

T he Art of Getting Along

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Are we born with the ability to get along? What happens with our tolerance level for getting along as we develop and age? Why are we attracted to some individuals who seem to have a positive magnet for getting along?

This program topic will assist the participant to:

- ◆ identify how to get along,
- ◆ assess behavior toward getting along,
- ◆ learn positive ways of getting along, and
- ◆ learn effective communication for getting along.

Introduction

Do you know someone you would cross a busy street just to talk with and be near? Do you notice some people seem unruffled and easy to get along with? Are you easy to get along with?

If you look at people who are easy to get along with, you will notice they have learned the art of getting along. They have learned that their first nonverbal message is their face. Most people whom we perceive as easy to get along with have bright, open eyes and are usually smiling. They appear nonthreatening and open to our approach to communicate. Let's explore how this happens and how you can learn this art of getting along.

Activity: Provide paper and pencil for each person. Ask members to list people they know who are easy to get along with. Then, ask them to describe what makes each person easy to get along with. Third, ask them to list one very positive person and what they believe makes that person so special and easy to get along with.

You may want to take a few minutes to list these individuals and why they are easy to get along with. Perhaps they can be grouped by their main characteristic: caring, respectful, fair, inclusive, affectionate, and joyful.

Personality Skills of Getting Along

The following are some "typical" skills common to individuals who have learned the art of getting along. A short description is provided. *You may want to have examples and allow the members to discuss their definition of each of these personality skills. You may want to expand the list of personality skills. The important thing in this exercise is for each member to determine what behavior he/she sees as a positive skill in getting along.*

Caring has a broad meaning but denotes certain characteristics that most people agree on. Caring means to be kind and compassionate through acts of kindness and service to others. It also means to have a servant's attitude in actions and responses toward others: to look for opportunities to serve rather than be served; to express gratitude easily and often to others, with "thank you" and "please" as a part of their daily vocabulary; to forgive others and not hold a grudge; to help people in need without thought of reward or recognition.

Use these skills to become a caring person:

- ◆ Be kind to others through your actions and communication. Look for opportunities to serve others.
- ◆ Express gratitude freely and often to others, and let them know how much you appreciate them.

- ◆ Use “thank you” and “please” as part of your daily conversations.
- ◆ Send thank-you notes and tell others about another person’s acts of kindness toward you.
- ◆ Forgive others and yourself daily.
- ◆ Help others in need; by doing this, you will fulfill a greater need in yourself.

Showing Respect Remember Rodney Dangerfield’s famous line, “I don’t get no respect!” We all want to be respected, and we work hard to earn the respect of others. How we treat others with respect is learned; we are not born with this ability.

Develop these skills in showing respect:

- ◆ Follow the Golden Rule in your treatment of others.
- ◆ Learn to be tolerant of others and their differences.
- ◆ Use good manners, not bad language.
- ◆ Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- ◆ Don’t threaten, hit, or hurt anyone with fist or words.
- ◆ Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

Fairness is a very important characteristic in the art of getting along. Everyone has a measuring stick as to how fairness is measured and what is fair. As you develop your skills to get along with others, remember these strategies of being fair:

- ◆ Play by the rules.
- ◆ Take turns and share resources.
- ◆ Be open-minded; learn to be a good listener.
- ◆ Don’t take advantage of others.
- ◆ Don’t blame others carelessly.

Inclusive To be included is something everyone wants. It is a basic human need. When individuals perceive they are not included, their behavior changes. Knowing how to make others feel included (or a part of) is very important in the art of getting along. Try these strategies to include others.

- ◆ Use words like “we” and “us,” not “I” or “me.”
- ◆ Communicate appreciation or acceptance through body language and words.

An example would be how we respond to a person who has done something nice for us or someone we appreciate or accept versus someone we tolerate. (Of all interpersonal communication, 75 percent is communicated in the tolerance mode or below.)

Tolerance Mode – Little eye contact; more stern facial expression; longer distance between individuals; communication expresses attitude that “I am tolerating you.”

Appreciation or Acceptance Mode has good eye contact, smiling, pleasant facial expressions, and shorter distance between individuals; it conveys an overall attitude of acceptance and appreciation.

Affection can be defined in many ways. Individual needs for affection are different, but all persons need some form of affection, such as a kiss, hug, handshake, or pat on the back. Affection is an emotion that can be very powerful in the art of getting along. It is important for people to understand this human behavior and the need in all of us for some form of affection.

Try the following:

- ◆ Give a pat on the back.
- ◆ Give a warm handshake.
- ◆ Touch the person’s hand or arm. Touch is a powerful way of showing affection.

** Remind members some people are sensitive to being touched. Respect people’s personal space and don’t cause a problem for yourself. Safe areas of touch are usually hand, lower part of arm, or shoulder. Affection also can be communicated through tone of voice, smiling, and selection of words.*

Joy normally comes from within a person. It is expressed in many ways, such as smiles, body stance, posture, walking, and tone and quality of voice. We all know some people who are joyful, and they are a joy to be around. Their personality is like a refreshing wind on a hot day or cool water when we’re thirsty. Here is another secret in the art of getting along: Individuals need happiness and joy in

their lives. Because they want joy, they are attracted to positive behaviors of joyful, “magnetic” people like bees are to flowers and thirsty people to water.

The following can help you learn to be joyful and refreshing:

- ◆ Smile.
- ◆ Keep a list of happy thoughts.
- ◆ Learn what makes you happy.
- ◆ Learn to say “what’s good for you today,” instead of saying “what’s wrong.”
- ◆ Be positive and have faith in yourself and others.
- ◆ Always see the day as partly sunny, not partly cloudy.
- ◆ When you awake each morning, say “This will be a joyful day” and believe it.
- ◆ When you go to bed at night, remember the happiness of the day.
- ◆ Learn that joy and happiness come from within. No one makes us happy or joyful; we do it ourselves.

Activity: Have members role play the five levels of communication.

Five Levels of Communication:

- ◆ Acceptance
- ◆ Appreciation
- ◆ Tolerance
- ◆ Avoidance
- ◆ Revulsion

Have members demonstrate the difference in facial expressions, eye contact, body language, and use of words to describe the different ways we communicate in these five levels.

Example of Acceptance:

You just had the pastor’s wife mention she would like to join your Extension Homemakers Club. She shows up at your monthly club meeting. How would you role play this form of acceptance?

Example of Appreciation:

Your club members were invited by an individual who paid for an afternoon at a very nice restaurant where you had a wonderful meal followed by a very

entertaining play. How would you role play your appreciation?

Example of Tolerance:

You are busy preparing for a family get-together at your house. You have only two hours until they arrive. A vacuum cleaner salesman knocks on your door. How would you role play tolerance?

Example of Avoidance:

Maybe you can use the door-to-door salesman or the neighborhood gossip knocking at your door. How would you role play avoidance?

Example of Revulsion:

This is based on one’s judgment of what is unacceptable in human behavior. How would you role play revulsion?

Review the five levels of communication. Have members list the differences in communication as to facial expressions, body language and space, gestures, touch, word choice, and voice tone.

Remember that 75 percent of all interpersonal communication is conducted in the tolerance, avoidance, or revulsion mode of communicating. Review the communication style for acceptance and appreciation. Notice that we smile and our voice is warmer and softer. The words we use are nicer, and our body language is more open. Our hands are out with our palms turned up. We touch the other person or are closer to him/her. We have eye-to-eye contact and demonstrate through verbal and nonverbal communication how much we accept and appreciate the individual.

Strategies for the Art of Getting Along

1. Understand the needs of people and work to meet the needs of being *included*, receiving some form of *affection*, and having some *control*.
2. Surround yourself with positive thoughts and ideas. Learn to take the high road of positive thinking and become a positive magnet for others.

3. Learn what makes you happy in life and begin to build on these strong foundations of happiness. Remember that happiness starts from within. It grows as a powerful, positive force that enables us to get along with ourselves and others.
4. Learn to smile and look others in the eye. Your face is your window to the world. It is your billboard to everyone who sees you. It advertises you without you ever opening your mouth.
5. Learn to treat all people equally. Always remember to care for the person. You may not agree with the behavior, but be kind to the person. Give him or her the benefit of the doubt when behavior is not up to your expectations.
6. Find something positive in everyone and build on that something. Learn to be a positive “magnet” with your attitude toward yourself and others. Develop your attitude, which clearly says I care about you and want to get along.

Guidelines for Getting Along

1. Confirm for yourself that you want to get along with others.
2. Be honest with yourself and others.
3. Keep promises and be loyal.
4. Be accountable for your behavior.
5. Be fair and care about yourself and others.
6. Be appreciative of others and let them know.
7. Remember the good in people and forget the bad.
8. Remember that you can't change people. You can only live a good example that they will see and perhaps want to follow in their life.

Remember...*Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape!*

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