



# **Effective Communication Skills for the Workplace**



**Assertiveness Training  
for  
Effective Communications  
in the Workplace**

# Let's define behaviors....

- Aggressive
- Submissive/passive
- Assertive
- Passive aggressive

# Aggressive behaviors...

- Aggressive Behavior = Expresses their feelings and wants as though any other view is unreasonable or stupid! Dismiss, ignore or insult the needs, wants and opinions of others. Nonverbally they make themselves large and threatening. Eye contact is fixed and penetrating. Voice is loud, perhaps shouting.

# Aggressiveness is...

## Demonstrated by

- Speaking louder than others;
- Signing bigger and forcefully over others;
- Interrupting others;
- Bullying;
- Using sarcasm;
- Patronizing or intimidating body language.

# Submissive/passive behaviors....

- Passive Behavior = Keep quiet, Don't say what you feel, need, or want. Put yourself down frequently. Apologize when you express yourself. Deny that you disagree with others or feel differently. Nonverbally this person makes themselves small. Look down, hunch over, avoids eye contact, and speaks softly.

# Submissiveness/passiveness is...

- A behavior that implies own contribution is less valuable than others.
- Conflict-avoidant.
- An indication of low self-esteem.

# Passive-Aggressive Behaviour

- **Passive-Aggressive Behaviour =**
  - Failure to meet the expectations of others through deniable means; forgetting, being delayed, and so on. Deny personal responsibility for their actions.

# Passive-Aggressive

This is a very destructive communication style and it's often hard to identify. One indicator is sarcasm, which often leaves you confused about which was the real message ... the funny one or the serious comment. Sarcasm is a safe way to express anger because it catches the other person off guard. Another indicator of passive-aggressive communication is the mixed message. "I love your skirt, it hides your big hips."

# Assertive behaviors ...

An honest direct and appropriate expression of ones feelings, thoughts and beliefs

Assertiveness - the ability to express your thoughts and feelings in a way that clearly states your needs and keeps the lines of communication open with the other.

# Assertiveness is...

- Sidestepping someone else's attempts at manipulation;
- Emotionally detaching oneself from criticism;
- Focusing on real issues;
- Acknowledging and being open about feelings;
- Listening carefully;
- Seeing the other viewpoints;
- Communicating clearly;
- Standing one's ground (respect for self);
- Resolving conflict;
- Letting other people know the consequences of their behavior.

# Test your assertiveness

- Can you express negative feelings about others and their behaviour without using abusive language?
- Are you able to express and exercise your strengths?
- Can you easily recognise and compliment others achievements?

# Test cont

- Do you have the confidence to ask for what is rightfully yours?
- Can you accept criticism without being defensive?
- Do you feel comfortable accepting compliments?
- Are you able to stand up for your rights?

# Test cont

- Are you able to refuse unreasonable demands from friends family and colleagues?
- Can you comfortably start and carry on a conversation by your self?
- Do you ask for assistance when you need?
- The no of 'yeses' determines the degree of assertiveness.

# More elaborate situations to test

**1. You are in a restaurant and order a paneer tikka medium-rare, but it is served to you well-done.**

**You would:**

- a. Accept it without comment because you sometimes like it well-done anyway.
- b. Angrily refuse the tikka and insist on seeing the manager to complain about the poor service.
- c. Call the waiter and indicate you ordered your tikka medium-rare and would like another tikka cooked to your requirements.

**2. You are a customer waiting in queue to be served in your busy lunch hour. Suddenly, a frail old lady steps in line ahead of you and claims that she is in a hurry.**

**You would:**

- a. Let her stay in front of you since she is already in line and it would be rude to speak out.
- b. Pull her out of line and, in a loud and angry manner make her go to the back.
- c. Calmly indicate to her that you are also in a hurry and have queued, then point out where it begins.

