Assertion Training

TI 005 - Thematic

By

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# Table of Contents

*Introduction* .................................................. 1

*Session I* ...................................................... 3

*Session II* ...................................................... 7

*Session III* .................................................... 10

*Session IV* ..................................................... 12

*List of Handouts* ............................................... 13

  Handout 1: Distinction Between Assertion, Non-Assertion and Aggression  14

  Handout #2: A comparison of Non-Assertive, Assertive and Aggressive Behavior  21

  Handout #3: Assertion Hierarchy .................................. 22

  Handout #4: Components of Assertive Behavior .................. 23

  Handout #5: Assertion in Relation to Other Social Skills .......... 24

  Handout #6: Behavior Checklist—Non-Verbal Behavior ............. 28
Assertion Training TI 005

Introduction

Assertive behavior is not only a highly desirable social behavior, it is a popular topic in the world of psychological education. The reasons for the popularity of the assertive behavior movement are not obscure. It is a highly effective interpersonal behavior, one that when exercised appropriately increases personal power. The following workshop format is one of the many effective approaches to teaching this behavior to adults.

Goals

1. To aid participants in developing verbal and behavioral assertive skills.
2. To create a functional awareness of the distinctions between aggressive, assertive and non-assertive behavior.
3. To facilitate individual awareness of assertive rights and values.
4. To provide a supportive environment for reality testing newly learned behaviors.

Group Design

The workshop is designed to provide an initial intensive experience in the development of assertive verbal and behavioral skills. The presented format consists of four weekly sessions of 1 1/2 hours. The content of these sessions is easily adaptable to other formats.

The workshop may be used equally well with all male, all female or sexually mixed groups. It is of crucial importance that the facilitators be strong assertive role models and represent both sexes.

In the past the authors have not conducted pre-group screenings. The first session has a strong didactic and introductory tone. Ground rules, expectations, and format are explained in detail. An explicit contract is made with the group that attendance at the second session will constitute a commitment to the group and its goals. Also ample time is provided for each person to introduce him- or herself and express their expectations for the experience. This allows the facilitators to assess any individuals for whom the workshop is inappropriate.
Contact with these individuals may be made individually before the second session.

The workshop begins by showing videotaped examples demonstrating non-assertive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors. These vignettes can be prepared by the leaders beforehand, if they have a basic knowledge of video production. They do not have to be a professional quality production. Thereafter, videotaping the participants as they practice assertive behavioral skills can be a useful approach, but it is not essential.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the workshop is based upon pre- and post-administration of the Assertiveness Inventory (Wolfe & Lazarus, 1966) and a self-report questionnaire mailed to each participant two weeks after the last session of the workshop. There are numerous inventories that would be as applicable as Wolfe and Lazarus’ inventory (for example, Rathus, 1973; Gambill & Rickey, 1975; Galassi, et al, 1974).

Materials

The workshop involves a fair amount of didactic input. The first four sessions begin with mini-lectures. All of the lecture material is duplicated onto handouts and distributed at the end of each session. Also worksheets are utilized in an attempt to aid each individual in focusing on their assertive problem areas.

Developing effective behavioral skills is greatly facilitated by the use of videotape equipment. Use of the equipment from the first session allows participants on-going direct feedback about their behavior. Confrontation of self-defeating and non-productive behaviors is far easier when they may be reflected via an “objective” source. Use of the video equipment begins at a very non-threatening level. Initial exposure begins with the viewing of a tape of vignettes demonstrating non-assertive, aggressive and assertive behaviors. The tape used was made by amateurs, with the co-facilitators appearing among the role players. If video equipment is not available, there are several commercial films for sale or rent that would meet many of the same needs (see The American Personnel and Guidance Association’s film catalog).
Session I

Objectives

1. To establish a realistic set of expectations for the experience.

2. To explain the ground rules for group participation and explain the importance and meaning of each.

3. To facilitate the beginning of group identification and cohesiveness.

4. To establish a warm supportive atmosphere in the group.

5. To create a functional awareness of the distinctions between assertive, non-assertive and aggressive.

6. To facilitate an understanding of the relationship between anxiety and assertive behavior.

Procedure

1. Introduction to Group

Leaders introduce themselves and share their reasons for running the group.

Leaders describe format of group, use of role-playing, video equipment, homework assignments, and the importance of each.

Ground rules for group participation are given. These include:

   a. regular attendance

   b. beginning on time

   c. all group members are participants and are responsible for the success of the experience

   d. confidentiality is strictly required

Leaders explain that this session is to serve as an introduction to the workshop. Participants are encouraged to consider these rules. Attendance at the second session will serve as an explicit commitment to follow the rules of the group.
2. Introduction of Participants

Participants are told to pair up with someone they don’t know and introduce themselves. They are asked to focus on their reasons for joining this group and any special concerns or needs they may have.

After about five minutes the leaders select one dyad and ask the partners to introduce each other. (It can be helpful to ask each person if there is anything they would like to add to their partner’s introduction.) Continue until each dyad has completed their introductions.

3. Mini-Lecture on Distinctions

Leaders begin by providing a framework for types of interpersonal relationships. Most relationships may be categorized into the following:

- Impersonal/Commercial Relationships
- Work/Social/School Relationships
- Intimate Relationships

**Impersonal/Commercial Relationships** are typically of very short duration and involve the exchange of services or materials. Usually the people in this category are primarily important in that they *do something for us, perform a service for us*.

The **Work/Social/School Category** is typically the largest one, covering a wide range of relationships. Despite the range, these relationships do have an ongoing nature and *usually involve some concern for the feelings of the people* involved. Occasionally relationships in this category involve the issue of power (employer/employee).

**Intimate relationships** are those that *involve the most sharing and caring* and are crucial to our happiness. Because assertive problems are almost always situation-specific, group participants usually have problems in only one or two of the categories. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their own interpersonal relationships as the leaders explain the distinctions between *non-assertive, aggressive* and *assertive* behavior.

Leaders explain the differences between non-assertive, aggressive and assertive behavior (See Handout #1 for detailed information).
Emphasis is placed on ways to distinguish these three behaviors by attending to non-verbal and verbal behavior.

Leaders also repeat the concept that assertive behavior problems are virtually always situation-specific; therefore participants will probably find their assertive problems focused in one area.

Leaders attempt to elicit questions, comments or reactions from the participants.

4. Present and Discuss Prepared Videotape

Leaders introduce prepared videotaped vignettes. The leaders’ tape consists of three role-plays representing the three categories of relationships: Impersonal/Commercial, Work/Social/School, and Intimate.

Each role-play is repeated three times, illustrating non-assertive, aggressive and assertive ways of responding.

Leaders instruct participants to watch for the differences in non-verbal cues, verbal cues, and implicit attitudes or values. Participants are encouraged to watch critically for anything that could be done better and anything they feel is particularly effective.

The first vignette is played and the leaders facilitate a discussion of both the role-play itself and the underlying issues or “rights.”

Then the second and third vignettes are played and discussed.

5. Anxiety and SUDS (Subjective Units of Distress)

Leaders provide a brief description of the relationship of anxiety to a lack of assertive behavior. Different methods of coping with anxiety are given a cursory description. Systematic desensitization, behavioral rehearsal, small step risk-taking patterns, and cognitive restructuring are among those described.

Leaders explain SUDS (subjective units of distress). We usually provide the guideline that 0–20 SUDS represents virtually no anxiety; 50–80 SUDS is an uncomfortable amount of anxiety, accompanied by physical symptoms (knot in stomach); and 80–100 SUDS is absolute out-of-control panic.
6. Sharing by Participants

Leaders request that the participants share what assertive problems they are interested in working on and the category or categories of relationships that cause them the most trouble.

7. Leaders distribute the Handouts

- Handout 1: Distinction Between Assertion, Non-Assertion and Aggression
- Handout 2: A Comparison of Non-Assertive, Assertive, and Aggressive Behavior
- Handout 3: Assertion Hierarchy
- Handout 4: Components of Assertive Behavior

8. Homework Assignment

Leaders ask participants to score themselves on the Assertion Hierarchy (Handout 3) and give examples of assertive behavior for each category.
Session II

Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of the three types of assertive behavior.

