

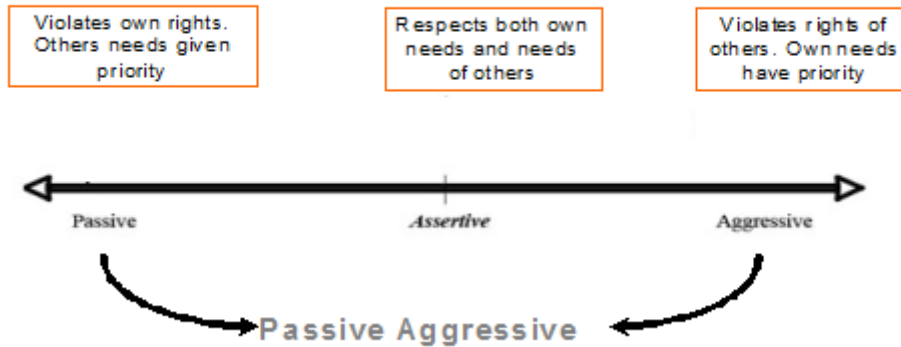
Assertiveness Skills

Definitions of Assertiveness

“The appropriate and honest expression of our views or feelings to another person, while respecting that person’s rights as well.”

“Standing up for your rights and not being taken advantage of while being prepared to negotiate.”

Behavioural Styles



Passive People

- Let people push them around, violates own rights
- Don’t stand up for themselves
- Do as they are told
- Doesn’t express honest feelings, thoughts and beliefs.
- Speak in a soft voice
- Adopt submissive posture
- Can become passive-aggressive: not saying what they mean or refusing to cooperate or help. For instance, saying “yes” when they mean “no” or refusing to speak when asked for an opinion. The words spoken are compliant, but the tone of voice maybe resentful.
- Alternate between being passive and aggressive

Verbal	Long rambling sentences; beat-around-the bush; overly apologise; self-dismissal; self- put downs, quietly angry
Nonverbal: Tone of Voice and body language	Soft, unsteady, hesitant voice; averting gaze; posture slouched; wringing hands; lip biting, slurring, mumbling, anxious voice
Thinking style	“I don’t count”, “I don’t matter, “People will think badly of me or not like me, if I speak up”, “I will not say what I really think”, “I will hurt their feelings if I speak up”, “I will rebel quietly”.

Advantage:

- They rarely experience direct rejection

Disadvantage:

- People take advantage of them
- Carry feelings of anger and resentment
- Breakdown in relationship
- Misunderstanding
- Take on a too big load because can’t say “no

Aggressive People

- Disregard other people’s feelings, lack empathy
- Humiliate, belittle, blame, ridicule, undermine others
- Are sarcastic or mocking, see the worst in others
- Make others feel guilty or in the wrong
- Attack others if they aren’t getting their own way
- Use name calling or make harsh criticisms
- Use absolutes such as “always”, “never”, “should”
- Misinterpret, twist, what is said or done
- Tend to exhibit aggressive behaviour: fighting, accusing, threatening, harsh tone of voice.
- Lack courtesy, not polite, can be rude, insensitive
- Can seek to punish or retaliate
- Expresses thoughts, feelings and beliefs in a manner that is hurtful, confronting, threatening, patronising
- Violates the rights of others

Verbal	Tone harsh and angry; use of threats and put downs, boastfulness, blame, express opinions as fact, sarcastic.
Nonverbal: Tone of Voice and Body language	Loud voice, staring, pointing, crossed arms, sneering, scowling, speak with contempt, interrupt, intruding into the other person’s space, not listening, rigid, inflexible, non-negotiable
Thinking style	“I care only about my situation”, “My way or no way!”, “I know better”, “They are wrong and I am right”, “They are attacking me”, “I want total control”, “I’ll teach them...!”

Advantage:

- People don’t push them around

Disadvantage:

- People do not want to be around them, because they are unpleasant.
- They alienate others around them
- They are lonely

Assertive People

- Stand up for themselves
- Express their views and feeling clearly, in a calm, appropriate way
- Listen effectively
- Don't let others take advantage of them unduly
- Are open to negotiation and compromise
- Are easy to understand, seek to understand others and can be pleasant
- Communicate in an open, honest manner without violating the rights of others

Verbal	Use "I" statements; paraphrase, listen, reflect, seek different perspectives, willing to explore other solutions
Nonverbal: Tone of Voice and Body language	Firm, relaxed voice; few hesitations; not over-loud or quiet, receptive listening; good eye contact; erect open body stance, calm posture
Thinking style	"I won't allow you to take advantage of me and I won't attack you for being who you are", "We are both worthwhile human beings, equal but different."

Advantages:

- They often get what they want, without upsetting others
- Increased self-respect, worth and personal control
- Imply that they know what they want
- Indicate their needs are as important as others
- Allow others to know where they stand
- Create respect in others for their honesty & forthrightness

Disadvantages

- Cannot always be assertive and sometimes not appropriate especially when dealing with someone who is not rational or is unduly angry. In these situations assertiveness can inflame the situation.

Why Assertiveness?

Being Unassertive – THE COSTS?



Passive behaviour

- ❖ Loss of self esteem
- ❖ Build up of stress and anger, bitterness and resentment
- ❖ Others keep making unreasonable demands on you
- ❖ Get stuck in relationships that are not healthy
- ❖ Feeling of being a victim, used
- ❖ Alternate between passive and aggressive
- ❖ Become manipulative: get our way indirectly; withdraw, close down, quietly object, do not cooperate, resist in non-overt ways.
- ❖ Feeling disconnected, misunderstood, disengaged from others



Aggressive behaviour

- ❖ Creates enemies and resentment in others
- ❖ Unstable relationships
- ❖ Create feelings of guilt and shame in others
- ❖ Decreased confidence and self esteem
- ❖ Feeling disconnected, misunderstood and disengaged from others

Being Assertive – THE BENEFITS?



Assertive behaviour

- ❖ Enhances self esteem
- ❖ Enjoy relationships
- ❖ Greater chance of getting what you want out of life
- ❖ Resentment doesn't build up
- ❖ Can understand, listen and love others more freely
- ❖ Feeling connected, understood and engaged with others

Myths about Assertiveness

- Myth 1 • "Assertiveness is basically the same as being aggressive".
- Myth 2 • "If I am assertive, I will get what I want, all the time".
- Myth 3 • "If I am assertive, I have to be assertive in every situation".

Negative Feelings Assertion

How to express your negative feelings to another person

Use the following formula when making assertive statements:

- I feel... (name emotion)
- When you... (specify behaviour, time and place)
- Because... (detail direct consequence on you)
- I'd like you to do this...I would prefer to do this...Make positive request! Be specific! (Making positive requests)

Example if you are a manager you can say to an employee: *"I get annoyed when you get here late, because it puts me and others off our schedule. I would like to work out a way for you to get here on time. For the next meeting on Wednesday can you be punctual please".*

Warning! Remember the Nonverbal: non-verbal is 90% of your message!

Assertive Body Language Involves...

- looking directly at the person you are talking to
- keep your voice calm
- open posture e.g.
 - don't cross your arms
 - stand straight
 - face the person directly
- stand your ground: don't back away
- stay calm: avoid being overly anxious or angry in your tone of voice or manners

Process for Asserting Your Message



- 1. Preparation for a specific event**
 - What are your intentions? What do you want to say? Write it down, if you like, be short, specific and to the point.
- 2. Sending the message**
 - Respectful but firm - body language and tone of voice
- 3. Silence**
 - Wait - receive the message negative or positive
- 4. Active listening to the other person's response**
 - Check understanding, practice active listening
- 5. Recycling Steps 2 through 4 as often as necessary**
 - Continue this until the person does not push back
- 6. Focusing on common intentions, views and seeking a win-win solution**
 - Both parties find a way to agree (even if agree to disagree)

Saying "No" Assertively

- Saying "no" can be difficult for a lot of people
- Saying "yes" when we really mean "no" can lead to stress, resentment, anger and future passive-aggressive behaviours

Why is it Hard to Say “No”?

Unhelpful beliefs:

- Saying “no” is unkind, uncaring and selfish
- Saying “no” will hurt and upset others and make them feel rejected
- If I say “no” to somebody they won’t like me anymore or think less of me
- I should always try to please others and be helpful

Tips for Saying “No”

- Be straightforward, calm and honest but not rude
- Keep it brief, talk slowly
- Be polite – say something like “thank you for asking...”
- Tell the person if you are finding it difficult
- Avoid unduly apologising or give elaborate reasons for saying “no”.
- When saying “no” take responsibility for it, (don’t unduly blame other people or events)

Ways of Saying “No”



- **The Direct “no”**
 - Effective with sales people
- **The Reflecting “no”**
 - Acknowledge the content and feeling of the request and then add your assertive refusal “...but I cannot do it.”
- **The Reasoned “no”**
 - Give a brief, specific and genuine reason for why you are saying no
- **The Raincheck “no”**
 - A way of saying “no” to the request at the present moment but leaves room for saying “yes” in the future....
- **The Enquiring “no”**
 - A way of opening up the request to see if there is another way it could be met
- **The Broken Record “no”**
 - Repeat the simple statement of refusal over and over again

Receiving Feedback

Ask for feedback (be proactive)

Listen to feedback

Don’t discount the positive

Don’t immediately argue or reject it

Spend time clarifying and understanding

Once received, it belongs to you (to use or reject)

Check it out with others

Thank the person for giving you feedback

- Even when you ask for it, it may not be forthcoming. You have to create an appropriate environment for people to feel comfortable giving feedback. Mostly built around trust.
- Being aware of your strengths and building on them, is just as important as being aware of your weaknesses.
- Although you may want to defend your position, understanding the feedback you are being given may assist your relationship
- By understanding the feedback, you are in a much better position to decide what to do with it (but remember what it might have taken for the person to give you the feedback)
- You have a choice with feedback, you can address it if necessary or discount it
- The only way of determining if the feedback is isolated or held by others, is to check it out with others. But remember their perception may not be your reality.
- No matter how you see it, their perception is their reality. The only way of changing this is to change your behavior or explain yourself so they may change their perception.
- Whether you wanted to hear it or not, it probably took courage for the person to give you feedback. Acknowledge this effort. And for those who believe they don’t get enough feedback, this is one way of ensuring you get more.



“Nine out of 10 people disagree with my idea, which sends a very clear message — nine out of 10 people are idiots!”

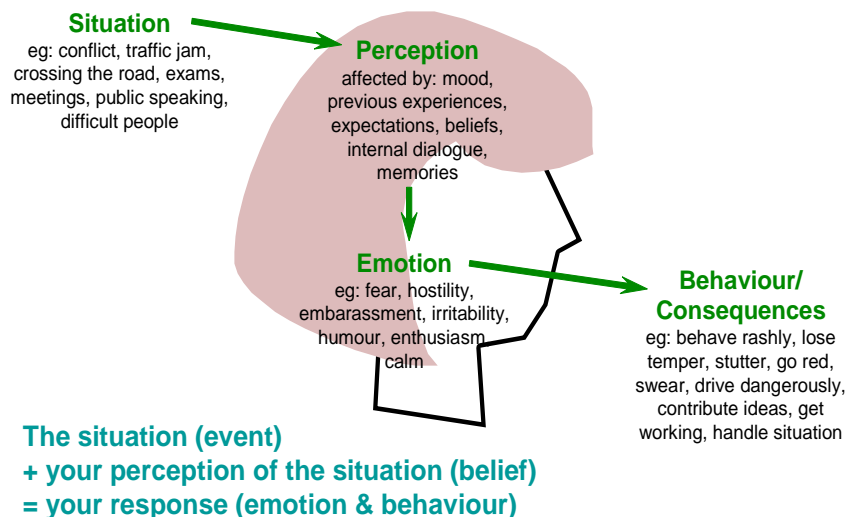
Tips on Taking Criticism

- Watch out for early signals - listen and be aware of criticism and act upon it.
- Listen out for your emotional triggers - be aware of your triggers and try to separate them from the content of the criticism.
- Repeat the feedback - show you understand the criticism, and that you are listening.
- Ask for specific examples of the issues(s) in question and clarification(When? Where? How?).
- Respond to the criticism - by accepting valid points and openly discussing other concerns

Perception=Self Talk

Perception= Self-Talk: what we say to ourselves about situations and what we experience
We can change our feelings by changing our self-talks.

Our perceptions are in our control



Changing Your Self-talk/Thinking

More helpful beliefs:

- ❖ Other people have the right to ask and I have the right to refuse
- ❖ When you say “no” you are refusing a request, not rejecting the person

Upsetting Self Talk

- X How rude!!!
- X How unfair!
- X I can't stand this!
- X Why don't you just get lost, you idiot!
- X What did I do to deserve this?
- X They are not going to get away with this!
- X Oh, my God, they are going to put in a complaint!
- X Why does this person hate me?
- X This is so wrong!

Calming Self Talk

- ✓ This person needs help; they are emotional(anxious-angry)
- ✓ I choose not to take this personally
- ✓ This says more about them than about me
- ✓ They are upsetting themselves
- ✓ I won't let myself be sucked in to their issues
- ✓ I have dealt with difficult situations before
- ✓ I can do this
- ✓ I am getting better at this
- ✓ I will keep practicing and find my way to be assertive



Moving on from Difficult Interactions

“Feeling overly guilty does not help, instead, I can think how I can correct my ways and what I can do better next time. I focus on the solution”

- Take the time to breathe out, use abdominal breathing with long exhale: use this to control your emotions and feel re-energised
- If necessary, take time-out for a short-time, go for a walk, time to relax and explore perspectives
- Review the things that went well
- Acknowledge your emotions and own them. What am I unhappy about?
- Discuss what happened with somebody else before you leave work
- Refer to managers, policies and procedures
- Remember that you have the power to change your feelings by changing your self-talks
- Why did the other person react that way? Where they feeling stressed or hurt in some way.
- What can I do differently next time?
- What is the other way of seeing this?
- What else can I say to myself about this that would be pointing to a solution and bring peace?
- How would someone else think about this situation?
- Am I blaming others or myself unduly for the way it turned out? What did I do well?
- Can I talk to myself as a good friend? What would I say to a good friend in a similar situation here? What would a good friend say to me about this?
- What would I say and do that would be compassionate to myself and the other person in that situation?

This handout was written by Marie Bloomfield, Clinical Psychologist, M. Psychol., MAPS. July 2019.

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