

Becoming More Assertive

1st February 2022, Henrietta Cameron & Laura Smith-Gulliver

Today

- Understand what assertive communication is
- Explore why and how people struggle to be assertive
- Debunk assertiveness myths
- Learn and practice how to use assertive communication

Assertion

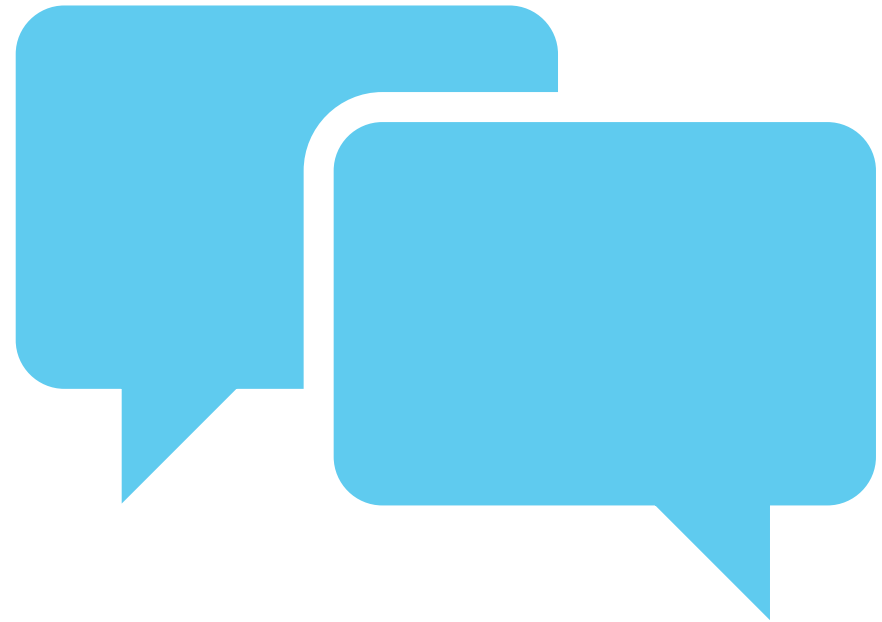
- ▶ Standing up for your own rights in such a way that you do not violate another person's rights
- ▶ Expressing your needs, wants, opinions, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways

The aim of assertion is to meet the needs of both parties

Activity/Discussion

**In pairs or groups
consider:**

Why do some
people struggle
with assertive
communication?



Non-Assertion

- ▶ Failing to stand up for your rights or doing so in such a way that others can easily disregard them
- ▶ Expressing your needs, wants, opinions, feelings and beliefs in apologetic, diffident or self-effacing ways
- ▶ Failing to express honestly your needs, wants, opinions, feelings and beliefs

The aim of non-assertion is to avoid conflict and to please others

Aggression

- ▶ Standing up for your own rights, but doing so in such a way that you violate the rights of the other people
- ▶ Ignoring or dismissing the needs, wants, opinions, feelings or beliefs of others
- ▶ Expressing your own needs, wants and opinions (which may be honest or dishonest) in inappropriate ways

The aim of aggression is to win, if necessary at the expense of others

Low Level vs High Level Aggression

Low level aggression

- ▶ Expresses annoyance/hostility without confronting the issue
- ▶ Often involves trying to control or manipulate others using sarcasm, silence or excessive flattery

High level aggression

- ▶ Confronts issue and expresses annoyance/hostility
- ▶ Ignores the views and feelings of others either intentionally or by default

Assertion

**I'm OK,
You're OK**

Non Assertion

**I'm Not OK,
You're OK**

Aggression

**I'm OK,
You're Not OK**

Often we are different in different contexts

EQUATE

Activity/Discussion

- ▶ What would the person be saying?
- ▶ What language would they use?
- ▶ How would they sound?
- ▶ Facial expression?
- ▶ Eye contact?
- ▶ Body movements/position?

Room 1

What does assertive behaviour look like and sound like?

Room 2

What does passive (non-assertive) behaviour look and sound like?

Room 3

What does aggressive behaviour look and sound like?

Assertiveness Myth #1

you are either
assertive
or you are not

Assertiveness Myth #2

Assertiveness
is the basically
same as being
aggressive

Assertiveness Myth #3

'If I'm assertive
I'll get what I
want'

Where do these myths come from?

**What are the outcomes and
consequences of them?**

Assertive Communication: 4 steps

1. Acknowledge the other person's point of view
2. However...state the behaviour/situation you have an issue with
3. State the impact this has
4. Say what you'd like to be different

Assertive Communication: Example

1. I appreciate that you are under a lot of pressure to meet the project deadline
2. However, when you swear in the team meetings
3. I feel uncomfortable and embarrassed
4. Please could you not do this in the future

Personal Practice

- ▶ Think of a situation where you'd like to be more assertive, or use some of the scenarios given
- ▶ Working with a partner develop the assertive response using the 4 steps
- ▶ Role play this situation with your partner

Assertive communicators will:

- ▶ state needs, wants and feelings clearly, appropriately, and respectfully
- ▶ use "I" statements
- ▶ communicate respect for others
- ▶ listen well without interrupting
- ▶ feel in control of self
- ▶ have good eye contact
- ▶ speak in a calm and clear tone of voice
- ▶ have a relaxed body posture
- ▶ feel connected to others
- ▶ feel competent and in control
- ▶ not allow others to abuse or manipulate them
- ▶ stand up for their rights

Assertive communicators will say:

- ▶ "We are equally entitled to express ourselves respectfully to one another."
- ▶ "I am confident about who I am."
- ▶ "I realize I have choices in my life and I consider my options."
- ▶ "I speak clearly, honestly, and to the point."
- ▶ "I can't control others but I can control myself."
- ▶ "I place a high priority on having my rights respected."
- ▶ "I am responsible for getting my needs met in a respectful manner."
- ▶ "I respect the rights of others."
- ▶ "Nobody owes me anything unless they've agreed to give it to me."
- ▶ "I'm 100% responsible for my own happiness."

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