Preface:

WELCOME TO THE FOURTEENTH EDITION OF INTER-ACT!

To Students Who Are About to Use This Text:
Few courses you take in college can have as profound an impact on your life as a course in interpersonal communication. You are embarking on a course of study that will help you be a better friend, family member, lover, partner, employee, manager, coworker, and leader. Today our rapidly changing technology and social media are presenting new challenges to how we manage effective relationships. This textbook, Inter-Act, will help you by introducing you to specific skills that you can use to overcome the complications that arise when our conversations are face to face and when they are mediated by technology. Each chapter explores concepts and current theories that explain how interpersonal communication processes work and the skills that help us to be effective. You will be encouraged to practice, refine, and adopt specific skills that increase your capacity to communicate in different ways. This will increase your interpersonal competence and your ability to have healthy relationships. The basic skills you will learn include developing messages that effectively convey your thoughts and feelings, understanding the nonverbal behavior of others, listening effectively, managing conversations with strangers and acquaintances, providing support and comfort to others, dealing with conflict, and simply finding the most effective way to speak up for yourself. You will also practice more complex skills that help us to sustain intimate relationships with family members, close friends, intimate partners, and people in your workplace. Because how we communicate is embedded in culture, Inter-Act introduces you to some of the primary cultural differences that explain how and why specific communication behaviors are interpreted differently in different cultures.

GOALS OF INTER-ACT
As with previous editions, Inter-Act, fourteenth edition, meets six specific goals that are essential to a basic course in interpersonal communication. These are:
1. to explain important communication concepts, frameworks, and theories that have been consistently supported by careful research so that you can understand the conceptual foundations of interpersonal communication.
2. to teach each specific communication skills that research has shown to facilitate effective relationships.
3. to present ethical frameworks you can use to be a moral communicator in your relationships.
4. to sensitize you to ways that communication needs, rules, and processes differ between diverse cultural groups and among people in any particular cultural group.
5. to challenge you to think critically and creatively about the concepts and skills you learn.
6. to provide abundant practice activities that significantly enhance your learning.

To Instructors Who Have Selected This Text:
The skills-based approach to interpersonal communication that was pioneered in Inter-Act and has remained so popular over the years has been expanded and reinforced with this new edition. These changes continue to be based on a message-centered approach to interpersonal communication (see Burleson, 2010). A message-centered approach allows us to explore how people form relationships and applies current theories and concepts as a framework for
understanding interpersonal communication. The message-centered approach is consistent with
the premise that there are basic universal message skills and guidelines that improve the
likelihood of successful human interaction. This edition emphasizes both automatic and mindful
processes involved in message preparation. Understanding these processes enable students to
incorporate new skills into their behavioral repertoire and improve relationships. With this
overview in mind, let’s take a closer look at what is new in this edition.

**HALLMARK FEATURES OF INTER-ACT—STRENGTHENED AND REVISED**

- **New chapter opening dialogues.** Each chapter opens with a new problematic
  conversation to set the scene for key ideas that are discussed in the chapter. These
  conversations are based on real ones reported by college students in Interpersonal
  Communication classes taught by the authors and contributors. At the end of each
  chapter the opening dialogue is revisited and students are asked to analyze the
  original dialogue using concepts and theories from the chapter. Then students are
  instructed to use what they have learned in the chapter to rewrite the dialogue so as to
  avoid some of the problems that occurred.

- **Running chapter features.** Each chapter includes several unobtrusive features that
  reinforce learning by engaging the student. Key terms and definitions are highlighted
  in the margins. Observe and Analyze activities ask students to observe common
  communication situations and analyze them using the concepts and theories that have
  just been presented in the text. Inter-Act with Social Media activities direct students to
  think about how basic interpersonal processes are affected when we use social or
  electronic media. Instructors can assign these activities as graded exercises or as
  prompts for journal entries.

- **Chapter box features.** A variety of special boxes highlight other perspectives on
  interpersonal communication. The popular feature Diverse Voices presents excerpts from
  previously published essays that shed light on the communication experiences of people
  from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. Each feature includes a set of thought-
  provoking questions that will stimulate lively class discussions about diversity. A
  Question of Ethics: What Would You Do? are short case studies presenting ethical
dilemmas that ask students to think critically about the situations and develop
recommendations concerning the central issues. Learn About Yourself are self-
administered attitude or behavior assessments that provide students with information
about themselves that is related to the material in each chapter. All of these activities are
based on research, and most illustrate well-respected ways of measuring a particular
concept. While students often complete activities without prompting, instructors may
choose to assign these and use them in class discussion.

- **Skill Builder Charts.** Skill builder charts appear in the text near the discussion of the
  skill. They provide a graphic summary of the skill including the definition, usages,
  message formation steps, and an example to illustrate its use.

- **End-of-chapter resources.** Key Words lists with page numbers provide students with an
  easy way to access chapter concepts. Analyze and Apply are activities that challenge
  students to use chapter concepts and skills to understand or improve a communication
  situation. These can be used as graded assignments, journal activities, or as in class
  exercises. Skill Practice activities are short drills where students can practice forming
  messages using the communication skills presented in the chapter. These may be
  assigned as written activities or used as part of in-class activity. A Communication
Improvement Plan helps students identify an area of their communication practice that they would like to improve and to design a program for meeting their objective. Students can download a form for making Communication Improvement Plans from the companion website. Instructors can create graded assignments based on these.

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Kathleen S. Verderber

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