2. To break down assertive behavior into its component social skills and facilitate an awareness of the effect of each upon the quality of an assertive response.

3. To establish a baseline of assertive ability for each participant and provide initial input into their area of concern.

Procedure

1. Introduction

Leaders ask if there are any questions from last week or from the handouts.

2. Explanation of Assertive Behavior

Leaders explain that assertive behavior may be of three types.

- It may be goal oriented. You are being assertive in order to pursue a goal: for example, getting the attention of a clerk to ask for some assistance.

- Assertive behavior may be a “defending” behavior—defending your rights. Telling a friend you wish she wouldn’t assume you can baby-sit is an example of standing up for your rights.

- Or assertive behavior may be directed at sharing something personal, something directed at intimacy. Telling someone you like, that you like them or sharing a personal feeling with a friend—these are sharing assertive behaviors.

Answer participants’ questions and discuss reactions to these categories. Leaders explain the interrelatedness of all types of assertive behavior and how improvement in one area will affect all the others.
3. Homework Discussion

Leaders ask participants to review their SUDS homework assignment, categorizing the situations at 40 SUDS and above as to type (goal-oriented, defending, or sharing something personal).

Leaders then ask participants to share any patterns of particular problem areas they may see.

4. Mini-lecture on Social Skills Related to Assertive Behavior

Leaders begin by a strong introduction of assertive behavior as a complex of behaviors involving interpersonal social skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge. (See Handout #5: Assertion in Relation to Other Social Skills.)

Acquisition of assertive behavior is greatly assisted by breaking down this complex into its component parts and dealing with them individually.

The three most important interpersonal social skills involved in being assertive are empathy, confrontation and persuasion (See Handout #5: Diagram of Relationship of Assertive Skills to Other Social Skills.) Leaders describe these in detail and model them for the group. Emphasis is placed on how each of these social skills effects the nature of the assertive statement and the resultant impact upon the receiver.

5. Questions and Discussions

Leaders provide an opportunity for questions and discussion of component social skills. Participants typically are primarily concerned with how these social skills can vary the impact of their assertive statements on the receiver.

6. Assertive Situation Role-Play

Using the participant’s completed SUDS Handout, the leaders select an assertive situation for one of the group members. The participant is instructed to not be concerned initially with how perfect an assertive response he or she can make. The participant is asked to focus on using one of the component social skills to be assigned by the leaders. Another participant is enlisted in the role-play and it is videotaped.
This procedure is repeated for each participant prior to processing any of the role-plays. In picking out the assertive situation to be used, the leaders typically begin at the 30 or 40 SUDS level. In choosing the component social skill to assign, the leaders attempt to select the most obviously appropriate.

An example would be persuasion for an assertive situation falling into the impersonal category that is goal-oriented in nature. This not only eases the difficulty participants have in focusing on these social skills, but also provides some examples of common patterns in assertive responses.

7. Processing the Role Plays

Using a fairly structured approach, the group begins to process the series of role-plays. The structure imposed on this processing is designed to make the experience as non-threatening as possible, maintain control over the amount of time spent on each role-play, and establish a framework for presenting criticism.

For each of the role-plays, the structure is as follows. The group views the role-play. Group members are asked to fill out Handout #6: Behavior Checklist Non-Verbal Behavior when they observe.

Leaders ask the participant who was attempting to be assertive (1) how they felt in that situation, (2) what they saw as good in their assertive response, (3) what they would like to do differently.

Leaders ask the participant assisting in the role-play to share what they as the recipient of the assertive statement (1) saw as positive and (2) wish had been done differently.

Leaders ask then the rest of the group what they saw as positive and what they think could be done differently.

8. Homework Assignments

The leaders work with each individual participant to develop homework assignments. The most critical factor in the development of these assignments is that the participants be committed to following through. Thus, the most helpful approach is to elicit the assignment itself from the participants.
Session III

Objectives

1. To provide an opportunity for discussion and support of behavioral goals attempted during the past week.

2. To offer additional techniques that would facilitate assertive behavior.

3. To continue providing behavior rehearsal of assertive situations.

Procedure

1. Discussion of Homework Assignments

Leaders ask participants to share their experiences in pursuing their homework assignments. When appropriate, it is helpful to role-play those situations that were not entirely successful, eliciting input from all group members.

