

ASSERTIVENESS

BASIC THEORY:

Assertiveness training teaches verbal and behavioral skills which an individual can use to communicate more effectively and more often. Many people have difficulty in sharing very positive and/or very negative feelings and thoughts. They experience anxious feelings as a result. The basic premise of assertion is that it's alright to get one's needs met. The goal is to enable one to take care of his/her needs without infringing upon the rights of others.

Behavior can be seen on a continuum from passive to assertive to aggressive. The passive person denies his rights by hiding feelings and often feels hurt and depressed as a result. Seldom are one's desired goals achieved. At the other end of the continuum, the aggressive person frequently will achieve goals, but usually at the other's expense. This behavior is often a result of letting a situation build up until it explodes and often the person experiences feelings of guilt. Passive and aggressive people do not feel very good about themselves either, because they've denied their own needs or those of others. In contrast, the assertive person has a good self-image. In being assertive, one is able to express feelings directly and honestly without imposing one's will on others. Frequently, the assertive person achieves desired goals, but the greatest satisfaction comes from knowing one has communicated one's needs and greatly increased the probability that these needs will be heard by others.

NOTES ON ASSERTIVENESS:

- I have a right to be my own judge.
- This is my life, and what happens in it is up to me.
- Being assertive does not always get me what I want.
- I am responsible for me - my feelings, thoughts and actions.
- When I am assertive, I'm not out to win or lose - my intention is to get my needs met; not at your expense or mine.
- I have a right to accept or reject any ideas - even these.
- I have a right to make mistakes and be responsible for them.
- Rule number 1 in assertion - PERSISTENCE!
- It is important to me to anticipate possible consequences, then choose to be passive, assertive or aggressive
- I know I've not been assertive enough when I've told a third party about it.
- It's okay for me to be selfish. No one else knows me as well as I do. I need to look out for me
- No one can manipulate my emotions or behavior unless I allow it to happen.
- There are situations in which I decided for me that it is best not to be assertive.
- I have a right to be passive, assertive or aggressive.
- Most difficult to express are feelings of caring, love and constructive anger.
- Before I attempt to tell you, it's important for me to define what I need, I want, I feel.
- Feelings are - just are - not good or bad - just are. I will choose how to act and accept responsibility for what I do.
- Start asserting in situations that have a high probability of succeeding.

THE RIGHTS OF A FREE ADULT

1. To be treated with courtesy and respect as an equal and responsible member of our society
2. To develop my talents and potentialities
3. To independent opinion
4. To my feelings - whether they're love and affection or anger
5. To express my feeling and opinions
6. To make mistakes
7. To change my mind
8. To ask for information
9. To make requests or refuse them without justifying myself
10. To state how I do or do not intend to behave
11. To answer those questions I wish to answer and to refuse to answer the others
12. To decide how to spend or dispose of my time, money or other personal possessions
13. To be responsible for my own feelings and behavior only

ASSERTIVENESS TECHNIQUES

I-MESSAGES

This is probably the most useful and versatile assertion. The I-message is direct, honest, concerns self, and describes behavior without putting a value on it. It also translates feelings into verbal messages. When using it be non-evaluative and describe the behavior as specifically as possible. If desired, a statement giving information on correcting the situation may be added. It takes the following form:

.."I feel (emotion) when (describe behavior or situation) and I would like...()."

Examples: 1) Your mother is visiting and begins to berate you about your dirty house.

wrong way: "You're henpecking drives me nuts. If you don't like it, leave."

right way: "I feel irritated when you criticize the way I keep my house. I would like you to stop so I can enjoy your company more."

NON-VERBAL ASSERTION

Non-verbal behavior usually effects the potency of assertive statements. It can act to either enhance or cancel out the verbal message. Types of behavior helpful to enhance assertion:

1. eye contact
2. good posture
3. facial expressions showing emotion
4. voice is clear, animated and of moderate loudness

Examples of inconsistent messages:

1. smiling when saying "I get angry when you're not on time."

EMPATHETIC ASSERTION

This type of assertion enhances communication by being sensitive to the other person, while at the same time, making your own needs and wants known. By practicing this, it insures your understanding of the other person and reduces the likelihood of an aggressive response. The form this response takes is:

Statement of understanding + but/and + I-statement

Example: "Billy, I know that this is hard for you to understand and accept, but I can't let you go to the hockey game since you're still sick"

ASSERTIVENESS INVENTORY

Code:

- 1 - I am rarely or never assertive
- 2 - I am sometimes assertive but not usually
- 3 - I am usually assertive

In these situations:

Home _____
Career _____
School _____
Socially _____
Church _____

In expressing these feelings:

Angry _____
Sad _____
Happy _____
Loving _____
Fear _____
Self-doubt _____
Positive self-statements _____

With these types of people:

Intimates _____
Strangers _____
Aggressive _____
Angry _____
Timid _____
Men _____
Women _____
Authority Figures _____
Children _____

Other areas:

Making requests _____
Saying no _____
Giving compliments _____
Receiving compliments _____
Giving criticism _____
Receiving criticism _____
Making Conversation _____
Sexuality _____

Specific personal assertiveness goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

ASSERTION TECHNIQUES

ESCALATING ASSERTION

This involves beginning with a minimally assertive response, with the least possibility of negative consequences, and then increasing the firmness of the assertion when needs are not met. Usually used in cases when personal rights are violated. Escalating assertions may take the following form:

1. Empathetic assertion - firm basic assertion
2. Statement of preference - outright refusal

Example: a woman is sitting alone in a bar and is approached by a man who repeatedly offers to buy her a drink -

1. "Thank you for offering but I prefer to finish my drink alone."
2. "No thank you! I want to be left alone."
3. "This is the last time I'm going to tell you, I want to be left alone. Now please leave."

CONFRONTIVE ASSERTION

This type of assertion is usually used when what a person does, conflicts with what he says. The entire assertion is said in a non-evaluative, matter-of-fact way. It takes the following form:

Statement of what was supposed to be done + statement of what was actually done + statement of what you want or need

Example: a person misses a luncheon engagement without leaving word -
"We were supposed to have lunch today, but you never arrived. In the future I would like to know if you can't make it beforehand."

***Caution: The following type of assertion should be a last resort as it usually inhibits communication and promotes defensiveness. It should not be used with friends or relatives.

BROKEN RECORD

If a person does not appear to be listening to you and responds with excuses or evasiveness such as salesmen or children, this technique proves useful. It takes the form of a statement or assertion being repeated over and over, verbatim, until the person acknowledges. Usually it may follow an escalating assertion which proves useless.

Examples:

- "I don't want any magazines.... I don't want any magazines...."
- "I want you to go to bed.... I want you to go to bed...."

ASSERTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Someone jumps ahead of you and takes the parking space you were obviously waiting for.
 - a. You go find another space.
 - b. You shout obscenities.
 - c. You tell the person that you were first and would like to have the space.
2. A friend just gave you a book you've been wanting but couldn't afford to buy.
 - a. You say thanks and inform your friend of another book you really want.
 - b. You say, "Thanks, I appreciate that."
 - c. You blush and say, "You shouldn't have done that."
3. Your food at a restaurant is very displeasing to you.
 - a. You ask the waiter/ess to correct your order.
 - b. You eat it anyway.
 - c. You tell the waiter/ess it is terrible and you refuse to pay.
4. your superior tells you your work is very unsatisfactory.
 - a. You say, "I quit!"
 - b. You gulp and say, "I'll try harder."
 - c. You ask, "What is it that is unsatisfactory?"
5. Merchandise you just bought is defective.
 - a. You take it back and ask for a new one.
 - b. You keep the faulty merchandise.
 - c. You take it back and let them know that you and your friends will not patronize their store ever again.
6. The neighbor's dog is barking for the third straight night in a row, and again you can't get to sleep.
 - a. You call the police.
 - b. You talk to your neighbor and tell him/her how the dog is affecting you.
 - c. You stuff cotton in your ears and put a pillow over your head.
7. You are stuck with a long-winded person at a party.
 - a. You continue to listen.
 - b. You say, "Excuse me, I'd like to talk with others here."
 - c. You leave abruptly.
8. You're loaded with work, and your boss comes over with a new project for you to design and have ready tomorrow.
 - a. You say, "No way! I've got enough to do."

- b. You explain your pressures and the reasons you think that the project can wait.
 - c. You let everything else go and work on the new project.
9. You are working with a co-leader, and your partner consistently takes over and runs the whole thing.
- a. You tell your partner what you see happening and say you'd like a more equal share of the responsibility.
 - b. You know that your partner is better so you let him/her continue.
 - c. You say, "You want the whole show so you can have it, Goodbye!"
10. While talking with someone you . . .
- a. look away most of the time.
 - b. dart back and forth looking at the person and elsewhere.
 - c. maintain a rather steady eye contact.
11. It is mealtime at home, and you've tried for the fifth time to say something when you are interrupted again.
- a. You say to yourself, "I'm not going to try again, it's not very important anyway."
 - b. You say, "I've tried to say something several times and have been cut off. I'd like to finish without being interrupted."
 - c. You shout, "What a bunch of rude people."
12. While involved in a meeting or discussion . . .
- a. you tend to dominate the conversation.
 - b. you offer your views and listen to others.
 - c. you say very little.
13. You are in an elevator where someone is smoking, and the smoke is getting to you.
- a. You cover your nose and mouth and concentrate on when the elevator will reach your floor.
 - b. You say, "People die from other people's smoke."
 - c. You say the smoke is really bothering you, and you ask them to put their cigarette out.
14. Someone just jumped in line ahead of you.
- a. You say, "Get out of my way, I was here first!"
 - b. You say, "I don't think you realize I was here before you. You are in my place."
 - c. You do/say nothing.
15. You showed a friend a painting you have just finished and like. Your friend tells you they don't like it.
- a. You say, "Thanks, I appreciate you telling me how you see it."
 - b. You say, "Yeah, it isn't very good is it?"
 - c. You say, "Thanks, a hell of a friend you are."

16. Your aunt just told you she is coming to spend next week with you. You don't have much planned yet you prefer not to spend too much time with her.
 - a. You say, "O.K., see you next week."
 - b. You say, "I'm very busy next week and the next week too."
 - c. You say, "I'm glad you want to visit me; however, next week is not the best time for me. Let's see if we can work out a time that is best for both of us."
17. When meeting someone new . . .
 - a. You are first to introduce yourself and ask who they are.
 - b. You wait for them to introduce themselves.
 - c. You introduce yourself and then proceed for several minutes telling them all about yourself; you barely get their names and then you're off meeting someone else.
18. Your budget is really tight, and you've been asked again to donate again to a "worthy cause."
 - a. You say, "Man, you people keep ripping me off!"
 - b. You donate anyway.
 - c. You say, "No, I will not be able to donate this time."
19. You have a headache and someone in the house has the stereo loud.
 - a. You say, "Turn that damn thing down."
 - b. You say nothing.
 - c. You say, "I have a headache, I'd like to turn this down."
20. You want to see a new movie. You go to your date/mate and say . . .
 - a. "I'd like to see _____, I'd like to see it with you, would you like to go?"
 - b. "Would you like to see a movie?"
 - c. "Hey, there's a new movie in town - Let's go."

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOR STYLES

CHARACTERISTICS	PASSIVE	ASSERTIVE	AGGRESSIVE
<p>YOUR OWN FEELINGS IN THE EXCHANGE</p>	<p>Allow others to choose for you. Emotionally dishonest. Indirect, self-denying, inhibited, Win-Lose situation which you lose. If you do get your own way, it is indirect.</p>	<p>Choose for self. Appropriately honest. Direct, self-respecting, self-expressing, straightforward. Convert Win-Lose to Win-Win.</p>	<p>Choose for others. Inappropriately honest (tactless). Direct, self-enhancing. Self-expressive, derogatory. Win-Lose situation which you win.</p>
<p>OTHERS' FEELINGS IN THE EXCHANGE</p>	<p>Anxious, ignored, helpless, manipulated. Angry at self and/or other.</p>	<p>Confident, self-respecting, goal-oriented, valued. Later: accomplished.</p>	<p>Righteous, superior, depreciatory, controlling. Later: possibly guilty.</p>
<p>OTHERS' VIEW OF YOU IN THE EXCHANGE</p>	<p>Guilty or superior. Frustrated with you.</p>	<p>Valued, respected.</p>	<p>Humiliated, defensive, resentful, hurt.</p>
<p>OUTCOME</p>	<p>Lack of respect. Distrust. Can be considered a push-over. Do not know where you stand.</p>	<p>Respect, trust, know where you stand.</p>	<p>Vengeful, angry, distrust, fear.</p>
<p>UNDERLYING BELIEF SYSTEM</p>	<p>Others achieve their goals at your expense. Your rights violated.</p> <p>I should never make anyone uncomfortable or displeasedexcept myself.</p>	<p>Outcome determined by above-board negotiation. Yours and others' rights respected.</p> <p>I have a responsibility to protect my own rights, and I respect others but not necessarily their behavior.</p>	<p>You achieve your goal at other's expense. Your rights upheld; others violated.</p> <p>I have to put others down in order to protect myself.</p>