

**COM 101: Collegiate Communication**  
**Chapter Two: Accepting Personal Responsibility**  
**Presented by Kelly Garnett**

**Recommended Chapter Readings**

Pages 31-35: Adopting the Creator Role

Page 36: One Student's Story

Pages 36-40: Mastering Creator Language

Pages 43-47: Making Wise Decisions

Pages 50-53: Change Your Inner Conversation

**What works for this chapter? How can I drive home the points the chapter is trying to make while providing opportunities for the students to earn participation points in class?**

1. *Introduce the concept of personal responsibility with the Alligator River Story:*

- Break the students into groups
- Read the story aloud
- Allow students to work together to rank characters according to their level of responsibility for the story's unfortunate outcome.

*Adjustments I have made to the original activity, if you are familiar with the original:*

- I changed character names for clarity and to make them easier to remember.
- I changed the ranking system from the original handout because the students found it confusing.
- I always read the story out loud, with plenty of drama, while walking around the room, before allowing the students to work together in groups.

*Why I suspect this activity works:*

- The story is not unlike the television shows so many of the students enjoy watching; there is plenty of backstabbing, betrayal, and drama to hold their attention. All this scandal provides opportunity for a colorful discussion that ever-so-sneakily introduces a relevant, key concept from the chapter: that each of the characters had a CHOICE in how they handled the circumstances in which they found themselves. Students invariably rank the person they believe made the worst choice as the one who is most personally responsible for the story's outcome.

2. *Use fortune cookies to help the students start to understand the concept of Victim vs. Creator*

- Pass out fortune cookies
- Have students read their fortune to themselves; ask for volunteers to share
- Ask if anyone believes that the cookies can predict the future... or who has perhaps considered relying on the advice of a horoscope, or a psychic.
- Expand the discussion of where we look outside ourselves for explanations of why and how things happen to us... some people rely on advice from parents, trusted friends, therapists, religious organizations, etc.

- Ask students to consider that while we will not always be in control of what happens to us, we, as individuals, personally have the ability to choose how we react to any set of circumstances; unlike a cookie or horoscope that attempts to predict the future, we have the power to control our reaction to the PRESENT -- always.
- Introduce the difference between Victims and Creators, their characteristic behaviors, and how we can choose which kind of person we want to be.

*Why I suspect this activity works:*

- Students appreciate being eased into a difficult concept via a lighthearted introduction.
- Everybody likes cookies.

3. *Utilize existing media as a means to master “creator language”*

- Choose three relevant, relatable movie trailers
- Provide students with the Self-Talk Identification activity sheet
- Divide students into groups, and allow them to work together as they watch each trailer, and then, on the activity sheet, identify what the voices of the Inner Critic, Defender and Guide might say about the situations the trailers present.

*Why I suspect this activity works:*

- This generation is completely saturated with social media exposure. Rather than fight sites like YouTube for their attention, I am attempting to use the Web’s powers for good, rather than distracting, noisy evil. The movie trailers, if chosen carefully for content, present identifiable, workable scenarios students can use as the basis for understanding their own inner voices. And if you happen to choose a funny, farfetched one to end with (I used *Zombieland* last year), it is possible you might even get a smile out of somebody – no small feat for week two.

4. *Bring it all home with an activity in which they can recognize themselves and the choices they might have to make – teach them the Wise Choice Process using scenarios*

- Keep students in previous groups
- Provide students with Wise Choice Process activity sheet
- Go over the steps of the Wise Choice Process together, as a class
- Distribute a real-life scenario to each group, and ask them to work together to complete the Wise Choice Process activity sheet
- Have each group read their scenario to the class, then share their responses

*Why I suspect this activity works:*

- You have already provided the building blocks for the concepts presented in this activity. It is designed to pull together all of the previously discussed ideas, and to end class on a proactive, positive note.

5. *And don’t forget a game or icebreaker!*

Why? In my experience, the better (and earlier) the class gets to know one another, the more willing they will be to participate in class discussions and activities.

**How can I relate this topic to our outside-of-class activities?**

I see a clear connection between the content contained in this chapter and the Faculty/Staff Connection activity I ask my students to complete. Students are asked to make a connection with a faculty or staff member of their choice. After a one-on-one meeting, students are required to complete a reflective activity sheet, which they turn in for 50 points. If you are making an effort to tie such an activity to this chapter, you can emphasize the importance of being proactive in utilizing the many people on campus who are available to help students improve their circumstances.

**What's with all the other stuff in this packet?**

For your convenience, should you wish to utilize any of the activities mentioned above, I have included copies of the following items:

- The Alligator River Story (Revised)
- The Self Talk Identification Activity Sheet
- The Wise Choice Process Activity Sheet
- Wise Choice Process Scenarios
- Suggested, Student Approved Ice Breakers
- Faculty/Staff Connection Activity Sheet
- A full sample lesson plan for this chapter

**Thanks so much for coming to my session! It is a pleasure (and an inspiration!)  
to work with each and every one of you! 😊**

## The Alligator River Story

Once upon a time, there was a woman named Lucy. Lucy was in love with a man named Gregory. Gregory lived on the opposite shore of a river. The river, which separated the two lovers, was teeming with man-eating alligators.

Lucy wanted to cross the river to be with Gregory. Unfortunately, a terrible flood had recently washed out the only bridge crossing the river. So Lucy went to ask Arthur, the town's riverboat captain, to take her across. He said he would be glad to – so long as she agreed to go to bed with him before the voyage.

Lucy promptly refused, and went to her friend Sam's house to vent. She explained her plight, and asked for Sam's help. Sam, however, did not want to get involved in any way, and wouldn't say a word. Lucy decided her only alternative was to accept Arthur's terms – so she did. Arthur then made good on his side of the bargain, delivering Lucy safely across the river, and into the arms of Gregory.

When Lucy told Gregory about the escapade in which she had become involved in order to cross the river to see him, Gregory cast her aside with disdain. Heartsick and dejected, Lucy turned to Gregory's neighbor, Henry, with her tale of woe.

Henry, feeling compassion for Lucy, sought out Gregory and beat him to a pulp. Lucy was overjoyed at the sight of Gregory getting his due, and as the sun set on the horizon, you could hear the sounds of Lucy's laughter as she watched Gregory limp toward the hospital.

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The five characters from the story are listed below in alphabetical order. Working as a group, rank each character according to their level of responsibility for the unfortunate outcome of the story, with 1 being least responsible, and 5 being most responsible.

Arthur \_\_\_\_\_

Gregory \_\_\_\_\_

Henry \_\_\_\_\_

Lucy \_\_\_\_\_

Sam \_\_\_\_\_

Group Members' Names:

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## **Self-Talk Identification Exercises**

### **Exercise #1**

What would the Inner Critic say about the situation?

What would the Inner Defender say about the situation?

What would the Inner Guide say about the situation?

### **Exercise #2**

What would the Inner Critic say about the situation?

What would the Inner Defender say about the situation?

What would the Inner Guide say about the situation?

**Exercise #3**

What would the Inner Critic say about the situation?

What would the Inner Defender say about the situation?

What would the Inner Guide say about the situation?

Group Members' Names:

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## **Wise Choice Process Worksheet**

1. What is the present situation?

2. What would you LIKE the situation to be?

3. Create a list of choices – actions that describe how you can choose to react to the situation.

4. What are the possible outcomes of each choice?

5. What choices will you commit to doing?

6. How and when will you evaluate the success of your plan?

## Wise Choice Process Activity Scenarios

1. I had practiced for weeks to prepare for tryouts for the OU soccer team, working out, eating right, and getting plenty of sleep. But last night, my best friend broke up with her significant other, and I wound up staying up all night to comfort her. I missed breakfast and had to rush to tryouts, which started at 7 a.m. I did my best, but I didn't make the team, and now, I am really upset. Being a part of a college sports team has always been a dream of mine, and now that dream is over.

2. At the beginning of the semester, my writing professor announced that the two best essays from the term would be awarded cash prizes as a part of an annual competition. I love to write, and really needed that money to help pay for school, since my dad lost his job over the summer. I spent weeks perfecting my essay, but when the time came to announce the awards, mine wasn't picked. Now I am totally stressed out about money, and wondering if I actually suck at the one thing I thought I was really good at – writing.

3. I thought when I started college, it would be a whole new experience for me. I have always been awkward and shy, and felt like an outcast in my high school. I knew college was a great chance to make a fresh start. But right before the semester started, I got into a bad car accident, and now both my legs are in casts for the next two months. Talk about standing out – I am stuck in a wheelchair until the breaks heal. It is just like high school all over again.

4. One of the things I was most looking forward to when I came to college was getting away from my arch nemesis from high school. He tormented me for years, making fun of me, always telling everyone else what a loser I was. But when I sat down in my first math class, I couldn't believe my eyes – there he was, three rows away. Now I am thinking about transferring, even though it has always been my dream to go to school here.

5. Last night, I went to this party in the residence halls. I had bought a new outfit, and was feeling really good about myself. Secretly, I hoped that I would run into my hot partner from biology class. When I got there, I saw my crush alright – making out with my best friend. My best friend, whom everyone always says is SO awesome, who has always gotten ALL the attention. I am so sick of this.

## Suggested Icebreakers

### Evolution

#### Supplies needed:

- A marker or chalk to draw the “evolutionary steps” on the board

#### Preparation:

- Draw the following creatures on the board, in order:
  - Amoeba
  - Insect
  - Fish
  - Lizard
  - Bird
  - Monkey
  - Human
- Create a movement for each of these creatures.
- Share the movements with the whole group.

#### Important to Know:

- This game is meant to be played SILENTLY. No talking allowed!
- The game is based on “Rock, Paper, Scissors.” Be sure to clarify with your group whether they are supposed to show their rock, paper, or scissors on the three count (Hit, Hit, Show) or the four count (Hit, Hit, Hit, Show).
- This is an individual game – there will only be one winner.

#### Play:

1. Everyone starts out the game as an amoeba. At your signal, the game begins, and the group should wander around the room, making the motion for the amoeba, until they meet another amoeba. When they meet, they face off to play “Rock, Paper, Scissors.”
2. The winner of the “Rock, Paper, Scissors” match gets to “evolve” – they become the next creature on your list, and begin making the appropriate motion for THAT creature. They now need to wander around until they find someone on the same evolutionary level as they are... only like creatures can battle and play “Rock, Paper, Scissors.”
3. The loser of the “Rock, Paper, Scissors” match remains an amoeba, and must find another amoeba to battle. They cannot evolve to the next level until they win a match.
4. The first person to evolve into a human should shout, “I’m a human!” They are the winner of the game.

## **Telephone – Pictionary Style!**

### **Supplies needed:**

- Four pieces of paper for each player
- A writing utensil for each player

### **Preparation:**

- Distribute a stack of four pieces of paper to each player.
- Ask each player to number their pieces of paper, 1 through 4, in the upper right-hand corner, and to hold the paper in their hands in number order.
- Remind the group that until the very last step, they can ONLY look at the paper on the top of the stack... they may not look back through previous papers.

### **Play:**

1. Ask each player to write a simple phrase, cliché or song lyric on the piece of paper with the number 1 on it. Provide some examples, if necessary.
2. When everyone has written their phrase, the whole group passes their whole stack of papers to the right.
3. Each player looks at their new stack of paper, reads the phrase on paper number 1, and then puts paper number 1 at the back of the stack.
4. On the paper with the number 2 on it, each player now DRAWS their interpretation of the phrase they saw on paper number 1.
5. When everyone has drawn the phrase, the whole group passes their whole stack of papers to the right.
6. Each player looks at their new stack of paper, examines the drawing on paper number 2, and then puts paper number 2 at the back of the stack.
7. On the paper with the number 3 on it, each player WRITES a phrase to describe the drawing they just saw.
8. When everyone has written their phrase, the whole group passes their whole stack of paper to the right.
9. Each player looks at their new stack of paper, reads the phrase on paper number 3, and then puts paper number three at the back of the stack.
10. On the paper with the number 4 on it, each player now DRAWS their interpretation of the phrase they saw on paper number 3.
11. When everyone has drawn the phrase, the whole group passes their whole stack of papers to the right one last time.
12. The final step of the game is for each person to share the papers with the group, starting at paper number 1, and going through paper number 4.

## Zoo

### **Supplies needed:**

None

### **Preparation:**

- Ask each player to think of an animal, and to then come up with a simple movement for that animal. Provide examples, if necessary.
- Position group in a circle (game can be played either seated or standing, but standing will be easier as people start to get “out.”)
- Have everyone demonstrate their motion to the group.

### **Play**

1. The group needs to start a steady rhythm by patting their thighs twice, then clapping their hands once (think of the clapping beat often used with the Queen song “We Will Rock You”).
2. Designate a person to start the game.
3. This person will start the game by replacing a clap with their animal motion.
4. On the very next rhythm round, they will replace the clap with the animal motion of another person in their group.
5. On the very next rhythm round, the person whose animal motion was chosen should repeat their motion, using it to again replace the clap.
6. On the very next rhythm round, that person should replace the clap with the animal motion of *another* player.
7. Play continues on in this manner, with each chosen player replacing the clap with first their motion, then the motion of another player, until someone makes a mistake, or fails to make an animal motion along with the beat. When that happens, that player is out, and should step back from the circle.
8. As the group gets smaller, the tempo of the rhythm should be gradually increased. This will, of course, make the game even more challenging.
9. The final player left standing wins!

## **Tap, Tap, Tap**

### **Supplies Needed:**

None

### **Preparation:**

- Find a wide, open space
- Have each player lie on their bellies, propped on their elbows, with their right arm over the left arm of the person next to them.

### **Important to Know:**

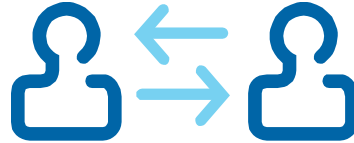
- The direction of play is dictated by the first hand that is tapped. If a right hand is tapped first, play moves to the right; if a left hand is tapped first, play moves to the left. If someone DOUBLE taps their hand, play switches direction.

### **Play:**

1. Designate a person to start the game. That person will tap one of their hands, dictating the direction in which play should move around the circle.
2. Play then moves from hand to hand, with each person tapping his or her hand(s) in order.
3. If someone double taps, play immediately switches direction.
4. If someone taps out of turn, they lose the hand that "mis-tapped," and must pull it from the circle.
5. If someone taps out of turn with the only hand they have remaining in the game, they have lost both hands and must leave the circle.
6. Close the circle in, as necessary, as players leave it.
7. The final two players should play "Rock, Paper, Scissors" to determine a final winner.

## Faculty/Staff Connection Activity

Due November 1, 2011



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The greatest resources available to you on campus are the faculty and staff members who run the academic departments and offices you will take courses from and visit throughout your time at Oakland.

For this activity, you will need to make a connection with a faculty or staff member of your choice. This person can be a professor, adviser, career counselor, tutor, or member of a student services office. You are encouraged to choose someone who can provide insight and information that will be valuable to your own experiences or educational needs.

There is much flexibility in this assignment in that you can connect with this person in order to learn more about what they do, to gain assistance with a course you are taking, to seek information about what services their office provides – the choice is yours.

Once you have connected with the person of your choice, please answer the questions shown below. The answers to your questions should be complete, thorough sentences, and should show an investment of time and thought. Your answers should be typed in a word processing program like Microsoft word, printed out, and brought to class on or before the given due date.

1. Who did you choose to connect with? When did you meet, and where?
2. Why did you choose this person?
3. How did you feel before meeting with this person – intimidated? Excited?
4. Did you find the meeting informative and helpful? Why or why not?
5. What kind of information was this person able to provide to you?
6. Do you think you will speak with this person again? Why or why not?

## Week 3, Chapter 2: Sample Lesson Plan

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- Attendance and Announcements (5 minutes)
  
- Defining Self-Responsibility (15 minutes)
  - Read Alligator River story aloud
  
  - Distribute worksheets to each group, and ask them to work together to rank the characters in order of responsibility
  
  - Discuss results
    - There is an underlying theme in how the groups chose who behaved most badly.
  
    - People's opinions appear to be based on which character made the worst CHOICES.
  
    - As you learned through this week's reading assignments, CHOICE is the determining factor in the concept of self-responsibility.
  
    - As a student, as a HUMAN, you have the ability to CHOOSE how you react to any set of circumstances that come your way.
  
    - As the book suggests, this element of choice is what separates humans from the rest of the animals. Animals react based on INSTINCT. As humans, we have a key moment, when presented with any set of circumstances, where we are able to consider, do I want to take this path, or that path?
  
    - The path you choose is going to be determined by whether or not you are a person who takes responsibility for your self, for your actions, and for the outcomes of your own life.
  
- Creators vs. Victims (10 minutes)
  - Distribute fortune cookies
    - Break open your fortune cookie, and take a look at what your fortune has to say. Feel free to eat your cookie while you mull it

over. Who would like to share their fortune?

- How many of you believe that fortune cookies have the power to predict the future? What about horoscopes, does anyone like to read their horoscope? Anyone ever seen a psychic?
- These are some examples of the more entertaining ways we look outside of ourselves for explanations of why and how things will or do happen to us.
  
- Where are some of the more serious places we look for explanations? (Religion, our parent's advice or judgment, therapists, trusted friends)
  
- While many outside sources may influence us, we must always remember that we, as individuals, are able to choose the course of our lives. Now, are there going to be instances where things happen to you that you truly, genuinely, have no control over? Absolutely. Give me some examples of those. (Serious illness, death of a loved one, natural disasters, crime...) but even in those instances, you will always have the choice of HOW YOU REACT to those situations.
  
- Some people, when faced with unfavorable occurrences, choose to be VICTIMS. How do victims react to challenging circumstances?
  - They blame others
  - They complain
  - They make excuses
  - They repeat the same behavior
  
- Other people choose to be CREATORS. How do creators react to challenging circumstances?
  - They take responsibility for their part
  - They seek solutions
  - They take action
  - They try something new
  
- So, let's learn how to become creators.

- Mastering Creator Language (20 minutes)
  - Our book explains that when we are faced with a challenge – and it could be any of the types of challenges we have just talked about – it almost always starts a conversation in our minds. The book calls this “self talk.”
  - “Self talk” is super important because these conversations we have with ourselves often determine how we are going to react to any given situation.
  - The book explains that there are typically three types of speakers you might have in your mind: The Inner Critic, The Inner Defender, and the Inner Guide.
  - The Inner Critic judges US, telling us we are inadequate, and blaming us for whatever is going wrong:
    - *I will never be able to do this assignment*
    - *I am not smart enough*
    - *I never do the right thing*
  - The Inner Defender judges OTHERS, and makes excuses for our own behavior:
    - *The teacher was too boring – I couldn’t pay attention to the material*
    - *My roommate kept me up too late playing video games*
    - *My boyfriend made me so crabby, I wound up yelling at my little sister*
  - The Inner Guide seeks to make the best of the situation, asking:
    - *What did I do to contribute to this situation?*
    - *How can I make the best of the position I find myself in?*
    - *What can I do to improve these circumstances?*
  - Learning how to identify these different voices – and to change the negative self talk of an Inner Critic or Inner Defender into the talk of the Inner Guide – is incredibly important to your success here in college... and also in life. So, let’s get a little practice at it!

- Play movie trailers, and after each, have groups write one sentence from each of the inner voices that relates to the main character's circumstances.
- Wise Choice Process Activity (20 minutes)
  - So, let's pull together everything we have learned so far. What we now know is that people who take responsibility for themselves listen to their inner guide, and make WISE CHOICES.
  - The book talked in detail about how we can all learn how to make those kinds of proactive, useful choices through something called The Wise Choice Process -- a process that can be used to become a creator.
- Distribute Wise Process activity handout
- Discuss the steps of the Wise Choice Process
  - 1. Identify your present situation
  - 2. Identify what you would LIKE your situation to be
  - 3. Create a list of choices – actions that describe how you can react, right now, to your situation
  - 4. Consider the possible outcome of each choice
  - 5. Determine which choices you will commit to doing
  - 6. Determine how and when you will evaluate the effectiveness of your plan
- Distribute scenarios
  - Working together as a group, I want you to consider the scenario you have been given, and go through the Wise Choice Process. Have one person record your group's answers, and then we will come together and talk about what you've come up with.
- Discuss responses
- Icebreaker activity (15 minutes)
- Housekeeping (5 minutes)

- Next week's assignments: