

ASSERTIVENESS

Being Assertive

Being able to state your

WANTS and NEEDS

CLEARLY and CALMLY

Without either finding yourself tongue-tied and apologetic or aggressive and pushy.

To be prepared not to back down if someone disagrees with you.

To be ready to repeat the message if necessary.

(Morrison & Burnard 1992)

When we have to confront another person we tend to feel:

ANXIOUS

Probably because we don't know how the other persons will react.

They might react in a negative way towards us.

What stops us being assertive of confronting?

Usually the fear that the other person might think less of us and as a result:

REJECTS US

Because of this anxiety we tend to react in one of the two characteristic ways

Either we are:

AGGRESSIVE → try to flatten the other person

SLEDGEHAMMER APPROACH

Or:

SUBMISSIVE → never really get to assert ourselves

PUSSYFOOTING APPROACH

BEST APPROACH??

Probably lies somewhere between these two extremes

Aggressiveness-----Assertiveness-----Submissiveness

Midpoint on continuum

Due to reaction of ANXIETY

The level and calm approach of being assertive takes Practice, Nerve and Confidence.

Barriers to Assertiveness:

1. Lack of Practice

2. Fear of Hostility

3. Formative Training

4. Undervaluing Yourself

5. Being Unclear

6. Poor Presentation

(Woodcock and Francis 1982)

How to build up Assertive Skills

Being Aware

1. Overcoming Mental Barriers
2. Managing Your Anxiety
3. Knowing What to Say
4. Knowing How to Say it
5. Acting Appropriately

Major Elements to Assertiveness

INTENT

States own needs and wants, not hurtful to others

BEHAVIOUR

Honest, direct, expressive, non-destructive to others

EFFECTS

The other receives a direct and non-destructive and non hurtful message

SOCIO CULTURAL CONTEXT

Appropriate behaviour regarding environment and culture

(Alberti & Emmons 1982)

ASSERT YOURSELF

Avoid confused emotions with others

Be simply in your dealings

Carry through what you set out to do

Don't put yourself down

Watch out for 'flak' (hostility)

Go out to win

(Woodcock and Francis 1982)

COMPONENTS OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR

- Eye Contact
- Bodily Posture
- Distance
- Gestures
- Facial expression/tone of voice
- Fluency
- Timing
- Listening
- Content

3 Stages of Assertiveness Training (Alberti & Emmons 1982)

Stage 1

Person lacks insight into behaviour and possible needed changes in order to become more assertive

Stage 2

Person begins to realize the various dimensions of assertive behaviour, begins to practice them and temporarily becomes awkward and self-conscious in their use.

Stage 3

Person includes new behaviours in person's everyday presentation of self. Is perceived as more assertive.

These new behaviours require ongoing awareness, and constant practice.

The assertive person is seen to be an adult person able to treat other people reasonably and without childish or belligerent (aggressive) behaviour

Assertive and Nonassertive styles of Communication

(Vaughan & Pellmoor 1989)

Characteristics	Assertive	Nonassertive Style:	
		Unassertive	Aggressive
Attitude towards self and others	I'm OK you're OK	I'm not OK You're OK	I'm OK You're not OK
Decision Making	Makes own decision	Lets others choose for her	Chooses for others
Behaviour in Problem Situations	Direct, fair confrontation	Flees, gives in	Outright, assaultive
Verbal Behaviours	Clear, direct statement of wants, objective words, honest statements of feelings	Apologetic words, hedging, rambling, failing to say what is meant	Loaded words, accusations, superior, haughty words, labeling of other person
Non-Verbal generally	Confident, congruent messages	Actions instead of words (not saying what you feel), looking as though you don't mean what you say	Air of superiority, flippant, sarcastic style
Voice	Firm, warm, confident	Weak, distant, soft, wavering	Tense, shrill, loud, cold, demanding, authoritarian, deadly quiet
Eyes	Warm, in contact, frank	Averted, downcast, teary, pleading	Expressionless, cold, narrowed, staring
Stance	Relaxed	Stooped, excessive leaning for support	Hands on hips, feet apart
Hands	Gestures at appropriate times	Fidgety, clammy	Fists pounding or clenched
Pattern of relating	Puts herself up without putting others down	Puts herself down	Puts herself up by putting others down
Response of others	Mutual respect	Disrespect, guilt, anger, frustration	Hurt, defensiveness, humiliation
Consequences of Style	I win, you win. Strives for 'win-win' or 'no loose' solutions	I lose, you lose. Only succeeds by luck or charity of others	I win, you lose. Beats out others at any cost

Assertive Rights

1. I have the right to ask what I want (recognizing that other people have the right to say No)
2. I have the right to have my own opinions and values and to express them appropriately.
3. I have the right to change my mind.
4. I have the right to make my own decisions and to cope with the consequences.
5. I have the right to decline responsibility for other peoples' problems.
6. I have the right to be successful
7. I have the right to privacy, to be alone and to be independent.
8. I have the right to say 'I don't know' and 'I don't understand'.
9. I have the right to change myself and to be an assertive person.
10. I have the right to say 'No and say 'Yes' without feeling guilty.
11. I have the right to relate to others without being dependent on them for approval.
(Dickson 1982)

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