# Topic Outline

## Overview

## Introduction to the IPC Model

## The Basics: Sizing Up the Situation:

Positioning, Posturing, Observing, Listening
Summary of the Basics

## The Add-ons: Communicating with Inmates:

Responding to Inmates, Identifying Content, Identifying Feeling, Identifying Meaning, Asking Questions
Summary of the Add-ons

## The Applications: Managing Behavior:

Handling Requests
Making Requests
Reinforcing Behavior
Summary of the Applications

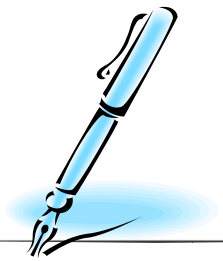
## Conclusion

# *Inter-Personal Communication for Corrections*

## *Instructions*

This portion of the manual presents an explanation of the skills or steps under study. This symbol means that you are to read this section of the manual. After reading the background material, you need to consider how to use it! That is what the next section addresses. The written work provides an opportunity to use the material in the context of working with inmates.

You can best understand the material by paying particular attention to the key concepts or definitions contained at the start of every section in this manual. They build on each other, so each new concept introduced relies on your complete understanding of those previously presented.



This symbol indicates a written activity, which you are to complete. The manual provides space for you to record your answers and reactions

# *Introduction to the Interpersonal Communications for Corrections*

## *Overview*

***Sizing Up the Situation: position, posture, observe, listen***

***Communicating with Inmates: respond to questions, ask questions***

***Managing Behavior: handling requests, making requests, reinforcing behavior***

Traditionally, the training given to correctional officers has been aimed at their heads—it was filled with theories and ideas. Sure, there was some skills training, but that was usually in firearms or self-defense. Another thing about training was that it was almost exclusively concerned with security—contraband, key control, cell searches and the like.

While these are obviously legitimate concerns, this orientation doesn't take into account the fact that correctional officers spend much (if not most) of their time interacting with inmates—and each other. Officers traditionally have been trained to keep the institution secure, but not to get along with inmates effectively. More important, they haven't been trained in how to get the inmates to do what the officer wants them to do, which is what the job is really all about.

This training program is an effort to change that orientation. The program is based on work done by trainers and researchers in the field of corrections over the past 35 years, and is based on a careful study of the skills that truly effective correctional officers demonstrate. Techniques for identifying those skills have been developed, and now there are techniques for teaching others, like you, how to acquire and use those skills.

The IPC model has three major sections.

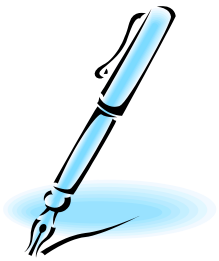
***The Basics are fundamental skills that give you information that helps you decide what action to take in any given situation. Another name for the Basics is "Sizing Up Skills".***

***The Add-ons are communication skills that will help you get an inmate to explore and share information with you. These skills are the key to finding out what's really going on in a situation.***

***The Applications are supervision skills that help you manage inmate behavior in a respectful way—so that you get what you want done with minimal trouble.***

Think back on your own experience in being supervised. You've probably had bosses that you thought did a good job in managing you, and others that you felt did a bad job. Think about the good bosses. What qualities or skills did they demonstrate that made them effective in managing you—that made them successful in motivating you to do a good job?

List those qualities and skills below:



# *The Basics: Sizing Up the Situation*

# The Basics

## Sizing Up the Situation

The Basics are sizing up skills that help you know what's happening in any situation. Sizing up helps you avoid costly mistakes and maximizes the chances that your decisions and actions will be effective and accurate. Sizing up works because it gets you ready to take and use information to manage and often prevent problems. Using the Basics is always appropriate because you always need to size up whatever situation you're in.

The four basic sizing up skills are: Listening, Observing, Posture

### The Four Basic Skills

An inmate comes to the correctional officer. He is restless, breathing quickly, repeatedly clenching and unclenching his hands. But the officer doesn't notice these signs. He's busy going over paperwork. His workstation is situated so that the inmate is not in full view. The officer would have to make a 90° turn to see the inmate fully.

The inmate asks if he can speak with the officer. Deep in his work, the officer indicates that he is busy and asks the inmate to come back later. The inmate quickly walks across the dayroom and grabs an inmate seated at a table, punching him repeatedly. The officer uses his radio to summon assistance to break up the fight. The inmate is cuffed and taken to segregation. There is considerable uneasiness and unrest in the housing area as a result of the incident.

The fight came as a surprise. The inmate had a good record with no history of violence. The two inmates were not known to have problems with each other. What happened?

First, we all know that inmates sometimes act impulsively.

Second, we know that situations like the preceding one are not always predictable.

Third, we must recognize that officers always have the option to handle a given situation in a way that is for better—or for worse. The officer in the above situation, for example, might well have handled things in such a way as to avoid the fight.

In general, of course, the officer could have handled things better if he had sized up the situation more accurately. The ability to do just this—to assess what's really going on and decide what if any action should be taken—is perhaps the most critical part of an officer's job. Only the officer who really knows what's going on can choose and take the best possible course of action in managing inmates.

But "sizing up ability" is not an ability that an officer is born with. Nor is it always an ability that an officer develops through experience alone. No, sizing things up requires some very definite skills.

## Four Basic Skills

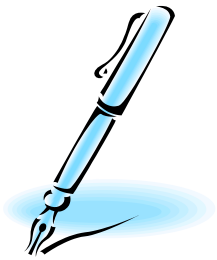
Sizing up any situation involves four very basic skills—positioning, posturing, observing, and listening. The word "basic" is important here. The four skill areas are basic and fundamental to everything you will learn in the rest of this manual – and to everything you actually do on the job. For you cannot hope to communicate safely and effectively with an inmate or inmates until you have used these skills to size up the situation. Nor can you hope to control inmates unless you have first sized up the situation. On the other hand, by learning to make continual use of these four basic skills, you can maximize your chances of making the right response in situations where a wrong response could be very costly indeed!

The four basic skills are cumulative in that each new skill builds on each previous one. For example, posturing yourself effectively means that you should already be in an effective position; observing accurately means you should already have gotten into an effective position and posture; and so on. In other words, you don't simply use one skill at a time. Instead, you size up a situation by making maximum possible use of all four basic skills.

In general, of course, the skilled officer always systematically sizes things up on his shift, whether he is responsible for a housing unit, booking, or inmate workers. Here are some ways an officer sizes things up before actually going on duty -

A. Checks with the supervisor and reviews the log to see what has happened during the last shift;
B. Reads the log of the officer he is replacing and asks for a briefing about the conditions in his area of responsibility;
C. Determines if there are items that need priority attention (like shaking down a recently vacated living area) and makes a note about taking care of them; and
D. Walks the area of responsibility to take a reading of what is going on, who is where, who is doing what, and to test the general atmosphere of the area.

It is in this final phase of pre-duty, and in the actual duty that follows, that the officer puts his four basic skills to maximum use.



Why do you think that sizing up the situation is important?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

If you were to walk the area of your responsibility prior to going on duty, what would you be looking for? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Which of the basic skills do you think would be most helpful in getting that information?

_____
_____
_____

# Positioning

**Positioning** means putting yourself in the best possible place to see and hear individuals or groups. This helps you get information you need to manage inmates and to prevent minor incidents from becoming major problems.

The three parts of positioning are: Distancing, Facing the Inmate, and Looking Directly,

## The Three Parts of Positioning

Physically positioning yourself in relationship to an individual or group is very important in the effective management of inmates. The three basic parts of positioning are establishing an appropriate distance, facing the inmate, and looking directly.

As an effective officer, you need to position yourself where you can see and hear problems. Being in a good position helps you to know just what's happening and, therefore, to prevent problems from escalating. Then, too, inmates who think they are not being observed are always more of a problem because they tend to live by the rule, "We'll get away with as much as we can—or as much as you'll let us." As you know, it's impossible for you to be everywhere at once. Yet the more you use positioning skills to see and hear, the less likely it is that the inmates will get involved in things that are against the rules.

Now let's look at the three specific skills or procedures outlined above.

## The First Part of Positioning: Distancing

The first principle of distancing is to keep it safe. Yet while safety is foremost, it is not enough. You could be safely in an office while inmates are doing some pretty negative things. The

distance must be safe but you must also be able to see what is going on. And you must be able to hear what is being said whenever possible.

***Positioning means distancing yourself far enough to be safe, close enough to see and hear.***

## The Second Part of Positioning: Facing the Inmate

Facing the inmate ensures that your position gives you the most effective line of vision. Your left shoulder should be lined up with the left boundary line of the area you are watching, and your right shoulder should be lined up with the right boundary line of the area you are watching. When you move your head to either side so that your chin is right above either shoulder, you should be able to see the entire field for which you are responsible.

***Positioning means facing the inmate or inmates.***

Sometimes the sheer size of the area for which you are responsible makes it impossible to remain in one position. In this sort of situation, you must move around so that you can see all the areas or persons you are responsible for. In moving around, as in all behaviors, it is always important that you change the order of doing things so that your behavior cannot be predicted easily. At the same time, of course, you must be thorough regardless of the pattern you employ. Facing the inmate helps you to size up a situation. You can see best when you are directly facing inmates. When your goal is communication with inmates, this also lets them know you are open to hearing them.

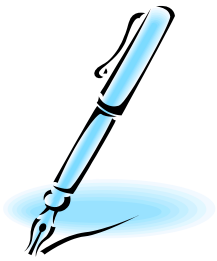
## The Third Part of Positioning: Looking Directly

When positioning yourself, you should look directly at the area or person(s) you are managing. Unless you look directly, you will not be on top of the situation even if you are in the right position and are facing the inmate. Looking directly at a group often involves looking at their eyes. When questioning inmates, for example, you will be able to get important clues by observing their eyes and their facial expressions closely. In addition to the information you can get, your direct look tells inmates that you mean business and are not threatened. This doesn't mean you get involved in a staring contest. But many inmates believe that a person who won't look you in the eyes is afraid.

Eye contact may also be the best way of communicating interest. Inmates become aware of our efforts to make contact with them when they see us looking directly at their faces. Of course, looking directly at inmates will also provide you with valuable information about them. Inmates who keep shifting their eyes while talking to you signal that, at the very least, they are in comfortable with you or with what is being said. This kind of information is important in managing inmates.

***Positioning means looking directly at the area and person or people you're managing.***

You probably have posts other than housing units. Think of some of these other posts. Describe where you would position yourself to size up the situation.



Post: _____

Position: _____

_____

Post: _____

Position: _____

# Posturing

Using good posture means holding your body in a way that shows strength, confidence, interest and control. When you appear strong and confident, inmates will believe you are strong and confident.

The three parts of positioning are: Standing Erect, Eliminating Distracting Behaviors, and Inclining Forward.

## The Three Parts of Posturing

Your posture—how you carry yourself—tells an inmate a lot. It can make an inmate think that you're confident, or that you're really pretty worried about what might happen. Your aim, of course, is to show your real confidence.

As with positioning, there are several ways in which you can use posturing when you are sizing up the situation. Here we'll focus on three specific procedures- standing erect, eliminating distracting behaviors, and inclining forward.

The way in which the first two procedures show confidence should be obvious. When you stand erect and get rid of distracting behaviors, you let inmates know that you're in full physical control—control not only of your own body, but of the whole situation. And that's essential! Inmates may try to intimidate an officer who doesn't look as if he is confident about what he's doing. Any officer without the respect of the inmates will have a difficult time supervising effectively.

By standing erect and eliminating distracting habits, you do a lot to show your strength and confidence. The third part of the posturing skills outlined here, inclining forward, can also show confidence by reinforcing the idea that all your attention and potential energy is riveted on the inmate or inmates. Inclining yourself forward, as you will see in later in this course, can also help

you to communicate your interest. Used in this way, such a posture says to an inmate "I am inclined to listen, to pay attention, to be interested."

Let's take a closer look at the three parts of posturing already outlined.

## The First Part of Posturing: Standing Erect

Each of you knows how important standing erect is. You probably heard it as a child; and you definitely heard it if you were in the armed services: "Stand up to your full height," "Be proud; stand up straight," "Stick out that chest," and "Pull in that gut." Standing erect takes muscle tone and practice. Look in the mirror and check yourself out. Are your shoulders straight? Is your chest caved in? How do you feel? Ask others for their reaction. Which way do they experience you as stronger, more confident?

***Posturing means standing erect to show strength and confidence.***

## The Second Part of Posturing: Eliminating Distracting Behaviors

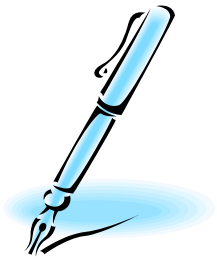
A person who can't stand steady is seen as nervous. Biting your nails, tapping your foot, or other distracting behaviors do not communicate confidence and control. But standing stiff like a board doesn't communicate it either. You should not feel tension in your body after you have eliminated distracting behaviors.

***Posturing means eliminating all distracting behaviors.***

## The Third Part of Posturing: Inclining Forward

Your intention here must be to communicate interest and concern by shifting your weight forward so that the inmates become more aware of your "inclination" to communicate and supervise them with respect. You can do this by placing one foot slightly forward of the other, with your weight on the forward foot. This does communicate "moving closer" without actually moving you much closer or making any physical contact. Since this position shows you to be more alert, it also gives you more control over the situation. Lean your weight away from another person. What do you experience? Probably a "laid back" sort of remoteness. You're simply not as involved.

***Posturing means inclining yourself forward to show that your attention is really focused.***



List some distracting behaviors that *other officers* sometimes show.

_____

_____

_____

What are some distracting behaviors that *you* sometimes show?

_____

_____

_____

# Observing

Observing is the ability to notice and understand inmate appearances, behavior and environment. Careful observation of inmate actions will tell you a lot of what you need to know about inmates, their feelings, and their problems.

The four steps in observing are: Looking at Behavior, Appearance, and Environment, Drawing Inferences, Deciding Normal/Abnormal, Deciding Trouble/No Trouble

## The Four Parts of Observing

## The First Part of Observing: Looking at Behavior, Appearance, and Environment

A "behavior" is something that the inmate does while conscious and active. For example, an officer might observe any or all of the following behaviors—two inmates playing basketball; one inmate pushing another inmate; one inmate reading. An "appearance" is something an inmate might display even if unconscious or dead. For example, an officer might observe the following appearances: one inmate is black; another inmate isn't wearing clean clothes today; a third

inmate is an older person. “Environment” is the particular people and things around an inmate. When observing an inmate, you should try to answer questions like, “what’s he doing right now?” (behavior), “what are the important things about how she looks?” (appearance), and “what’s important about where he is and who he’s with?” (environment). Once you’re able to answer these questions, you’re ready to draw some inferences about the inmate.

***Observing means looking at inmate behavior, appearance, and environment.***

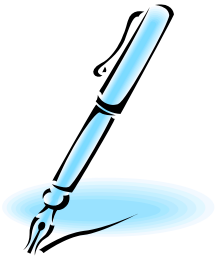
## The Second Part of Observing: Drawing Inferences

Inferences are the initial conclusions you come to as the result of observing inmates.
You take in visual cues related to inmate appearance, behavior, and environment. These cues are really “clues” that show you something about inmate feelings, inmate relationships, inmate energy levels and inmate values. The more observations you make, the more inferences you can draw—and the more accurate these inferences will be.

**Observing means drawing inferences about inmate feelings, relationships, energy levels, and values.**

### Drawing Inferences about Feelings

The officer can use his observing skills to draw inferences about how an individual inmate or an entire unit of inmates is feeling. Knowing how a person is feeling is critical in determining the potential for problems. For example, you might use the feeling word “happy” to describe an inmate who is exercising and smiling. For an inmate who is pacing and wringing his hands, you might apply the feeling word “anxious”. You might use the term “tense” to describe a group of inmates who are tightly clustered and speaking in low tones.



What feeling word would you apply to the following examples?

1. An inmate is sitting on her bed, head hanging down, slowly rocking back and forth.

Feeling word:_____

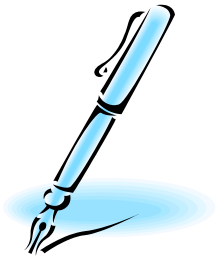
2. An inmate is looking at the GED certificate that he just received in the mail. He is smiling and motioning for other inmates to come and see the certificate.

Feeling word: _____

## Drawing Inferences about Relationships

Besides being aware of the nonverbal cues that indicate the feelings of the inmate, the officer can further increase his effectiveness in correctional management by looking for cues that indicate the nature of the relationship between himself and the inmates and between the inmates themselves. In general, you can categorize relationships and feelings as *positive*, *negative* or *neutral*.

The relationship between the officer and the inmates and among the inmates themselves serves as a good indicator of future action. An inmate who has a good relationship with an officer is likely to cooperate and follow the rules. An inmate who has a bad relationship with either an officer or another inmate may be a source of violence or disruptive behavior. Among inmates, relationships are critical.



List two behaviors and/or appearances that would tell you that two inmates have a *negative* relationship.

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

What might result from these behaviors and appearances?

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

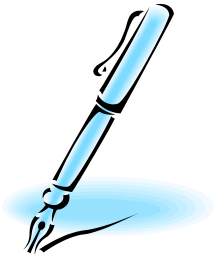
List two behaviors and/or appearances that would tell you that two inmates have a *positive* relationship.

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

## Drawing Inferences about Energy Level

Energy level indicates a great deal about how much and what type of trouble an inmate can and/or will cause. For example, inmates with a low energy level are reluctant to initiate anything. Some inmates have a low energy level. They look and act defeated. Their movements are slow, their heads hang down, and every move seems like an effort. These inmates spend a good part of their time sleeping. Low energy inmates may need encouragement to increase their activity, or they may need to be monitored to be sure they are not a danger to themselves. Inmates with moderate energy levels actively engage in activities (playing cards, talking, cleaning) while high-energy inmates not only participate in all that is required but also make use of physical fitness equipment and other optional activities. High energy needs to be used constructively so that it does not become a source of problems.

While it is important to observe basic levels of energy, changes in energy level are even more critical. Energy levels are usually constant for inmates except at special times (e.g., visiting hours, holidays). Changes from high to low or low to high may indicate trouble. List two behaviors that show a high energy level.



List two behaviors that show a high energy level.

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

List two behaviors that show a low energy level.

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

List two circumstances that might cause inmate energy levels to change:

1. _____
_____

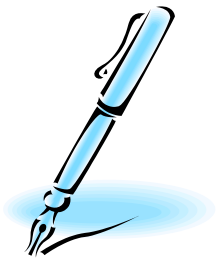
2. _____
_____

---

### Drawing Inferences about Values

It is also important to understand what a given inmate values. Here is where observing the inmate's environment comes in. You can learn a great deal about an inmate by carefully observing his environment. A general rule is that what a person gives his energy is of value to him; the more energy, the higher the value.

Your observations should help you find out how the inmate relates to his environment. Does he have friends? Who are they? Remember, birds of a feather definitely do flock together! A guy who hangs out with the drug crowd is telling you something. What are the things that are important for the inmate? You should look for things in the environment that reflect his interests and values (e.g., neatness, what he reads). Knowing what an inmate values has real implications for effective management. When you know what a person wants and doesn't want, you've got an edge in managing that person.



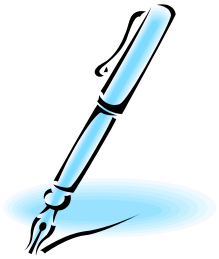
List three things in relation to environment that might reflect inmate values.

1. _____
_____

2. _____
_____

## Reasons for Inferences

The reasons for your inferences should be *visual cues* related to behaviors, appearances and environment. Inferences stand the best chance of being accurate if they are based on detailed and concrete observations rather than on vague and general ones. Inferences are based on your previous observations of behaviors and appearances. The more concrete you can be in describing the appearances and behaviors to yourself and to others with whom you might share them, the more likely it is that your inferences will be correct. Read the following incident carefully. Be ready to give reasons (descriptions of appearances and behaviors) for some inferences you will be asked to draw.



A new, young inmate is sitting alone at a table in the dayroom. Several older, longer term inmates sit down and start talking with the new inmate. He looks down, and after a few minutes, gets up, goes into his cell, and returns with several commissary items. Leaving the commissary on the table, the young inmate goes to his cell and shuts the door. Write down the feelings of the young inmate, his relationship to the group, and his energy level. Cite reasons for your inferences. (The reasons should be descriptions of the appearances and behaviors demonstrated.)

Feeling:

_____

(*angry, scared, happy, sad)*

Reason: _____

_____

Relationship: _____

(*positive, negative, neutral)*

Reason: _____

_____

Energy level: _____

*(high, moderate, low)*

Reason: _____

## The Third Part of Observing: Deciding Whether Things Are Normal or Abnormal

Once you've been on the job for a while, of course, you get to know how individual inmates tend to function. One person is easy-going and hardly ever argues with others. Another always looks mad at the world. A third always seems to be feeling sorry for himself. Your observations and the inferences you've drawn can help you determine whether a particular inmate is in a "normal" or "abnormal" condition at any point in time.

In determining whether things are normal or abnormal for a given inmate at a given time, compare your present observations of the inmate with any past ones and/or any comments which other officers may have made about the inmate. For example, you may observe two inmates talking loudly with each other. If this is normal behavior for these inmates, you probably need to exercise only the usual amount of caution. But if the appearance and behavior of the inmates are unusual or abnormal for them, you'll know it's a potentially violent situation.

## The Fourth Part of Observing: Deciding Whether There Is Trouble

This decision should be based on your observations and your knowledge of the correctional environment. With your knowledge of the correctional environment in general, you should be able to generate certain principles that will be useful in making this decision, such as the following:

- "Birds of a feather flock together."
- "A very depressed person usually withdraws from activities and other people."
- "When 10-15% of a group of inmates are down, tense, or hostile, it can affect the entire group."
- "Abrupt or major changes in behavior or appearance mean trouble."
- "An inmate who has assaulted another inmate has a greater likelihood of assaulting someone else."

***Observing means deciding whether it's a "trouble" or "no trouble" situation***

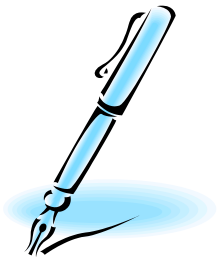
For example, take the situation described earlier. Two inmates are talking loudly. You have not observed these two inmates together before. As you approach, you hear one inmate rudely telling the other to take a shower. The second inmate begins waving his arms and raising his voice even louder. Given these observations, you can infer that the inmates are angry, have a negative relationship, and have high energy. You combine these inferences with your knowledge that inmates may impulsively lash out if they feel their image has been damaged. You decide that this is a trouble situation

Observing inmate appearance and behavior is usually the quickest and most accurate way to detect whether or not a given individual is really having a problem. Inmates are usually reluctant

to talk about their problems. Your observations will allow you to anticipate problems so that you can prepare for their possible impact upon the inmate himself, on other inmates, and on you and other officers.

## Observing Scenario Summary

Four inmates are out in the dayroom—two watching TV and two playing cards. A fifth inmate (Billy) enters, mumbling about his lost picture. He first approaches the TV watchers and then the card players, asking about his picture. Billy wanders away muttering to himself. He starts asking the other inmates about what happened to his picture. One of the inmates gets irritated at Billy and tells him to leave. The officer watching this from a short distance must decide what they will do to intervene as Billy stands there being told to leave the area by the other inmate. The rest of the inmates look towards the officer as if to signal they need help dealing with Billy.



Considering the scenario above; write down what you would do to deal with Billy and the others.

What are your options in dealing with Billy and the other inmates?

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

What part of the scenario is the most important in basing your decision to intervene?
1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

# Listening

Listening is the ability to hear and understand what inmates are saying. Listening helps you hear the danger signals from inmates while things are still at the verbal stage so you can take appropriate action to manage situations before they get out of hand.

The four skills of listening are: Suspend Judgment, Pick out Key Words, Identify Intensity, Reflect on Mood

### The Four Parts of Listening

## Verbal Cues and Signals

Inmates often go through a verbal stage before the action begins. If you can hear the danger signals, you can cut off the trouble before it really breaks out. Listening involves the officer's ability to hear and accurately recall all the important verbal cues used by the inmates. "Important" here means stated or implied signals of trouble or problems. The danger may be an inmate's intention to inflict harm on himself or another inmate, an intention to inflict harm on an officer, or even his intention to attempt an escape. You can listen for cues that mean a problem is possible if preventive action is not taken soon. For example, an inmate might tell an officer that

he is sick and tired of the food and he isn't going to eat another bad meal. This could signal that the inmate plans to take some action to express his anger about the food. If the officer listens, he may be able to address the inmate's complaint and avoid a violent outburst.

Complaints from inmates are common, of course, but they are also important. An effective officer listens to complaints and recognizes when a familiar cue is uttered in a new tone, or when a complaint arises from a usually uncomplaining inmate. An officer especially listens for changes—silence when there is usually noise (recreation area); or noise when there is usually silence (3 a.m. in the housing unit). Once again, the officer asks himself the question: "Is there trouble here?"

You should get ready for listening by using the basic positioning, posturing and observing skills whenever possible. A good position will obviously help you hear better. Posturing is essential when listening to an inmate who really wants to talk to you; your posture can signal the inmate that you're focusing all your attention on him. Finally, your observing skills can help you to understand the implications of what you're hearing. An inmate who sounds angry but turns out to be leaning back in his chair and grinning may have only been telling a story to others. An inmate whose angry voice fits with his tense appearance presents quite a different situation.

One more preliminary thing—you can't listen effectively to inmates if you've got other things on your mind. If you're thinking about home or other job responsibilities, you may miss a lot of what is said and what it really means. You've got to focus on the inmate to whom you're listening. This takes a good deal of concentration. You can work to develop this kind of concentration by reviewing what you're going to do and whom you're going to see before you assume your post. Then you'll really be ready to start using the four specific procedures which skilled listening involves—suspending judgment, picking out key words, identifying intensity, and reflecting on mood.

## The First Part of Listening: Suspend Judgment

This is very difficult to do in relation to any inmate, since society itself has passed judgment on him. Yet most officers agree that it's important to judge a person on what they do *now* in jail rather than what may have been done on the outside. It is still hard at times to listen without immediate judgment because many inmates either complain about other inmates, the jail or you, or demand to be given something. Despite this, it will severely hurt your management efforts if you do not suspend judgment, because you will never hear the real verbal cues you need to prevent danger or assist someone.

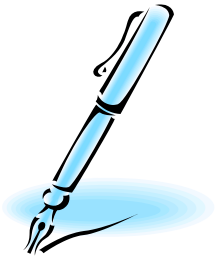
***Listening means suspending judgment temporarily so you can really hear what's being said.***

All complaints sound the same after a while, but they are not all the same! Some are just the normal negatives of inmates while others are real warning signals of danger. Just let the inmate's message sink in before making any decisions about it. Of course, certain situations within the jail call for quick action; but if you develop your nonjudgmental listening ability now, you will hear better and be able to take appropriate action more quickly when necessary.

## The Second Part of Listening: Pick Out Key Words

There are key words and phrases to listen for. Here are a few—*kill, depressed, snitch.* Other words to listen for—*you'll pay, get out of here, hostage.* Of course, everything you hear and see must be considered in terms of who the inmate is that said or did it. In addition to the key words, you'll need to pick out the person who is involved.

***Listening means picking out key words and phrases like get or shank or that S.O.B.***



List some words or phrases that signal danger or trouble in your own particular environment:

_____

_____

## The Third Part of Listening: Identify Intensity

Statements are made with varying intensity (high, moderate and low). The louder or more emotional a statement, the more intense it is. But loudness and emotion are not the same thing. A wavering voice, for instance, signals a lot of emotion even though it may not be loud. High intensity statements are very real signs of danger.

***Listening means determining whether the intensity of an inmate's speech is high, medium, or low.***

## The Fourth Part of Listening: Reflect On Mood

"Mood" here means, at a very simple level, what the inmates are feeling. One question you may ask to determine mood is "what kinds of feelings are being expressed or implied (positive, negative, neutral)?" Another question you want to answer is "is this mood normal or abnormal for this time and place?" Sure, there are always exceptions. For example, someone can say "I'm

going to kill you" quietly and without emotion, yet still mean it. This is why it is so important to know your inmates and to continue to observe and listen for other cues.

***Listening means determining whether an inmate's mood is positive, negative or neutral, and whether this mood is normal or abnormal.***

When you answer the question, "is this normal or abnormal?" you should try to formulate the reason why this is the case. "Normal" means "as it usually is". This can apply to one inmate as well as to a large group of inmates.

## Summary of the Basics

All right, you've had a chance to learn the four basic skills you need to size up a situation—to manage your job and the inmates more effectively. You've practiced positioning, posturing, observing, and listening. But as you know, there's far more to being an effective officer than being able to size things up. Often you will choose to manage by communicating with inmates. You'll want to defuse a troublesome situation or get important information. Or you may need to address an inmate's concerns.

In the second major section of this manual we'll consider the skills you'll need to communicate with inmates. The skills in this second section are important when it comes to helping inmates with their problems and are absolutely essential when dealing with tense situations— situations where strong feelings may get out of control unless you're able to communicate with inmates. Sizing things up just lets you know what's happening and what may happen. To change things for the better—and that's what effective management requires—you need to add on communication skills!

# *The Add-ons: Communicating with Inmates*

# The Add-ons

## Communicating with Inmates

Add-on skills help you open up communication with inmates. They provide you with the ability to get another person to tell you more about what he knows or thinks. You'll find the add-on communicating skills invaluable whenever you need to get more information about a situation or address an inmate's concerns.

The two add-on communicating skills are: Asking Questions, Responding to Inmates

### The Two Parts to Understanding

### Communication Promotes Understanding

Just what is communication all about? We know that some officers can really talk with inmates and others can't. Although you see and hear inmates every working day, chances are you're never really sure what's really going on inside them. At the most fundamental level, officers and inmates are all human beings. But many times it seems that the similarities stop there. The gulf between you and one inmate may often be frustrating. In one way you feel that you know this inmate but in another way you're sure you don't. And knowing him is important. The better your understanding of any inmate, the more effective you can be in terms of inmate management.

This is where communication skills become important add-ons. When you choose to use these skills, you can find out a great deal more about individual inmates. You can add to your understanding and action in ways that will help you defuse tension, decrease the chances of trouble and increase your ability to handle any and all situations more effectively. The basic skills let you size up the situation. The add-on communication skills presented in this section let you understand the full implications of that situation and act constructively.

Once you choose to communicate with an inmate or a group of inmates, you begin by putting all of the four basic skills to use—positioning, posturing, observing and listening. As the communication process develops, you use new skills in two important areas.

## The Two Skills: Responding to Inmates and Asking Relevant Questions

As the materials that follow make clear, responding to inmates means a good deal more than just answering a greeting—although this, too, can be important. You need to take the initiative in developing effective responses. By the same token, asking relevant questions means more than a simple, "Hey, what's going on". In this section you'll have a chance to learn the specific procedures involved in responding and asking questions effectively.

As noted, communicating with inmates must begin with your use of all the basic skills. You position yourself at the best possible distance from the inmate—say three to four feet when you are working with a single person (although this would certainly increase if danger were imminent). This puts you close enough to see and hear everything yet not so close that you seem overly threatening. You face the inmate. And you look directly at him, making frequent eye contact to let him know you're really "right there".

You posture yourself so as to communicate both confidence and real attention. You observe the inmate's appearance and behavior, using visual cues to draw inferences about his feelings, relationship with you, and general energy level. And you listen carefully, making sure you take in all the key words and verbal indications of intensity so that you can determine just what the inmate's mood really is. Only after you have really mastered and put to use the basic skills will you be able to use the add-on communication skills effectively.

Like the basic skills, communication skills involve a step-by-step approach. First you respond to the inmate. Then you ask any relevant questions you need to ask. Then you respond again, this time to the inmate's answers. You would usually not, in other words, just jump in and start asking questions—at least not if you're trying to get the inmate to open up and communicate with you voluntarily.

We have all met some officers who are skilled at communicating with inmates. What qualities or skills did these good communicators have that made them effective? List two.

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____

# Responding to Inmates

Responding means just that—showing a clear reaction to something, which you have seen or heard. A response *gives evidence* that you have listened. In this section we'll take a look at several levels of responding.

The three steps to responding to inmates are: Identify Content, Identify Feeling, Identify Meaning

## The Three Steps to Responding

At the simplest level, you can ***identify content*** by summarizing and expressing what an inmate or group of inmates has said or done. At the next level, you can ***identify the feelings*** shown in an inmate's words or reflected in his actions. Finally, you can ***identify the meaning*** or reasons for an inmate's feelings. Each new level of responding does more to show an inmate that you are really on top of things, really seeing, hearing and understanding him. Probably more than anything else in this training, responding is going to seem strange to you. It's new, and you may be doubtful about its worth. There are two things to remember here.

First, this is a skill to be added to what you already do rather than a skill to replace what you do. The more responses you have to choose from, the more effective you can be. Second, by practicing the skill you will learn the best places and ways to use it.

## The First Level of Responding: Identifying Content

Identifying content is the skill of seeing and hearing what is really happening and the ability to reflect that understanding back to the inmate. You're letting the inmate know you heard accurately and are on top of the situation.

While your use of the basic skills establishes a relationship in which inmates are more likely to cooperate with and talk to you, responding is a tool you can use in the moment to communicate with inmates. Identifying content is the first part of responding to the total problem or situation involving inmates. It shows an inmate that you have heard or seen what he said or did. When any person, including an inmate, knows that you are seeing and/or hearing him accurately, he will tend to talk more freely. This is critical because talking gives you more of the information you need while allowing the inmate to get things off his chest.

