



to build

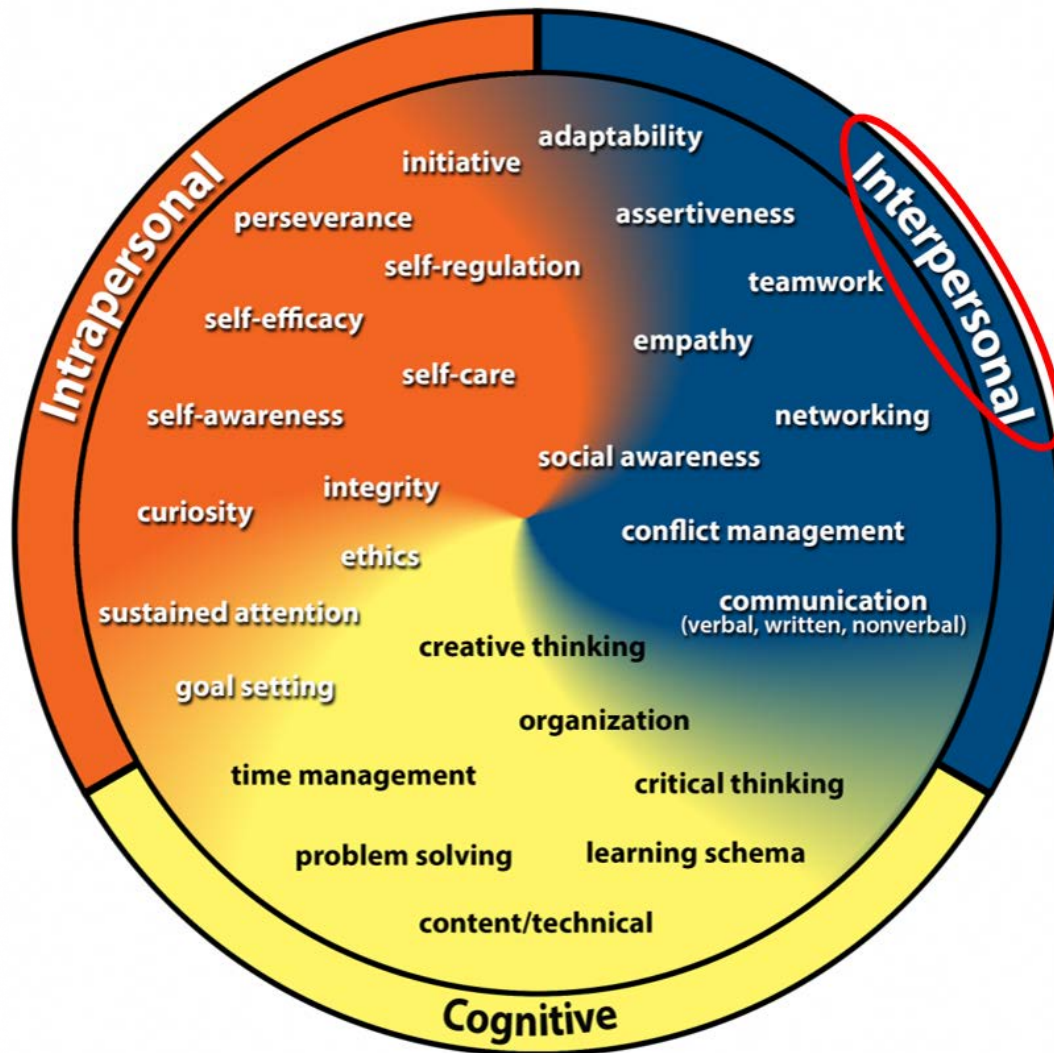
Interpersonal Competencies

with your **Teen**

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Interpersonal competencies help teens graduate from high school and succeed in careers and college. These competencies help us interact with others successfully, and include **assertiveness**, **empathy**, **conflict management**, and **social awareness**.

College and Career Competency Wheel



© 2013 Amy Gaumer Erickson and Patricia Noonan

For more information, visit:



It's important to know that interpersonal competencies can be taught and reinforced on a day-to-day basis. And teaching interpersonal competencies has a huge impact. Research shows that students with these competencies:

- Have better school attendance
- Feel more engaged in school
- Spend more time studying
- Have higher employment rates
- Earn better grades and achievement scores
- Are better able to effectively overcome stressors

(Dignath et al., 2008; Duckworth et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Nota, 2004; Ursache, 2012; Winkler-Eskreis et al., 2014)

© 2016 Amy Gaumer Erickson and Patricia Noonan

To develop interpersonal competencies, teens need to practice them. Educators and families can partner to teach, practice, and reinforce these concepts at school, at home, and in the community.

10 Quick Tips to Help Develop Your Teen's Interpersonal Competencies

- 1** If your teen is complaining about a conflict with a teacher, peer, or sibling, ask why they think the other person is acting the way that they are. This reinforces **empathy** and **conflict management**.
- 2** When your teen is about to experience change at school, such as moving into a new grade, take the time to discuss how they feel about making the adjustment. Brainstorm possible things that could happen as part of the change and how your teen can deal with these changes. This helps build and reinforce **adaptability**.
- 3** Ask your teen to identify instances in which talking about a particular topic or using certain language might not be appropriate and why. This helps build **communication** and **empathy**.
- 4** Welcome opportunities for you and your teen to meet with educators. For example, if your teen receives a low grade on an assignment, encourage them to discuss ways to improve with the teacher. To support your teen's ability to express personal preferences, interests, and goals during the meeting, help them draft a list of questions or thoughts and practice what they will say in the meeting. This will reinforce the competencies of **assertiveness** and **conflict management**.
- 5** Teachers often assign their students to work in teams to complete a class project. If it's clear that your teen would rather be working on their own than with others, use it as an opportunity to discuss how most projects in college and the workplace depend on effective **teamwork**. To be effective, a team has to have members who all do their fair share of the work and who respect one another even when they disagree. These are skills and behaviors that are valued by employers.
- 6** Having friends, family, and teachers who can provide support is an important resource to teens, especially when they encounter stressors. Have your teen periodically take an inventory of all the people they have some social ties with. Talk about the nature of those ties (e.g., if they are close ties or more remote). This helps your teen understand how they can create and strengthen ties and then use them to gain (and offer) support through **networking**.
- 7** Social media can be a fast and easy way for your teen to stay in touch with friends, but that style of communicating can lead to confusion or misunderstandings when the recipient of the message doesn't understand the context. For example, if your teen wants to wish Grandpa happy birthday by texting HBTY and HAK, a sincere and heartfelt sentiment may not come through. Use this as an opportunity to discuss what goes into successful **communication**, where the thoughts and feelings that are intended and sent are the ones received.
- 8** If your teen has had a stressful encounter at school, talk through what happened, and acknowledge their emotions so your teen can learn to accurately read a situation and react appropriately. Then help your teen figure out the best responses to different situations. This builds and reinforces **social awareness** and **conflict management**.
- 9** Attach a copy of the competency wheel to your fridge, and as you see your teen demonstrate an interpersonal competency, give positive feedback by saying something like "All the concepts on this wheel are skills that you will use in college or in a career—you just demonstrated this competency!" Give specific examples about how your teen's behavior illustrated the competency.
- 10** If your teen has a job, ask your teen to look at the wheel to identify which interpersonal competencies are most important for doing well at his or her job. Ask your teen to identify 1–2 areas for improvement and discuss.

FREE College and Career Competency Resources available at: