Setting goals can help motivate a person to change and intrinsically hold oneself accountable. In order to achieve one’s goals, the goal needs to be broken down to see if that goal is attainable. In our text the author has created guidelines for setting goals, state each goal as a positive statement, formulate specific goals, formulate concise goals, set realistic goals as well as stretch goals, and lastly set goals for different time periods (DuBrin, 2015). Of the five guidelines for goal setting I find that setting realistic as well as stretch goals to be the most beneficial when creating a goal. If you are not honest with yourself in setting a realistic goal then one could then become unmotivated to obtain that goal because it is out of reach. However, creating stretch goals can become realistic when the goal pushes a person to become better over a predetermined time period. My coworkers and I have noticed that tend to multitask when others are speaking to me. I tend to play on my phone or doodle while I listen. To others this seems rude, however to me it helps me focus on what they are saying. It is hard for me to verbalize this to them because they don’t have a problem focusing when they need to listen. So in setting my own goal I am going to try to not multitask when others speak to me, instead I will try and find a new way, which is not offensive to others, to focus on what they are saying.

The second step to changing a behavior is assessing reality. Depending on the behavior that needs to be changed, a person needs to ask themselves questions as to why others perceive
them that way. By assessing reality yourself it can then lead you to asking others such as coworkers, spouses, and friends if they feel the same way that you do about yourself and ultimately give yourself the information you need to change the behavior. In assessing myself I found that I tend to multitask when others are speaking to me. To add to the validity of this I asked a few coworkers to assess me using the same questions that I used, and they agreed that I do tend to multitask at some inappropriate times. Now that I know how I view myself and how others view me I can then see how far away I am from my goal of changing this behavior. I think the time period on this could take some time using trial and error as to different methods that can help me focus, and I need to learn how to express myself to others when I am trying to focus as to not to offend them.

The third and fourth step in changing a behavior is creating an action plan and getting feedback on the actions. When a person creates an action plan, a series of steps to achieve a goal (DuBrin, 2015), it helps them focus on their goal and without an action plan a personal goal will be elusive (DuBrin, 2015). When creating an action plan it is essential that you maintain self-discipline to implement the plan for it to be effective. The fourth step is to measure the effects of one’s actions against reality by getting feedback on the consequences of your actions (DuBrin, 2015). Gaining this essential data gives you the knowledge of if you are getting closer to your goal. Getting information from the people around you is crucial to see what parts of the action plan still need improvement and if any of the methods you use to change the behavior are being noticed. For my own action plan I have decided to work on better communication with others while I am trying to focus, so if I should slip, they will know that I am still paying attention. Another part of the plan is to figure out why this behavior has recently started happening because in the past I was not like this and could focus very easily. And lastly I plan on trying to make
frequent eye contact with others as they speak to me. In gathering feedback I will speak to my
coworkers who addressed this behavior with me along with family and friends to see if they
recognize any changes in my behavior after implementing my action plan.

The final step in changing a behavior is frequent practice which makes modifying a
behavior permanent. The more you do something the more it becomes a habit, and that is all a
habit is a behavior. For my own behavior the more I practice the more, I hope, my behavior will
change. I think that those around me, once I figure out a method to focus, will need to hold me
accountable as well as I will need to hold myself accountable for the behavior to change
permanently.
References