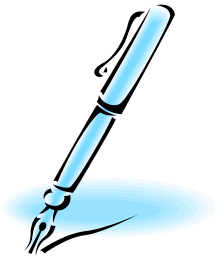
***Responding at the simplest level identifies content: "You're saying _____."***

***The two steps to identifying content are:***

1. ***Think about the content***
2. ***Reflect back***

When identifying content, you are focusing on what the inmates are either saying or doing. First, you ***think about*** what you have seen and heard: "What are the inmates doing?" and "What is the inmate saying?" In answering both questions, stick close to what is actually going on and/or what is being said. Second, after taking it all in and thinking about it, you summarize what the inmates are saying or doing in your own words. ***You reflect back the content by saying to an inmate either "You look (it looks _____)" or "You're saying _____."***

(For example "You look like you're pretty busy" or "You're saying you're pretty busy.")



List two examples of situations in which you might identify content in order to get more information:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

## Get Inmates to Talk Instead of Act!

A common inmate attitude is “the inmate vs. the officer”. Responding can alter the “me against them” belief enough to open communication with inmates. An inmate who is committed to some destructive action and who has done destructive things in the past will probably not be affected by identifying content. But such responses will give many other inmates an opportunity to talk it out, to share it rather to keep it inside.

Here’s an example. One inmate might say, “I really can’t stand him. He pushes me and pushes me. Every time I see him, I want to get even.” Put aside your desire to question such an inmate (“Why do you want to do something foolish?”) and your desire to push him into something positive by stating a negative (“You really want to do some more time?”). Instead, identify the content of his statements—“You’re saying you really want to get back at him.” This response will encourage talk and help you get the information you need to understand the situation before you push or take any action. Instead of switching to a hostile or defensive way to counter what he might see as an officer’s usual hassling, the inmate relaxes. You’re not pushing. Instead, you’re playing along and giving him a chance to talk it out. Also your response gives the inmate a chance to talk and thereby lessens the probability that he will act out negatively. In addition, the more an inmate talks, the more you learn about his values. And the more you know about his values, the easier it is to manage him.

## The Second Level of Responding: Identifying Feeling

Identifying feeling is the ability to capture in words the specific feeling being experienced by an inmate. By identifying, or reflecting back, the inmate’s feeling, you show that you understand that feeling. This encourages the inmate to talk, to release his feelings.

### *The two steps to identifying feeling are: Think About the Feeling, Reflect it Back*

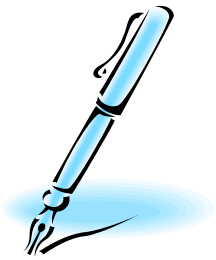
Every person has feelings that affect what he or she says and does. The nature and strength of these feelings usually determine what a person is going to do. When you identify an inmate’s feeling, you are encouraging him to share those feelings with you. The skill of identifying feelings has important implications for the management of inmates.

***Responding at the next level identifies feelings: “You feel_____.”***

## Understanding Can Defuse Negative Feelings!

Showing you understand how a person feels can be even more powerful than showing you understand the content of his actions and/or words. Showing an inmate that you understand his negative feelings can usually defuse those negative feelings. By responding to feelings at the verbal or "symbolic" behavior level, you keep the inmate's words from turning into action. Also, responding to feelings at a verbal level can give you the necessary clues to determine the person's intention. If he clams up after you have identified his feelings, he is probably going to act on them; on the other hand, if he goes with it verbally, he is telling you he wants to talk it out instead of acting on it. You all know the difference between a talking fight where the parties are looking for a way out ("oh yeah?" "yeah!"), and a real fight where the fists will be flying any second.

Besides being able to defuse negative feelings so that words don't become actions, identifying feelings leads to greater understanding of—and by—the inmate. The inmate can't always link up his feelings with the situation and is often at a loss to understand what he is feeling. In addition, when you identify positive feelings, these feelings get reinforced (unlike negative feelings). There's nothing mysterious about this. We don't enjoy our negative feelings so we get rid of them by sharing them—by "talking it out". But we do enjoy our positive feelings. So they only become stronger when they're shared with another person. You can begin to strengthen the positive feelings that will help an inmate to act more positively simply by recognizing and responding to these feelings. As a general rule, a person who feels positively about himself will try to do positive things, while a person who feels negatively about himself will try to do negative things. If you push this out into a general principle, you get "people tend to act in ways consistent with the way other people see them." If you put together an inmate's low self-image and the fact that others have a low image of him as well, you can predict that the inmate will act accordingly (negatively). Now you can't pretend that someone is positive when he is not; but if in fact he feels positive or does something that is positive, then recognizing this will help.



List two situations where it would be important and useful to defuse negative feelings.

1. _____
   _____

2. _____
   _____

### Identifying Feeling Words and Intensity

To identify feeling, you position and posture yourself, then observe and listen. Then you ***think about*** the feeling (happy, angry, sad, scared) and its intensity (high, medium, or low). Finally, you respond by ***reflecting back***, **"You feel _____." (For example, "You feel angry.")**

Here the new skill involves identifying feeling and intensity. Adding a new skill doesn't mean discarding the old skills, of course. When identifying feeling, you are really asking yourself, "given what I see and hear, how does this person basically feel?" Is he happy, angry, sad, scared, or confused? His behavior and words will let you make a good guess at the feeling. For example, an inmate who yells at another inmate, "you stupid idiot, look what you did to my bed!" while he waves his arms and his face gets red is obviously feeling some level of anger.

After you have picked out the feeling word, you must think about the intensity of the feeling. For example, anger can be high in intensity (boiling mad), medium in intensity (frustrated), or low in intensity (annoyed). The more accurately your feeling word identifies the intensity, the more effective your response will be. That is, your response will be more accurate and will do the job better (e.g., defuse the negative feeling). You wouldn't choose "concerned" for the above example because the term is too weak to describe a person yelling, waving his arms and turning red. Such an understatement would probably only make him angrier. But "You feel furious" would fit fine.

## The Third Level of Responding: Identifying Meaning

Learning how to identify content and how to identify feeling has prepared you to identify meaning. Now your response at this new level can put everything together. Here you will capture effectively where the inmate is in the moment. By adding the meaning to the content and feeling, you will help yourself and the inmate understand the reason for his feelings about the situation.

***The two steps to identifying meaning are: Thinking About Meaning, Reflect Back***

## Meaning is the Reason for the Feeling

The reason is simply the personal meaning for the inmate about what is happening. For example, an inmate in danger of being pulled into a fight when his record is clean might feel "scared" because "the fight could blow my chances to get out early." The personal meaning of the potential fight for this inmate is that it might prevent him from earning good time. That is one reason why he is scared.

***Responding at the highest level identifies content, feeling, and meaning: "You feel _____ because _____."***

By putting together the content, feeling, and meaning and responding to all three, you show the inmate you understand his experience as he presents it. This increases the chances of the inmate talking to you.

For example, an inmate asks the officer a question about his work detail.

*Inmate:* "Why do I have to be in the kitchen? The steam and the odors suffocate me."
*Officer:* "You feel concerned because the conditions over there are hard for you to work in."
*Inmate:* "Yeah. I get this heavy feeling in my chest and I begin to wheeze after about thirty minutes. I know the kitchen supervisor thinks I'm running a game, but man, I need to get out of there!"
*Officer:* "You feel worried about your situation because you think something is wrong in your chest that the smells in the kitchen make worse, and you can't convince the supervisor that you're leveling with him."
*Inmate:* "Right. It's getting worse all the time, and I don't know what to do."
*Officer:* "How about going to the infirmary in the morning to get it checked? The doctor can authorize a work detail change if he feels that your condition needs it." The officer understands clearly where the inmate is in the situation, where he wants (or needs) to be, and is able to suggest a possible solution. This became possible because he was able to attach an understanding of meaning to the content and feeling of what the inmate was saying.

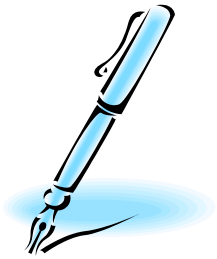
## Identifying Meaning

By building on what you know, you add the reason to the content and feeling responses you have just learned. ***Your new way of responding becomes "You feel _____ because _____."***

What we need to focus on here, of course, is an inmate's reason (personal meaning) for his feeling. Supplying the reason means you must understand why what happened is important. You do this by rephrasing the content in your own words to capture that importance. You are actually giving the reason for the feeling. In this way, you make the inmate's feeling clearer and more understandable. It is also important to capture whether the inmate is seeing himself as responsible or seeing someone else as responsible. Your response should reflect where he sees the responsibility in the beginning, even though you may not agree. By doing this you will have a better chance of opening him up. You can always disagree when it becomes necessary and effective to do so.

For example, an inmate has told the officer about gambling in the housing unit. Now, the inmate suspects that the officer has told other inmates how he found out about the gambling. The inmate confronts the officer, his eyes narrowed and his hands trembling.

"You jerk! You promised the other inmates wouldn't find out who told you! Now they know about me. You really screwed me over!"



Identify the intensity and category of this feeling and pick an accurate "feeling" word to describe the inmate's emotion:

_____
_____,
_____

Now supply the reason for the inmate's feeling. What does his situation really mean to him? Who is he blaming? Why is all of this so important to him? To understand what's going on, you have to forget that you may not have told anyone who gave you the information; forget that you had your reasons if you did tell someone; forget the inmate's words and tone and language. What does this mean to him? Recognizing the meaning, formulate a response.

***Response to meaning: "You feel _____ because _____."***

## Explanation

The officer who was actually involved knew how to initiate communication with an inmate in a tense situation like this—and he recognized that failure to do so could mean real trouble.

He knew that the inmate's basic feeling was anger. He knew that the intensity of this feeling was high and that the inmate was really furious. And he knew that the inmate was blaming him for putting him in danger in the unit—the real meaning of the situation for the inmate. Knowing all of this, the officer was able to respond effectively to the inmate's feeling and to what this feeling meant.

"You feel furious because you think I put you in danger."

This response caught the inmate flat-footed. He had expected the officer to deny everything, or to tell him to shut his mouth, or to ignore the whole thing. He certainly hadn't expected the officer to respond to his situation at the same level that he, the inmate, was experiencing it!

Because the officer knew how to respond at this level, he was able to keep the inmate talking openly. And in a tense situation, this can mean the difference between effective management and genuine danger!

## Referral

When identifying meaning, a communication interchange may sometimes go deeper than you feel you can handle. If this happens, you must consider the option of a referral. With your added understanding, your referral will be that much more specific and beneficial. But many times your added understanding will provide you with the information you need to really manage the inmate. The payoff for you and the inmate will be rewarding. Many officers put in their time with the inmates but don't get the payoff because they lack some of the skills needed to finish off the good start that they make by being decent and fair. Responding is one way to ensure the payoff.

Practice your responding skills with inmates with whom you have been communicating. When you practice the skill, don't just give one response and say to yourself, "Well, I did it." Keep using your responding skills over and over again when you are trying to understand an inmate. When you feel he has said all he is going to say, or when you know all you need to know, then you can take action. But be careful about giving advice too soon. A lot of times an inmate will hold back part of the problem until he sees how you react. If you tell him what to do too early, it may not be good advice.

# Asking Questions

You ask questions in order to get useful answers. Some questions get better answers than others; the skill of asking questions will help you increase your information and hence your ability to manage inmates well.

The three steps to asking questions are: Using the "5 W's and H" Method, Thinking About What Was Said or Not Said, Responding to the Answer

## Three Steps in Asking Questions

As the following materials make clear, there are really three basic steps involved in asking relevant questions in an effective way. First, you must develop one or more questions of the "5W's and H" type—Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Second, you must think about the answer or answers given by the inmate to make sure you fully understand all the implications. Third, respond to the inmate by reflecting back the answer.

Asking questions will help you manage an inmate. If an inmate answered our questions, we would be all set. After all, we have all the right questions. The reality, however, is that for a variety of reasons (e.g. lack of trust, his own guilt) the inmate does not answer many questions. In fact, questions will sometimes have the opposite effect. That is, they will shut off communication with inmates rather than open it up. The only way questions can be really effective in opening up an inmate is when they are used in addition to the basic skills plus

responding. Use of the basics plus responding can get an inmate to the point where he will talk quite openly. It is then that questions can make their contribution by getting some of the necessary specifics (who, what, when, where, why, and how- the 5W's and H system).

## The First Step in Asking Questions: 5W's and H

Answers to questions will give you the detail you need to manage inmates effectively. The more details you know, the better you can understand what is going on. You always want to know who is involved, what they are doing or going to do, when and where something happened or will happen, how it's going to be done or how it was done, and why it did or will take place.

For example:

"Where were you?"

"Who were you with?"

"Why were you there?"

"What did you actually do?"

"When did all this happen?"

"How was it handled?"

## The Second Step in Asking Questions: Thinking About What Was Said or Not Said

It's not enough to ask good questions. You also have to be able to make sense out of the answers you get (and recognize as well, perhaps, the answers you're still not getting). An inmate may be leveling with you and giving you the information you need to manage things or to provide assistance. He may be leveling with you as best he can but perhaps not giving you all the information you need. Or he may be covering something up, which means that he is still not fully open, still not really communicating with you.

In thinking about the inmate's answer to your question, you can consider four specific things: how the inmate looks as he answers (relaxed, uncomfortable); what he is doing while he answers (facing you and making eye contact, looking away, looking down at his feet); what he has actually said (the informational content of his answer); and what he may have failed to say (any "gaps" in the way his answer fits with your questions). By reflecting on these four areas of concern, you can make sure that you fully understand all the implications of the inmate's answer.

## The Third Step in Asking Questions: Responding to Answers

Responding to answers means reflecting back to the inmate what he has said in terms of content, feeling, and/or meaning - all the skills you learned previously. Responding opens up the inmate and gives you a chance to make sure you understand what is being said. It also builds up trust with the inmate. For these reasons, you should always try to respond to an inmate's actions or words at the highest possible level before and after you actually start asking questions. Questions then fill in the details of the picture. Often details (reasons) come from responding skills alone. If they do not, questions are appropriate. It's as simple as that.

# Summary of the Add-ons

In the first section of this manual, you learned the skills you need to size up the situation. Now, working through this second section, you've learned the skills you need in order to initiate meaningful communication to improve your management responsibilities — the skills involved in responding and asking questions. These skills are designed to help you manage inmates by communication. The payoffs are always good for all concerned. Now it's time to move on; to go beyond sizing up and communicating and consider what's involved in really controlling the situation. We'll concentrate on this topic and the skills it requires in the final section of the manual.

# *The Applications: Managing Behavior*

# The Applications

## Managing Behavior

The application skills combine the basic and the add-on skills, and are aimed at managing and controlling inmate behavior. These skills are important in helping you maintain control and manage inmates well.

The three skills to applications are: Handling Requests, Making Requests and Reinforcing Behavior

### The Three Application Skill Steps

Not all the ways in which officers try to control inmates are good; some are actually dangerous, and more than a few have proven disastrous. Many ineffective methods of management and control have been based on myths about correctional work. The problem with the majority of these is that they treat anything other than a show of pure force as a sign of official weakness. Yet the fear of looking fearful in the inmates' eyes has actually caused many officers to take greater risks. One thing is certain—as soon as an officer begins to develop effective interpersonal management skills, he begins to experience the real reward of being able to control situations with less tension, less force, and a lot less risk to himself!

However, even the effective use of basic skills plus use of communicating skills is not always enough. Every officer needs specific yet constructive ways of managing and controlling inmate behavior. This section of the manual will outline a number of such ways, the "applications" which any officer should have open to him.

## Managing Behavior is the Key

Managing and controlling behavior simply means taking charge. This is what it's all about in an institution. Without the ability to manage and control behavior, all the other efforts are wasted. An officer has to do everything he can to ensure appropriate behavior; in the interests of the institution, the staff, and the inmates. Officer control of inmate behavior leads to a secure institution. Inmate self-control leads the inmate to success. Without control, nothing productive can occur.

At the individual level there can be great frustration among the correctional staff; officers cannot and will not work well where inmates are poorly controlled. Lack of self-control among inmates is demonstrated in negative behavior. The uncontrolled individual cannot do the constructive things that lead to success. He is doomed to make the same mistakes over and over again. This costs him, it costs society, and it usually costs the officers who are charged with controlling the behavior of people who can't control their own behavior.

This section of the manual builds on previous sections. It is about the *how's* of controlling behavior by using good management skills. *What are these skills?* In this final section of the manual we'll take a close look at three different areas of skills. These skills are dealt with here as "applications" because they really represent the specific ways in which you can apply all of the other skills you've developed in order to manage and control inmate behavior in the most effective possible manner.

## Three Application Skills: Handling and Making Requests and Reinforcing Behavior

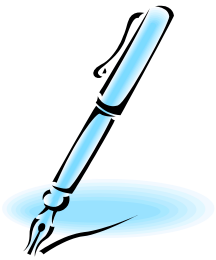
Unlike the earlier skills, these three areas are not all cumulative. That is, you will normally be involved at any given time in either handling an inmate's request or making a request of your own. In either situation, however, you will want to reinforce the inmate's subsequent behavior; positively if you want him to keep doing a particular thing and negatively if you want to keep him from doing something.

Before going any further, let's take a look at a couple of these skills in action. Here is a situation, quite routine, where an officer demonstrates skill in management. It could be handled very differently with more negative outcomes. It involves both the officer making a request of the inmate and, in turn, the inmate making a request of the officer.

*Officer:* “Mr. Jones, I’d like you to switch cleaning chores with Mr. Smith for the next two weeks because he’s been having problems with his neck and can’t lift the trashcans. He’ll do your sweeping while you do the trash.”
*Inmate:* “Is it okay with you if I try to get someone else to do it? I don’t like missing the news on TV to empty the trash.”
*Officer:* “I’m sorry, Mr. Jones, I know you’d prefer not to do the trash, but it needs to get done while Mr. Smith’s neck gets better. Your chore, the sweeping, is the only one he’s cleared to do right now. Mr. Smith can’t do his chore for two weeks; if he’s not better by then we’ll get a new worker to take his place and you can have your job back.”
*Inmate:* “Why do you always pick on me? I’m always the one who gets screwed on these deals.”
*Officer:* “I know you’re angry about having to switch chores because you don’t like to miss the news, but this is the best way to solve the problem. Please be ready to do the trash tomorrow night. Okay?”

### Control Through Skill, Not Force!

The officer in this case used his skills to control his situation. He didn’t demean or put down; he didn’t use sarcasm. You will observe, however, that included in his skills were firmness and reasons for his actions. There was no weakness. The inmate now knows what he is expected to do and why. The officer was even able to continue to be responsive to the inmate when the inmate became irritated. This use of skill gets that job done and increases the probability that the inmate will feel he has been treated fairly, even if he has to have his routine interrupted. Quite a contrast when you think about how another officer might have handled it.



Why is control important for inmate management?

_____
_____
_____

What does an inmate gain when he learns to control his own behavior?

_____
_____

# Handling Requests

Handling requests is the ability to manage inmate requests in a fair and effective manner. The skillful handling of requests helps build trust and reduce tension in the institution. It is also a good inmate management technique.

The two steps in handling requests are: Checking Things Out, Give Response and Reason

### The Two Steps to Handling Requests

## Rules, Regulations, and Inmate Rights

Before we turn to the skills involved in handling an inmate's requests, we should spend a minute reviewing the way in which institutional rules and regulations often relate to the specific things to which an inmate does—and does not—have a right. Although times are changing rapidly, each officer and each institution is bound by certain legal and institutional requirements to provide certain things to the inmates. Most of these things are basic rights and/or needs to which an inmate is entitled. Your jail probably has some written regulations to guide you in these areas. Abiding by these rights and needs usually enables an officer to establish a working relationship

with most of the inmates. There is always that 5% to 10% who react negatively no matter what you do. But by following the regulations, you can fairly expect the inmate to do what is expected of him. You have taken away his excuse for negative behavior, even in the eyes of the other inmates. When you attend effectively to the inmates, you have fulfilled your basic obligations to make the institution fair.

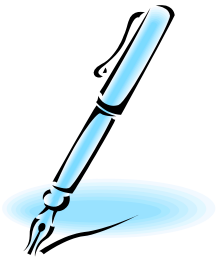
You can attend to an inmate either as the result of his or her request or by initiating contact on the basis of some need you see. The latter really opens up an inmate. (As used here, "attending" really refers to both of the skills we'll consider—checking the inmate out and responding to his request with a reason for your decision.) Attending skills are basic but very powerful. They reduce 90% of the tension in a jail and help to establish a relationship where communication is possible if a problem arises.

## The First Step in Handling Requests: Check Out the Inmate and Situation

It goes without saying that you are and will be bombarded with requests from inmates. Some will be legitimate, some not. Every request must be, and is, responded to. Even if you ignore the request, you have responded to it; and some consequence will occur which can affect your management and control of inmates. If you find this hard to believe, put yourself in a situation where you want your shift supervisor to consider one of your own requests and he ignores you. How do you feel? What message would it communicate if it happened often? What might be the consequence for your behavior?

***Checking out requests involves deciding if they are legitimate or not.***

Before you respond to any inmate request, you need to use your basic skills to check the inmate out. Is he leveling with you, or is he trying to run some kind of game? You also need to check out the situation in terms of any rules or regulations that might apply. Using your positioning, observing, listening and responding skills will be invaluable to you here. As you practice, this will become very clear to you.



Read the following situations. Then describe how you would check them out.

Inmate request: "Officer Smith, I feel sick. My stomach is real upset and I've been sweating more than usual. Can I go see the nurse?"

What skills would be important to use in this situation? _____

What rules or regulations must be considered? _____

Another inmate makes this request five minutes before count.

Inmate request: "Officer Smith, may I go back to the recreation area? I left my t-shirt there and it will be ripped off if I don't get it."

What skills would be important to use in this situation? _____
_____

What rules or regulations must be considered? _____
_____

By knowing which of the sizing-up and communicating skills to use, you can ensure that you really know what's happening with a particular inmate who has a request. And by reviewing the appropriate rules and regulations, you'll have a good idea of whether the inmate's request is or is not legitimate. Now you're ready to respond to the request itself.

## The Second Step in Handling Requests: Responding with a Reason for Your Decision

The new skill here involves indicating the action you're going to take, your decision, and giving the inmate your reason. Giving the inmate a good reason is not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it is the best way in which to minimize future gripes. If you turn the inmate down, he won't be able to complain that you didn't even tell him why. And if you grant his request, he'll know that it was just for this one situation for a good clear reason.

***Responding with a reason eliminates possible problems.***

Basically, of course, an officer has three possible avenues of action in relation to an inmate's request. In each case he should give some reason for his action. Here are the simplest forms these responses can take.

"Yes, I'll do (it) _____ because _____."

"No, I won't do (it) _____ because _____."

"I'll look into (it) _____ because _____."

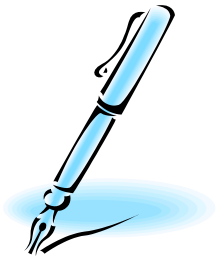
In each instance, the officer bases his decision on the laws and the regulations of the institution. In cases where inmates need or request something beyond what they are entitled to by law and regulation, each inmate's behavior (past and present), what is asked for, the way it is asked for and the information you have gained by checking things out should determine your response. For

example, an inmate might ask you, “Hey man, how about a phone call?” “No, I can’t allow you to have a call because it’s after 9:00 p.m., and only emergency phone calls are allowed now.”

### Take Care of Basic Needs

While an officer may have an option in a case like the above, some things, like a person’s food, cannot be withheld. You may have other options for an abusive inmate who demands his meals (e.g., write him up) but you can’t deny him his food. Knowing the law and the regulations of your institution will definitely make your job easier. By taking care of the basic needs of the inmate, tension, negative behavior, and grievances will be greatly reduced.

Taking care of basic needs is a “must” in any relationship. It would be very hard for an inmate to believe you wanted to communicate and assist him if you did not attend to his basic needs, that is, if you did not give him what he was entitled to. Dealing with such needs in a concrete way builds up trust that will make it more likely that the inmate will talk to you and act upon what you say.



List four legitimate requests inmates could make:

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____
3. _____
_____
4. _____
_____

List four non-legitimate requests and explain why they are not legitimate:

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____
3. _____
_____

4. _____

_____

# Making Requests

Making requests is the ability to manage inmates by making specific requests of them. Making requests skillfully improves the chances that inmates will cooperate and more readily carry out your requests.

The two steps involved in making requests are: Checking Things Out, Take Appropriate Action

### The Two Parts to Making Requests

## Making Requests

The two procedures involved in making requests in an effective way are checking things out (using the same procedures as when you are handling inmate requests) and taking appropriate action. As before, you need to check things out to ensure that you don't make the wrong move, a move that might increase tension rather than calm things down. Once you've done this, you can decide whether the best action will involve a simple request, an order or even direct physical action.

## The First Part of Making Requests: Checking Things Out

Since the procedures here will be the same as those involved in handling inmate requests, there's no need to go back over them at length. Here, however, your aim should be to understand the whole situation involving the inmate whom you plan to have to do something. Is he with his friends? If so, what's his probable relationship with them? Will he feel he's losing face if you give him an order, and therefore react antagonistically? By using your basic sizing-up skills and your responding skills if there's any tension in the air, you can make sure that whatever action you take in making your request will be effective.

***Checking things out involves use of your basic and responding skills.***

## The Second Part of Making Requests: Taking Action

Making requests of inmates is routine in corrections, of course. Many requests are made each shift, and often little thought is given to the impact of requests on the control of inmates. Yet as many of you know, it's how the request is made that often makes the difference, not the nature of he request.

***Taking action means selecting the best way to make your request.***

In taking action to get an inmate to do something, you have to be specific. You should identify what you want done and when. Many officers have found a polite request is most effective in getting an inmate to do what he is told. Of course, there are officers who feel that the inmates don't deserve politeness, or that it makes an officer look weak. But you were brought up with good manners; and the question is, are you going to let an inmate bring you down to his level? In addition, when an inmate doesn't do something reasonable when asked politely, then it is he who looks weak and not you. Moreover, by being initially polite, you've given the inmate the opportunity to comply easily.

Now it's his responsibility if you have to escalate to a harsher request or order. Some of you are going to find it difficult to use a polite format; but many officers have found that it is more effective to be polite. It gets the results you want. A mild (polite) request can take the form "Would you please _____?", or it can take the form "I would appreciate it if you would _____."

When you make an inmate request, the most direct method is simply to identify what you desire and then use the format "I want you to _____." But because inmates will frequently resent authority if you are simply telling them to do something, you may have fewer problems if you use a mild request format. Examples might be "I'd like you to do _____,"or "Would you stop _____." You can soften the statement even more by using polite words. For example, "Would you please stop _____."

What format you use for making a request will depend on the situation and the particular inmate. Of course, if an inmate abuses the mild method, you are always free to move to a stronger position including a direct order. As indicated above, the point is to get the job done —to have the inmate do what you want. Most experienced officers agree that it is generally easier if direct confrontations are avoided.

### Use Responding Skills

You may also want to use your responding skills in taking action. For example, you come across an inmate who is in a place where he should not be. As you approach, you recognize the inmate as a new to the unit. He doesn't appear to be doing anything else wrong; in fact he greets you:

*Inmate:* "Hello, Officer."

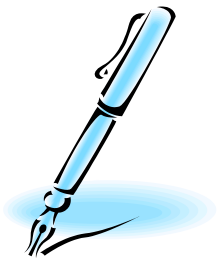
You give him the benefit of the doubt in the sense that you are open to what he is going to say. *You respond to content:* "Hi, _____. You seem to have drifted off from the rest of the guys."

*Inmate:* "I guess so, I just wanted to get off by myself for a while."

*You respond to feeling and content:* "I see. I guess you can get a feeling of being closed in sometimes being in here, but you can't be in this area because it's unauthorized."

*Inmate:* "I didn't realize that."

*You make request:* "Yeah, I'd like you to move back to the day area now."



There may be times when you want to start right out with a direct order or take immediate action. List two examples when you would give a direct order or take immediate action without making a request. Give the reason why you would do this.

Direct Order First

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

Immediate Action First
1._____
_____
2. _____
_____

# Reinforcing Behavior

Reinforcing behavior is the ability to administer negative and positive consequences effectively. Showing inmates the consequences—either positive or negative—of their actions will help you control behavior.

The two parts of reinforcing behavior are: Reinforcing Positively and Negatively, Using a Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Technique

## The Purpose to Reinforcing Behavior

## Background

The only reason people finally do anything is the consequences (positive or negative) of doing it or not doing it. Behaviors only change when there are consequences. Often, an inmate has been rewarded during his life for bad behavior. For instance, most inmates commit several crimes before they get caught. The inmate doesn't realize that not getting caught or being let off easy is not really in his best interest. In addition to the rewards for negative behavior, many inmates live

in a world where being honest and decent is seen as negative and weak. To turn this crazy picture around, institutions and officers must be sure to reward (or correct) the behavior appropriately. Also, the consequences have to be appropriate. That is, the inmate has to experience an action as a positive or a negative.

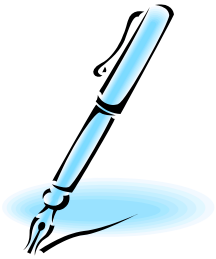
The positive consequence must also be seen as worth the price and the negative consequence as equal to the deed to be effective in changing behavior. If you send an inmate to disciplinary detention and he ends up with a single cell and no loss of privileges, you may not really be giving him a negative consequence. In fact, you may actually be rewarding a negative behavior. In a jail setting, inmates often test to find out what the limits are and who is really in control. Many inmates want to know "How much do I have to screw up before somebody tells me to stop?" Once an inmate knows who is really in control, he will reduce his testing behavior. The result is that the inmate is in your control, instead of you being in the inmate's control!

***Reinforcing means addressing positive and negative behaviors both verbally and non-verbally.***

## Negative Reinforcement

Reinforcements of negative behavior are not threats. As you know, you should never warn anyone of a consequences which you don't intend to follow through on. When you reinforce negatively, you are not setting up a challenge. You are only making clear what you expect and what will happen if your expectations are not met. You can't reinforce if you are out of control. When you are out of control, you can only threaten. And this puts the inmate in control. Your manner and tone of voice should be firm but calm. For example, you might say, "I'm giving you a direct order to stop. If you do not, then I'm going to have to write you up."

Using physical force to correct negative behavior should only be used where there is a threat of physical harm to you, to the inmate himself, or to other inmates. The risk of such reinforcement is too high, and it should be used as a last alternative.



List some negative reinforcements you can administer and/or take part in personally.

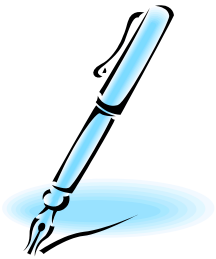
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Behavior for which you might negatively reinforce inmates ;

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

## Positive Reinforcement

It's just as important to positively reinforce or reward good behavior as it is to negatively reinforce or correct poor behavior. In fact, trouble can sometimes get started simply because an officer doesn't know how to keep things going as well as they have been going! The effective officer knows which inmates are handling things well and does everything possible to keep them on track. In addition, he positively reinforces positive work by those inmates who may not always behave appropriately. This officer may tell an inmate who always works well, "Glad to see you're doing your usual fine job, Ben. I know I can count on you." This sort of verbal reinforcement helps the inmate keep going in a constructive direction. The officer may also say, "Way to go, Bill" to an inmate who has just done his first positive thing of the day. The officer knows it's important for this inmate to recognize when he's on track—just as he has to realize when he's off the track as well.



List some positive reinforcements you can personally give and/or take part in  and the behavior for which you would give them.

Positive reinforcements you might give:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Behaviors you might positively reinforcement:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

## Two Kinds of Reinforcement: Verbal and Non-Verbal

There are essentially two kinds of reinforcement—verbal and non-verbal. You have several options for giving verbal reinforcements for negative behavior. If a warning is appropriate, you can use a format such as "If you do not do _____, then _____ will happen." The first blank would be the behavior you want to have the inmate start or stop, and the second blank would be the consequences. If a warning is not appropriate, the format would be "Since you have been (behavior), then (consequences)."

Verbal positive reinforcement is expressing your approval of the inmate's behavior. You can use a format such as "Thank you," "That's a really helpful thing" or "This place is looking good." You can reinforce behavior non-verbally with a nod or by shaking your head.

# Summary of the Applications

You have now learned the elements of interpersonal communication skills. By using these skills you will be a more effective and satisfied corrections professional and you'll find a significant improvement in your ability to manage inmates. The key, however, is to *use* the skills you've learned here.

As long as you've got the skills to size things up, you'll know what's really happening in your facility. And now, as long as you've got the skills to communicate with inmates, you'll be able to reduce tension and get them to open up with you. As long as you've got the skills to control inmates, you can manage their behavior in increasingly constructive ways.

# Conclusion

You have now completed this course in *Interpersonal Communications in the Correctional Setting*. Even outside of the correctional setting, this training can be of great value to you if you practice it. When dealing with other human beings and that's what corrections is all about, good interpersonal communications skills are indispensable. You can avoid many potentially dangerous situations and maintain a positive environment by using these skills properly and consistently.

Like any skill, you'll need to practice a great deal to get really good at it. But, when you've mastered the interpersonal communications skills you learned in this course, you can look forward to being a more effective officer, running a well-managed, safe, and secure unit in your facility.