2. Leaders present assertive technique of “broken record” (from Manuel J. Smith, 1975, when I Say No, I Feel Guilty).

   Broken Record

   “A skill that by calm repetition—saying what you want over and over again—teaches persistence without you having to rehearse arguments or angry feelings beforehand, in order to be ‘up’ for dealing with others.” (Smith, p. 323).

   The leaders have made a minor adaptation that is helpful and asked participants to use pattern of empathy, plus broken record.

3. Broken Record Role-Play

Leaders instruct group to pair off and take turns role-playing using this technique. Leaders should circulate among the pairs to coach the participants.
4. Leaders present “fogging” technique (Smith, 1975).

Fogging

“A skill that teaches acceptance of manipulative criticism by calmly acknowledging to your critic the probability that there may be some truth in what he says, yet allows you to remain your own judge of what you do” (Smith, p. 323).

5. Fogging Role Play

Leaders divide groups into pairs and have them role-play “fogging.” Once again, it is helpful for leaders to circulate and coach the pairs.

Leaders attempt to elicit upcoming assertive situations from the participants to use in role-playing. If this does not occur quickly, usually the SUDS homework assignment is a good source of ideas.

6. Additional Role Plays

In the time remaining, leaders direct two or three role-plays and process using the structure described previously. If it does not occur naturally, leaders should suggest attempting to appropriately use techniques learned in today’s session.

7. Homework

Leaders and participants generate homework assignments.
Session IV

Objectives

1. To confront and discuss the idea of assertive rights and their value implications.

2. To provide an opportunity for discussion and support of behavioral goals attempted during the past week.

Procedure

1. Homework

Discussion of homework assignments, following procedure described in Session III.

2. Assertive Rights Activity

First, leaders instruct participants to take a sheet of paper and list what assertive rights they feel they have. Allow no more than 5 minutes.

Next, divide the participants into groups of no more than four members. Ask participants to create a list of assertive rights that are acceptable to all group members. Finally, have the entire group combine lists to create a total group list of assertive rights.

Note to Leaders: There are discussions of assertive rights in

- Smith, Manual J. When I Say No, I Feel Guilty (Bantam, 1975).


3. Values Discussion

Leaders facilitate a discussion of the values implied in these assertive rights.

4. Assertiveness Inventory

Leaders administer second administration of Assertiveness Inventory.
List of Handouts

Handout 1: Distinction Between Assertion, Non-Assertion and Aggression
Handout 2: A Comparison of Non-Assertive, Assertive, and Aggressive Behavior
Handout 3: Assertion Hierarchy
Handout 4: Components of Assertive Behavior
Handout 5: Assertion in Relation to Other Social Skills
Handout 6: Behavior Checklist: Non-Verbal Behavior
Handout 1: Distinction Between Assertion, Non-Assertion and Aggression

An important, initial step in becoming more assertive is clearly understanding what assertive behavior means. In the case of women, too often the idea of an assertive woman is associated with unfeminine behavior, such as aggression. Assertive and aggressive behavior are different both in content and motivation. When a woman acquires the ability to be assertive, she is acquiring the ability to be strong and effective as well as feminine. Described below are non-assertive, assertive, and aggressive behavior. The distinctions between these are important to understand.

Non-Assertive Behavior

Non-assertive behavior allows your personal rights to be violated in one of two ways:

a) You violate your own rights by inhibiting the honest expression of feelings and needs or

b) You allow someone else to infringe upon your rights.

For example, when asked at what kind of restaurant you would like to eat, if you respond that it makes no difference, when it actually does, you are violating your own right to have and state a preference.

A second example would be when a friend, who rarely returns favors, asks you to watch her children, knowing that you already have other plans. In this case non-assertive behavior allows your friend to take advantage of you.

Non-assertive behavior does not feel good, although it may feel safe. A non-assertive person will often feel used, hurt, anxious or angry. Very often these feelings may be expressed non-verbally creating a kind of double message.

