

Purpose: Use this sample assignment for a better understanding of what is present in a high quality final paper outline. We've included these elements of constructive criticism to demonstrate that even "A" quality work still receives comments to improve the student's thinking and writing on the topic.

Hover over the information symbol () or select the numbers within the text to read about what the student has done well in this assignment and also some areas for improvement.

Letter: to Terry and Dana - Outline

Student's Name

COM200: Interpersonal Communication

Instructor's Name

Date (Sample March 19, 2014)¹

¹ This is a sample of what is necessary on your title page.

I. Introduction - Thesis Statement

I am writing this letter to you to help you on your new relationship journey in order to improve communication through better listening and communication skills, and to make you aware of your ability to face emotions, and how to open up and share with your spouse.²

II. Body Paragraph # 1 - Describe the process by which self-concept is developed and maintained.³

A. Topic Sentence: A successful relationship starts with knowing yourself, known as your self-concept, and understanding how this was developed and continues to change will better prepare you for your relationship.

B. Supporting Evidence: Sole explains that a person builds their self-concept based on how they believe others see them, often based off a reference group or feedback from other people. Sole also contends that this is an ongoing process and a person can change perceptions based on communication skills (Sole, 2011, Section 3.1).⁴

C. Explanation: It is important to understand how and why you view yourself in this way so that you can better communicate with your spouse, and know that their feedback to you will affect your self-concept.⁵

² A thesis should make some type of claim. This student's thesis would be stronger if there was more of a declaration.

³ Please note that the learning objectives changed after 11/24/2015. Be sure to use the learning objectives listed in the assignment prompt

⁴ This paper was written with an older version of this text, written only by Sole and in 2011. Be sure to use the version of the text being used in your class.

⁵ This is effective because the student begins with a point from the text and then makes connections to his or her life.

- D. So What?: Knowing this information about yourself will better prepare you for the relationship and help you communicate back to your partner.⁶

III. Body Paragraph #2 - Develop strategies for active, critical, and empathic listening.

- A. ⁷Topic Sentence: Once you know yourself, you must learn to listen to what your _____ ⁸partner is communicating to you, and you must have strategies in place to _____ determine when particular skills for active listening, or empathic listening may be warranted, or the need listen for comprehension is present.⁹

⁶ This is a good application of self-concept because it demonstrates that it is an ongoing process and that the relationships we have with others will shape how we see ourselves, and how we conceptualize ourselves will influence how we interact with others. This will then improve our communication.

⁷ The student needed to indent five spaces to remain consistent in formatting.

⁸ Again, to remain consistent, the student should continue to indent on the second and remaining lines.

⁹ Good transition, as the student links self-concept to the next section – listening.

- A. Supporting Evidence: Sole gives the description of the different types of listening which then can be applied to various listening skills depending on the set needed.
 - B. Explanation: There will be certain circumstances in a relationship when one partner will need to know what type of listening is needed and which skills must be put into play to effectively understand the other person and respond accordingly.
 - C. So What?: The importance of this can be exemplified as such: understanding when your partner only needs an empathic ear, without judgment, will be very helpful in a healthy relationship because there are times when your spouse will just want you to understand where they are coming from, even if it seems reason does not apply.¹⁰
- IV. Body Paragraph #3 - Recognize how words have the power to create and affect attitudes, behavior, and perception.
- A. Topic Sentence: When speaking to your partner, choose your words carefully because what you say, and how you say it, will have an impact on the perception of what you are saying, may create an unintended tone in the conversation, and can affect the response you receive back.

¹⁰ Great direct application of advice about listening for this specific couple.

- B. Supporting Evidence: Stevens states that right from birth, actions and words of others affect how people develop in society. He adds that good communication techniques can build or preserve self-esteem. (Stevens, 1995).¹¹
- C. Explanation: Right from childhood, people listen to the feedback of others to create perceptions of self, to modify their behavior, and respond with an appropriate attitude.¹²
- D. So What?: If a couple wishes to be productive in their interpersonal communication they need to take care of the words they choose and the manner in which they convey the words, as well as body language and tone.
- V. Body Paragraph #4 - Define emotional intelligence and its role in effective interpersonal relationships.
- A. Topic Sentence: Understanding your emotional intelligence, and that of your partner, can help you navigate through the emotional highs and lows of your relationship because you will be able to better handle your emotions and feelings, as well as those of your partner.¹³
- B. Supporting Evidence: Sole cites Zatura's definition of emotional intelligence as having three parts:

* the ability to effectively perceive, communicate, and manage negative emotions

* the ability to experience, communicate, and sustain positive emotions; and

¹¹ Good use of an outside source.

¹² Good connection back to self-concept, showing how interrelated these terms are.

¹³ Good rationale for why we pay attention to emotions.

* the ability to retain perspective during difficult times and to recover following stressful events (as cited in Sole, 2011, Section 9.2).¹⁴

- C. Explanation: Understanding how your partner handles stressful events will make it easier for you to interpret their communications, and being cognitive of your own interpretation of stimulus can help you make better decisions.¹⁵
- D. So What?: If you know your spouse reacts in a knee-jerk fashion to bad sudden news and cannot control their emotions, you can be better prepared for their method of communication and understand that it is not directed at you. This is particularly helpful if you can then control your response to smooth over the incident.¹⁶

VI. Body Paragraph #5 - Evaluate appropriate levels of self-disclosure in relationships.

- A. Topic Sentence: Self-disclosure, or opening up to one another to share intimate thoughts is important to a healthy relationship and knowing how much to share and when will make the process of self-disclosure more successful.
- B. Supporting Evidence:
 - 1. Schoenberg cites a study that says that showing your partner that you care about them and that they are loved is a key component to a successful relationship, and opening up through communication, known as self-disclosure, is a way to achieve that (Schoenberg, 2011).

¹⁴ Correct citation.

¹⁵ It would be nice to focus directly on emotions as well

¹⁶ Great advice!

2. Sole contends that you must evaluate how the listener will respond and use the information you wish to disclose so that you do so at the proper times and in the proper context (Sole, 2011, Section 7.5).

C. Explanation: While a partner should not wish to keep secrets, it is important to understand how items you wish to share, or not share, will affect your spouse, and plan accordingly.¹⁷ In addition, it is important for a spouse to know what is appropriate to share with others outside the relationship. It is also important to make sure there is the proper amount of self-disclosure to allow your relationship to grow and prosper.

D. So What?: It is important to engage your partner in meaningful communication that shows your interest in their person, rather than their day-to-day routines, and an effective way is to ask personal questions and to also share your own experiences. You will want to gauge the appropriate places to engage in such conversations, as well as the proper moments.¹⁸

VII. Conclusion - Thesis statement:

Ray and Steve, this letter has shown you ways to share yourself emotionally with your spouse, while preparing you to handle the feelings, and gave you ways to improve your

¹⁷ Nice, thoughtful advice about consideration of others when thinking about disclosure.

¹⁸ This section would be stronger if the student were to better explain the benefits of disclosure and its closeness or even self-concept.

communication through better skills to listen and reflect in hopes of making your relationship expedition a successful one.¹⁹

¹⁹ Good restatement of the key points. If the student had begun with a stronger thesis in the introduction, that could have been restated here as well.

References

Schoenberg, N. (2011, January 17). Can we talk? Researcher talks about the role of communication in happy marriages. *McClatchy-Tribune News Service*. Retrieved from ProQuest Newsstand. Document ID: 2240370261²⁰

Stephens, K. (1995, Jun 11). STICKS AND STONES?²¹: It's the words that really hurt. *Pantagraph*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/252161693?accountid=32521>

Sole, K.²² (2011). *Making Connections: Understanding Interpersonal Communication*. San Diego, CA: Bridgepoint Education, Inc.²³

²⁰ Please only use "Retrieved..." when offering a link to a url. The latter part of that reference should be omitted.

²¹ Please don't use all capital letters for any portion of a reference.

²² Sole is before Stephens alphabetically and therefore should be the second reference.

²³ This is mostly a perfect reference list!