Skills for Career And Life Effectiveness®
(An evolution of the Personal Skills Map™)

INTERPRETATION GUIDE®
Skill #3 - Interpersonal Comfort (IC)

John Johnson, Margo Murray, Kathe Rickel
Information About Skills for Career And Life Effectiveness® (SCALE®) And The Concepts From Which It Springs:

This section of the SCALE® Interpretation Guide will give you detailed information on interpreting each of the skills on the SCALE®.

This background section includes data on:
- What the SCALE® is
- What the SCALE® is not
- Resources for gaining additional knowledge of the research base of career/life effectiveness assessment

The SCALE® is a positive approach to the self-assessment of skills that are important in healthy living and successful working.

By responding to the questionnaire you will gain a picture of your current levels of skill effectiveness — skill strengths and skill areas in which you may wish to pursue growth.

The picture of current skills becomes a “map” for the future as you begin to plan skill development and personal growth experiences using the SCALE® information.

Skills for Career And Life Effectiveness® and SCALE® are Registered Trademarks of Emotional Intelligence Learning Systems, Inc.

Personal Skills Map™, Copyright, © 1982 by Darwin B. Nelson, Ph. D., and Gary R. Low, Ph.D. All rights reserved.

Personal Skills Map™ Administration and Interpretation Guide © 1998 MMHA The Managers' Mentors, Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the authors.

Personal Skills Map™ and PSM™ are Registered Trademarks Of Emotional Learning Systems
The SCALE® Is:

Wellness Oriented  The SCALE® is wellness oriented. It is a positive and constructive model for personal renewal.

Based on the Concepts of:

- Life-long learning
- Individual responsibility for learning
- A direct relationship between effective living and effective working or productivity
- Identification of the need as the first step in actually meeting the need
- Skill improvement depends on having permission to honestly acknowledge the need for such improvement
- Self help
- Effective training is directly related to a person's perceived needs

Learnable Skills  SCALE® measures only those areas of one's life that can be taught, learned, modeled, and practiced – in other words, things that can be changed and that a person is not "stuck with."

Committed to Change  SCALE® is based on the commitment that people can change, and will change if and when they want to and have resources available for it.

Research-based  Darwin B. Nelson, Ph.D., Gary R. Low, Ph.D., and Keith Taylor, M.S., of the Institute for the Development of Human Resources in Corpus Christi, Texas, have developed the research base, validity, reliability, and technical aspects of the SCALE® since 1976. The SCALE® process and instrument have an extensive and sound norming base.

Valid  The care and exactness with which the SCALE® Instrument has been nurtured to its present state is documented in a sixty-page book entitled, Personal Skills Map™: A Positive Assessment of Career/Life Effectiveness Skills Manual. Through their own long-term research, the research of colleagues and students, independent research, and with the corroborating evidence of a number of independent doctoral research dissertations (over 50 completed and others in progress), Nelson, Low, and Taylor can verify that the SCALE® does what it is designed to do. Currently, Drs. Nelson and Low continue to build the substantive research and application base of SCALE® skills, attitudes, and behaviors for career and life effectiveness, as well as leadership excellence. Dr. Rick Hammett has joined them in their life's work with Emotional Intelligence Learning Systems. Rick's contributions through statistical analyses, web development, and original ideas have been instrumental to improving SCALE® and our positive assessment and learning processes.

The SCALE® does significantly differentiate between more effective and less effective career/life skills among those who take the instrument under the conditions prescribed for its administration.
The SCALE® Is (continued)

The SCALE® Manual also identifies the correlations among the skills of the SCALE® and the correlations between the SCALE® and other related but dissimilar instruments:

- Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)
- Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS)
- Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)

A Map to Use for Further Skill Development

- Training
- Trying new behavior
- Seeking counsel
- Reading
- Seeking feedback from others
- Modifying your job
- Career pathing
- Insights into taking better care of yourself

All are corrective strategies for SCALE® skill areas where change is desired.

Relevant to Organizations

The SCALE® is most relevant to the needs of organizations that are centered on problems of people. Symptoms of career and life skills problems emerge in employee productivity, employee turnover, absenteeism, interpersonal problems, substance abuse, and physical disorders, such as ulcers, hypertension, weight problems, and aches and pains. Such personal problems become problems for the employees' organizations when they cause dysfunction in the work place.

These problems of organizations are directly related to the underdeveloped personal/life skills of its employees and management. The SCALE® maps out the current level of these skills so that growth strategies can be designed to further develop and strengthen essential career and life skills.
The SCALE® Is Not:

**A screening Instrument**

Alone, the SCALE® cannot be used as an assessment instrument to screen, hire, or point out who should be a candidate for promotion. It cannot adequately serve as a selection device in and of itself. The SCALE® was designed to protect the integrity and personal rights of the individual completing it, so it is inappropriate to use it to evaluate or diagnose a person’s potential for employment or promotion. Most people can fake the SCALE® if they are suspicious of how the results will be used.

**For Defensive Individuals**

The SCALE® has limited usefulness for persons who have difficulty in being honest and objective about themselves. Defensive (highly threatened) individuals may not be willing or have the skills to look at themselves in an objective, straightforward way.

**Magic**

Like any assessment instrument, the SCALE® can be no more effective than the person using the instrument. The SCALE® is a helpful tool for a skilled and sensitive professional who wants to work with people in effective ways — it performs no magic.
**Interpretation of the SCALE®**

This section of the Interpretation Guide provides detailed information on each SCALE® skill. The information is organized in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SKILLS</strong></th>
<th>Name used for each skill assessed by the SCALE®</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEFINITION</strong></td>
<td>A brief statement defining the skill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERACTION WITH OTHER SKILLS**

How the current skill is influenced by or influences other skills on the SCALE®

**RELEVANCE TO CAREER/LIFE EFFECTIVENESS**

Discussion of the significance of the focus skill on career and life effectiveness of the respondents

**PURSUING GROWTH**

Suggestions for ways to pursue growth and strengthening of skill. The material in this section will be phrased as a discussion with the respondent so that you can readily use these explanations when you are interpreting the SCALE® as or with a user.
Skill #3 - Interpersonal Comfort (IC)

**DEFINITION:**
How you see your own ability to judge appropriate social and physical distance in verbal and non-verbal interactions and how comfortable you are with others. Indicators of comfort and discomfort in interpersonal interactions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Discomfort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open/trusting</td>
<td>Cautious/Protective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiles</td>
<td>Serious Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Rigidity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERACTION WITH OTHER SKILLS:**

- **Self Esteem**
  A positive self-concept enables one to open up to others. Similarly, a close sharing of experiences increases one's awareness of self and comfort with others.

- **Assertion**
  Interacting in close proximity with others requires skill in taking care of oneself to be able to accurately assess the degree of risk in being close. The ability to be open and trust others increases the likelihood that you can maintain appropriate levels of assertion in communication.

- **Empathy**
  People with scores in the change area of interpersonal comfort are likely to have very low scores on the empathy scale. It is difficult to listen when you are not comfortable being close to others.

- **Drive Strength**
  Unlike the empathy correlation the person with a low interpersonal comfort skill may have a high drive strength score. Alone this person goes all-out for a personal goal.

- **Influence**
  Strengths in interpersonal comfort are often matched with strengths in persuasion.
RELEVANCE TO CAREER/LIFE EFFECTIVENESS:

Interaction Styles

There are some classic types who have trouble in close proximity to others. There is the “bull in the china shop” who is clumsily banging into people and knocking things over physically or verbally. This person comes on too strongly, too aggressively, with these behaviors can create distance from others. The “shy” person misses fun and friendships and recognition because of the reluctance to be close to others.

Just Can’t Get Along

Then, there is the person who just “can’t get along with people.” It’s hard to say why, but people just don’t choose to hang around people whose behavior is irritating. Irritating behavior includes laughing too loudly or wearing the "wrong" clothes or clinging to you. This person may have other irritating tendencies like being haughty or a braggart or a know-it-all. Others who can’t get along are those who constantly argue, have “chips on their shoulders,” or are always complaining. These people usually wish they had greater interpersonal and social skills even if they are not sure what the problem really is. They have a sense that people don’t always like them.

Learnable Skill

The interpersonal and social skills included in the scale of interpersonal comfort are all learnable. In general they are measured by the word “appropriateness.” What is the appropriate thing to do? Being appropriate is making the right choice of behavior from different kinds of possible behaviors. It is being flexible and adaptable with all the behaviors that are available at any moment in time and situationally choosing the best one, the one that fits and works in the given situation.

Appropriate Behavior

There are times when it is appropriate to be very open and expressive of one’s feelings and to be trusting of another person. There are also times when it is appropriate to be more cautious, less trusting, and more protective of oneself. Not to be able to be open with another person makes it difficult to become close and intimate. Not to be able to be distant and guarded makes one vulnerable to being easily hurt and exploited. Being able to do both and knowing when each is appropriate is basic to the skills of interpersonal comfort.

Behavioral Choices

Other behavioral choices that are available to the person skillful in interpersonal comfort include: sometimes smiling, sometimes being serious (it is very disconcerting to be arguing with someone you know is angry but who is smiling); sometimes being loud, sometimes being soft; sometimes taking initiative in a relationship, sometimes waiting for someone to come to you; sometimes being formal, sometimes being informal.
Skill #3 - Interpersonal Comfort (IC) (continued)

**Physical Touch**
Touching another person as a part of your communication is another judgment area. What signals are sent when a person grips another’s arm or shoulder firmly during conversation? It may be intended as a message of affection but received as a statement of control and possessiveness. Relating interpersonally in effective ways means that what is intended as a message verbally or nonverbally, is in fact the same message that is received. If there is distortion along the way, much like radio waves becoming distorted or T.V. network failure, the communication is not helpful. If you say, "Let's get to know each other," and mean, "I want to know a lot about you, but not disclose anything about me," something has been lost in the exchange. The goal in interpersonal communication is to have congruence among what is intended, what is spoken, what is acted out, and what is received.

**Intentional Action**
In some ways interpersonal interactions are like surgery. Surgery is not just cutting. It is cutting skillfully at the right time and with a reason for each stroke. Clean communication is difficult. Frequently what is said or acted out is not what is heard or observed. Critical to accurate communications is being intentional, having a reason for doing or saying something, and then getting feedback to determine if it was received as it was sent out.

**Flexibility**
Flexibility is a great value in interpersonal relations. When a person is flexible, it is possible for him or her to act in a variety of ways, each chosen to fit the situation. If the communicator does not have a very large repertoire of behaviors from which to choose, and behaviors that are comfortable to use and are well practiced, then that communicator will find it difficult to be flexible, even if the will is there. The building of interpersonal comfort skills consists of accumulating a repertoire of behaviors, verbal and nonverbal, to be used as needed. In this sense it is not helpful to be totally predictable in interpersonal or social interactions. A golfer cannot win tournaments with only one club and a single swing. Skillful golfers use a driver from the tee, a wedge in the trap, and a favorite putter on the green. Interpersonal skills are not too different from golfing skills. We want the ball or message in the receptacle with the fewest number of strokes.
Skill #3 - Interpersonal Comfort (IC) (continued)

**PURSUING GROWTH IN INTERPERSONAL COMFORT:**

*Gain Endorsement Through Flexibility*

The capacity to behave flexibly in human interaction will gain support of other people. When you know and use behaviors that make people feel understood, cared for, and important, you will get their support. Leadership is only acknowledged by the support of people. Flexibility, therefore, is the key to leadership.

*Get Feedback from Others*

One popular concept of the degree to which individuals are aware of their own and others’ behavior, is called the Johari window.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{I know} & \text{I don’t know} \\
\hline
a & b \\
\text{Common Area} & \text{Blind Spots} \\
\hline
c & d \\
\text{Mask} & \text{Potential} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Like panes in a window we look through these four areas at our behavior:

*a - In the Common area*

I know my behavior and so do you. This common knowledge helps our relationship.

*b - In the area of Blind Spots*

I don’t know some of my behavior that you do know. I am not aware of some things that you could help me learn more about.

*c - In the area of the Mask*

I know things about myself that you don’t know, things that I don’t want you to know or that I am not able to tell you. If I were to reveal this information, you would know more about me and maybe why I do what I do.
Skill #3 - Interpersonal Comfort (IC) (continued)

There are many things that neither you nor I know about me. Increasing this knowledge is the great potential for our relationship as we gradually discover more and more together. Giving and receiving of feedback is key to closing the knowledge gap in panes b, c, and d. My telling you how your behavior affects me is feedback, as is my asking you to give me feedback on how my behavior affects you. Knowledge thus comes from the feedback.

One of the best ways to build better skills in the area of interpersonal comfort is to be open to feedback from others. Ask a friend or colleague to give you feedback on your behavior. It’s a wonderful source of learning.

Experiment with New Behavior

When you feel uncomfortable using certain behaviors, try out those behaviors in a safe setting where some experimentation is possible. If you find yourself feeling shy at parties and not comfortable moving around and chatting with strangers, at the next party try to seek out three new people, engaging them in conversation. Afterwards reflect on what you did, how it felt, whether or not you’d like to add it to your repertoire of behaviors. Much growth can come from trying new things, a step at a time, learning from the experiment, and gradually adding the new to complement the old.

Get into the Theater

The opportunity to get involved in theater is a great way to try out new behaviors and to practice communicating verbally and nonverbally consistently with your intentions. Through portrayal of a character with certain emotions you can sharpen your skills at accurately conveying feelings and intended messages to others. Community theaters and their directors help expand the individual’s capacity to use facial expression and other nonverbals in interpersonal communication.

Take a Course in Interpersonal Communication Skills

Courses in interpersonal communication skills are made available to the public frequently by schools, agencies, training companies, and associations. These skill development offerings usually involve participants in actually practicing the skills. With such supervised practice, skill growth can happen quite quickly in communication areas such as:

- perception checking
- observation of nonverbals
- using nonverbals
- active listening
- roles and patterns
- giving and receiving feedback
- describing feelings
Try Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Neuro-Linguistic Programming is an approach to more effective interactions among people and is based on the modeling of good communication behaviors by top communicators of the day. John Grinder and Richard Bandler have studied the skills of the great communicators and have found the patterns that are consistent among these communicators. They conduct learning experiences for the public based on these patterns of effectiveness. NLP has contributed new content to the field of interpersonal communication training, and its offerings are available quite frequently in most metropolitan areas.

Find Out What your Interactive Style Is

There are a number of workshops and seminars offered that help individuals find out more about their own communication and behavioral styles or tendencies. Each person tends to have a primary style and some secondary styles that s/he uses in interpersonal situations. The styles can be modified and adapted with awareness and practice. It is important to know what your style is if you are to be able to adapt it, to be in control of it, to compensate for it if necessary in certain relationships or situations. It has been said “if I know more about you than you know about me, I may control the communication; if I know more about you than you know about yourself, I may control you.” Styles vary in degree of dominance, expressiveness, supportiveness, compliance, independence, formality, and flexibility. Many other descriptors can be used to differentiate styles as well. Whatever words are used it is important to know what your primary tendencies are and how your style interfaces with other styles if you want to be successful in your relationships or negotiations with those styles. Interpersonal comfort is greatly enhanced as an individual gains confidence in playing to the style of another person, starting with knowing the styles and knowing what behaviors impact that style. Look for seminar offerings that relate to gaining awareness of your own behavioral style, communication style, or management style. Many of these seminars use assessment instruments that help you identify your own style. Sometimes they ask you to select friends or peers to fill out the instruments about your style so that the data is taken from sources other than you.

Take a Human Relations or Personal Growth Lab

The most common workshop dealing with the skill areas of interpersonal comfort is usually called a basic human relations or personal growth lab. Central to this learning experience is the opportunity for an individual to increase his or her self-awareness through rather intensive small group interactions guided by a skilled group facilitator. In this setting an individual discovers how he or she tends to affect other people. Personal growth labs with skilled leaders (always check the credentials and references of the leader and the sponsoring organization to be sure) can result in deeper and faster learning and contribute to behavioral change significantly. These labs are intended for people who are healthy and balanced and should not be confused with group therapy. They are educational, not therapeutic.
Applying the SCALE® and Doing Follow-up to It

**Training Needs Assessment**
It is chiefly a needs assessment instrument for the individual, indirectly for the individual’s group. It is desired by organizations and managers who have difficulty choosing from incredible numbers of training offerings available to them, especially at times when dollars are short. It is an aid to setting priorities and decision making.

**Professional Development Planning**
The SCALE® is a natural educational, professional growth-planning tool. It is best used with incorporating it into planning activities. Planning begins with asking the right questions. The SCALE® asks the right questions well.

**Team Building**
As a group of individuals constructs its own disidentified group SCALE® (noting average scores and their spread along scales) it has started significant team building by bringing to the surface group skill strengths and needs. This start is a natural for staff and consultants who want to help the organization continue team building.

**Group Counseling**
One consulting intervention is to follow the development of a group SCALE® with ongoing clarifying and guidance as to where and how skill change needs might be improved and skill strengths used more effectively.

**Individual Counseling/Career Guidance**
Some individuals want help beyond basic interpretation of their SCALE® and cannot get it from their supervisors. These individuals should receive personal follow-up from competent guidance counselors.

**Training Offerings**
A natural follow up for consultants who administer the SCALE® with groups is to also supply the training resources for the group in areas where there are clear needs which can be met with certain training interventions.

**Organizational Effectiveness Assessments**
Consultants might identify a need to their clients for further assessments going beyond the parameters of the SCALE®, such as in assessing organizational effectiveness.
## Applying the SCALE® and Doing Follow-up to It

### A Second SCALE® for A Mentor or Supervisor

The SCALE® is limited to self-perception for its database. However, if an individual and a mentor or supervisor agree to go a second step with the SCALE® (and an agreement is essential), then the mentor or supervisor could fill out a SCALE® for the individual so that there is common information for the two people to discuss regarding the individual’s skill levels.

### Progress Evaluation

Since the SCALE® is time bound, reflecting only the skill level of the moment, it is useful as a longitudinal assessment tool to measure changes in skill proficiency. It could be used every few months as a source of professional development program evaluation information.
Resources: Reading List

The authors of the SCALE® suggest the following reading list for people who want to explore resources that have been influential to the thinking and theoretical base behind the SCALE® development.

**SCALE® Intrapersonal Dimension**
1. *Self Renewal and Excellence* by John Gardner
2. *On Becoming a Person* by Carl Rogers
3. *The Transparent Self and Healthy Personality* by Sidney Jourard
4. *Toward a Psychology of Being* by Abraham Maslow
5. *Becoming* by Gordon Allport
6. *Focusing* by Eugene Gendlin

**SCALE® Interpersonal Dimension**
7. *Responsible Assertive Behavior* by Arthur Lange and Patricia Jakubowski
8. *Declare Yourself* by John Narcisco
9. *Effectiveness = My Competence + Communication* by Margo Murray
10. *Interpersonal living and People in Systems* by Gerard Egan
11. *Assertiveness* by Robert Alberti
12. *A Guide to Rational Living* by Albert Ellis
13. *Keeping Your Cool Under Fire* by Theodora Wells
14. *Don’t Say Yes When You Want to Say No* by H. Fensterheim and Baer

**SCALE® Career/Life Effectiveness Dimension**
15. *Career Planning Workbook* by Margo Murray
16. *Time Management Trap* by Alec Mackenzie
17. *Successful Time Management* by Jack Ferner
18. *Using TIME* by Margo Murray
19. *Decision Making* by Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann
21. e-Development Action Planner® (e-DAP) by Margo Murray

**SCALE® Personal Wellness Dimension**
22. *Mind as Healer: Mind as Slayer* by K. Pelletier
23. *The Relaxation Response* by R. Benson
24. *Physical Fitness and Conditioning for Everyone* by Barry Johnson

**Personal Skills Model for Personal Change**
26. *Self Change* by Michael Mahoney
27. *Change: Principles of Problem Formation & Problem Resolution* by Watzlawick, Weeleand, & Fisk
28. *Structure of Magic (Vols. 1 and 2), Frogs into Princesses, and Patterns I and II* by Richard Bandler and John Grinder