**3. After walking out of a store where you purchased some items you discover you were short-changed by Rs3.**

**You would:**

- a. Let it go since you are already out of the store and have no proof you were short-changed. After all it's only Rs3.
- b. Go to the manager and argue that you were cheated by the assistant, then demand the proper change.
- c. Return to the clerk and inform him/her of the error.

# Why be Assertive?

- A pre-requisite for growth, development and success
- Prevents energy leakage
- Creates an awareness of rights and responsibilities towards one another
- Creates a responsible proactive environment

## **Self Esteem leads to Assertiveness – the purpose is to:**

- Maintain respect for self and other's needs and rights.
- Keep communication lines open.
- Achieve goals.
- Engage and develop human relationship.

# HOW DO I BECOME ASSERTIVE?

- START SMALL.
- BE SPECIFIC.
- NARROW YOUR GOALS.
- MAKE MANAGEABLE REQUESTS, NOT ACCUSATIONS.
- GRIPE ABOUT THE BEHAVIOR, NOT THE PERSON.
- HOLD YOUR GROUND.
- CHOOSE YOUR MOMENT.
- DON'T BECOME A COMPETITIVE COMPLAINER.

# A BILL OF ASSERTIVE RIGHTS

1. You have the right to judge your own behaviour, thoughts, and emotions, and to take the responsibility for the initiation and consequences upon yourself.
2. You have the right to offer no reasons or excuses for justifying your behaviour.
3. You have the right to judge if you are responsible for finding solutions to other people's problems.
4. You have the right to change your mind.
5. You have the right to make mistakes-and be responsible for them.
6. You have the right to say, "I don't know."
7. You have the right to be independent of the goodwill of others before coping with them.
8. You have the right to be illogical in making decisions.
9. You have the right to say, "I don't Understand."
10. You have the right to say, "I don't care."

**Every human has certain rights and along with the rights come responsibilities ...**

**Right: To Be Treated With Respect.**

**Responsibility: To Respect The Rights Of Others.**

**Right: To Express Opinions And Feelings.**

**Responsibility: To Welcome The Opinions And Feelings Of Others**

**Right: To Set Your Goals.**

**Responsibility: Help Others To Work To Their Goals And Objectives.**

**Right: To Refuse A Request Or Say 'No'.**

**Responsibility : To Encourage Others To Use Their Time The Way That They Want.**

## **Balance Your Rights and Rights Of Others:**

**If you only think of your rights you are aggressive.  
If you think of only others' rights you are non-assertive.**

**Right: To Ask For What I Want.**

**Responsibility: To Encourage Others To Fulfil Their Needs.**

**Right: To Make Mistakes.**

**Responsibility: To Help Others Learn Through Their  
Mistakes So That They Can Grow.**

**Right: To Get What I Pay For.**

**Responsibility: To Give Best Value And Service For The  
Money And Rewards I Receive From Others**

## **Be assertive in following situations:**

- When you want/ do not want something
- When you are hurt
- When you are happy / angry
- When you want to give feedback
- In the face of criticism
- When you want to negotiate

# Working towards

- What do you think would happen if you asserted yourself in the above situations?
- How do you know that X will happen if you asserted yourself?
- Is this a thought, feeling or picture?
- How does the above stop you from asserting yourself?
- What are you gaining from not being assertive?
- What are you giving up?

# **Assertive Techniques**

- **Signposting**
- **Self-disclosure**
- **Basic assertion**
- **Empathy**
- **Workable compromise**

# Signposting ...

- This means telling the other person which way you are going in the conversation (about to ask a question, summarize, point out something).
- This helps clarify the communication process, and helps to stress that you are communicating openly.

# Self-disclosure ...

Along with signposting, self-disclosure allows you to tell a little bit about yourself such as using...

- “That concerns me ...”
- “I feel uncomfortable when you speak that way ...”

## Basic Assertion...

- Stating clearly, concisely and usually without justification, what you want, what you think or how you feel.
- Use this at the start of a conversation or when your views are in danger of being ignored

# Empathy....

- Letting someone else know that you can and do appreciate their position while taking care not to come across as patronizing or condescending.
- You can do this by saying, “Gee I realize how hard it is for you.....”, “Wow...you have had a rough go at it...”

# Workable compromises ...

- Negative Assertion or Agreement
- Fogging
- Probing
- Broken Record
- Pointing out a discrepancy
- Pointing out a consequence

# Negative Assertion or Agreement

- What is it?

Agreeing with the other person's comment or with the truth in what they have said

- Use it when...

You want to sidestep a barbed comment, show such comments or tactics have no effect on you, refocus the conversation onto a rational level

# Fogging

- What is it?

Reflecting back what the other person has said, possibly paraphrased into more rational/factual or less emotive terms

- Use it when...

You want to resist the temptation to become emotionally involved. You want to show that emotional put-downs have zero impact on you.

# Fogging

- Fogging is based on agreeing with your critic like a fog bank.
- You will begin to look on criticism as feedback and "only one person's opinion."
- You are the ultimate judge of your own behaviour.

# Fogging

- Fogging allows the other person to feel heard.
- By fogging you also exhaust your critic.
- It takes more energy than most people have to continue criticizing someone who won't react.
- Stock phrases to use in fogging are:
  - "That could be true...", "You're probably right...", "Sometimes I think so myself:

# Probing

- What is it?

Asking open questions (why, what, how, etc) to encourage the other person to be more specific

- Use it when...

You want to avoid responding or counter attacking. You want to put the onus on the other person to justify what they said. You want to move the conversation from an emotive to a rational level

# Broken Record

- What is it?

Repeatedly stating what you want, what you think or how you feel

- Use it when...

You need to be persistent. When you want to avoid “playing their game” or “falling into their trap”

# Broken record

An example of this is "I understand and I'm not interested," or "I understand and I still want..." Having a standard phrase protects you from getting side-tracked and helps you stay low-key while repeating your response. often works best in commercial situations. It is also useful in close relationships when combined with other assertiveness skills.

# Pointing out a discrepancy

- What is it?

Drawing someone's attention to a difference in a present and previous story and inviting them to comment on that difference

- Use it when...

You do not want to jump to conclusions and when the situation is not what you expected

# Pointing out a consequence

- What is it?

Drawing someone's attention to the inevitable outcome of the current state of affairs.

- Use it when...

It has to be the last resort and you must draw the line.

# Steps for becoming more assertive

1. Select a support system
2. Evaluate and decide if you need to stop/get rid of destructive behavior
3. Make a decision to be assertive
4. Assess your assertive strengths and weaknesses
5. When and where do you start
6. Decide if something is critical and needs immediate attention
7. Work on your assertive behaviour daily

# Compare

## Avoid exaggerations

"You never are on time!" (Aggressive)

"You were 15 minutes late today. That's the third time this week." (Assertive)

## Use "I" not "You"

"You always interrupt my stories!" (Aggressive)

"I would like to tell my story without being interrupted." (Assertive)

## Express thoughts, feelings, and opinions reflecting ownership

"He makes me angry." (Denies ownership of feelings)

"I get angry when he breaks his promises." (Assertive and owns feelings)

# Compare

- "This is sloppy work." (Aggressive)
- "The pages in this report are out of order." (Assertive)
- "When you come late to the meeting (behavior) I feel angry (feelings) because we have to repeat information the rest of us heard (effect)."

# Conclusion

## **ASSERTIVE people**

- **get better results**
- **live longer and healthier**
- **enjoy rewarding relationships**
- **continually practice being assertive**

# Scenarios

- Time after time Your always late friend is-surprise-nowhere in sight for your 6 o'clock dinner date. By the time she breezes in at 6:45, you're in a sweet hurry to tell her how you feel.
- A dress you've worn only once has started to fray at the seams. You take it back to the store but the salesperson refuses to give you a refund. Your patience, like your dress, is starting to unravel.
- Your higher up turns you down for a promotion you thought was in the bag. You know she's made the wrong choice and-make no mistake about it-you're going to tell her why.

# Questions