You may be saying “Sure I’ll watch the kids,” but averted eyes, a tight mouth and a weak voice communicate that isn’t what you really want to do.
Sometimes non-assertive behavior is an attempt at manipulation. You may be deliberately giving up your rights in a certain setting in order to influence another person to act in a particular way.

The problem with this approach is that the bargain is not explicit. The other person is under no obligation to act in a particular way for you, and may not even be aware you are expecting anything from him or her. For most of us, non-assertive behavior is situation-specific. Typically it will occur in only a few settings or with a few people. There are some people who are generally non-assertive. These people are unable to do anything that would displease anyone. Because of the deep feelings of inadequacy and inhibition that are behind general non-assertiveness, it is not within the scope of this program to tackle this area of assertive training.

People who feel they are generally non-assertive should consider more extensive individual counseling or therapy.

**Assertive Behavior**

Assertive behavior enables a person to say what he or she believes, to stand up for his or her rights in a way that maximally facilitates communication and that indicates respect (not deference) for the other person. It is direct, honest and appropriate expression of one’s feelings, opinions and beliefs. Assertive behavior does not allow for violation of another’s rights either. It is a way of standing up for your rights without denying the rights of others.

Assertive behavior is a fairly complex skill that involves elements of other interpersonal skills. Some assertive statements require **confrontation** skills.

*An example of an **assertive–confrontive** statement is “You have promised twice to help me collect money for our club’s project, and both times have had to back out. I need to depend on you to carry through this time.”*

Some assertions involve elements of **persuasion**. In an **assertive–persuasive** statement you are not only stating your opinion, but are also attempting to convince others to adopt, or seriously consider, adopting it. This kind of assertive statement requires tact and care. It is necessary to communicate understanding of the other person’s point of view and avoid prematurely criticizing it. Despite extreme effort, you cannot expect all assertive statements to effect change in
others’ behavior. A better way of evaluating an assertive response is to judge how well you stood up for your rights in a clear, unambiguous manner.

High quality assertive responses include an empathetic component. The empathetic component serves to let the other person know you are aware of his or her point of view. While it is important to avoid sounding deferential, communicating respect for the other person’s right to have a different opinion may make the difference between being listened to and being ignored.

An example of an assertive-empathetic statement is, “I realize you are terribly busy, but I’ve been waiting for about five minutes and I need your help now.”

**Aggressive Behavior**

Aggressive behavior is when a person stands up for his or her rights in such a way that the rights of another are violated. The motivation for aggressive behavior is to not only achieve individual rights but to dominate, humiliate or “put down” the other person. Aggression is an attack on another person, not an attack on his or her behavior. Often aggressive behavior is a result of stored-up bad feelings. Stating bad feelings as they occur can be assertive. Attacking and making someone else responsible for your bad feelings is aggression.

Following are examples of assertive, aggressive and non-assertive responses borrowed from *Your Perfect Right* by Robert E. Alberti and Michael L. Emmons (Impact, 1974). These should help you understand the distinctions between the three ways of responding.
Case Examples

“Dining Out”

Mr. and Mrs. A. are at dinner in a moderately expensive restaurant. Mr. A. has ordered a rare steak, but when the steak is served, Mr. A. finds it to be very well done, contrary to his order. His behavior is:

- **Non-assertive**: Mr. A. grumbles to his wife about the “burned” meat, and observes that he won’t patronize this restaurant in the future. He says nothing to the waitress, responding “Fine!” to her inquiry “Is everything all right?” His dinner and evening are highly unsatisfactory, and he feels guilty for having taken no action. Mr. A’s estimate of himself, and Mrs. A’s estimate of him are both deflated by the experience.

- **Aggressive**: Mr. A. angrily summons the waitress to his table. He berates her loudly and unfairly for not complying with his order. His actions ridicule the waitress and embarrass Mrs. A. He demands and receives another steak, this one more to his liking. He feels in control of the situation, but Mrs. A’s embarrassment creates friction between them, and spoils their evening. The waitress is humiliated and angry and loses her poise for the rest of the evening.

- **Assertive**: Mr. A. motions the waitress to his table. Noting that he had ordered a rare steak, he shows her the well done meat, asking politely but firmly that it be returned to the kitchen and replaced with the rare-cooked steak he originally requested. The waitress apologizes for the error, and shortly returns with a rare steak. The A’s enjoy dinner, tip accordingly, and Mr. A. feels satisfaction with himself. The waitress is pleased with a satisfied customer and an adequate tip.
“The Heavyweight”

Mr. and Mrs. B., who have been married nine years, have been having marital problems recently because he insists that she is overweight and needs to reduce. He brings the subject up continually, pointing out that she is no longer the girl he married (who was 25 pounds lighter), that such overweight is bad for her health, that she is a bad example for the children, and so on. In addition, he teases her about being “chunky,” looks longingly at thin girls, commenting how attractive they look, and makes references to her figure in front of their friends. Mr. B. has been reacting this way for the past three months and Mrs. B. is highly upset. She has been attempting to lose weight for those three months but with little success.

Following Mr. B’s most recent rash of criticism, Mrs. B. is:

- **Non-assertive:** She apologizes for her overweight, makes feeble excuses or simply doesn’t reply to some of Mr. B’s comments. Internally, she feels bother hostile toward her husband for his naggings, and guilty about being overweight. Her feelings of anxiety make it even more difficult for her to lose weight and the battle continues.

- **Aggressive:** Mrs. B. goes into a long tirade about how her husband isn’t any great bargain anymore either! She brings up the fact that at night he falls asleep on the couch half the time, is a lousy sex partner and doesn’t pay sufficient attention. None of these comments are pertinent to the issue at hand, but Mrs. B. continues. She complains that he humiliates her in front of the children and their close friends and acts like a “lecherous old man” by the way he eyes the sexy girls. In her anger she succeeds only in wounding Mr. B. and driving a wedge between them by “defending” herself with a counter-attack on him.

- **Assertive:** Approaching her husband when they are alone and will not be interrupted, Mrs. B. indicates that she feels that Mr. B. is correct about her need to lose weight, but she does not care for the way he keeps after her about the problem or the manner in which he does so. She points out that she is doing her best and is having a difficult time losing the weight and maintaining the loss. He acknowledges the ineffectiveness of his harping, and they work out together a plan in which he will systematically reinforce her for her efforts to lose weight.
“The Neighbor Kid”

Mr. and Mrs. E. have a boy two years’ old and a baby girl two months old. Over the last several nights their neighbor’s son, who is 17, has been sitting in his own driveway in his car with his stereo tape player blaring loudly. He begins just about the time the E’s two young children retire in their bedroom on the side of the house where the boy plays the music. The loud music awakens the children each night and it has been impossible for the E’s to get the children to bed until the music stops. Mr. and Mrs. E. are both disturbed and decide to be:

- **Non-assertive**: Mr. and Mrs. E. move the children into their own bedroom on the other side of the house, wait until the music stops around 1 a.m. and then transfer the children back to their own rooms. Then they go to bed much past their own usual bedtime. They continue to quietly curse the teenager and soon become alienated from their neighbors.

- **Aggressive**: Mr. and Mrs. E. call the police and protest that “one of those wild teenagers” next door is creating a disturbance. They demand that the police “do their duty” and stop the noise at once. The police do talk with the boy and his parents, who become very upset and angry as a result of their embarrassment about the police visit. They denounce the E’s tactics in reporting to the police without speaking to them first, and resolve to avoid further association with them.

- **Assertive**: Both Mr. and Mrs. E. go over to the boy’s house and indicate to him that his stereo is keeping the children awake at night. They ask what arrangement they could work out concerning the music so that it would not disturb their children’s sleep. The boy is reluctantly agreeable to setting a lower volume during the late hours, but appreciates the E’s cooperative attitude. Both parties feel good about the outcome.
Discovering Your Rights

Because assertive behavior is a highly complex interpersonal skill, becoming assertive requires not only learning new ways of responding, but developing a belief system that supports your having and exercising rights. One of the functions of this program will be to help each of you to get in touch with those rights.

What rights you feel you have and what rights you choose to exercise will be unique for each of you. Personal rights are dependent upon values, priorities and relationships. Some rights most of you could agree upon, others you may reject. The important issue surrounding the discussion of rights is that each of you be aware of what you feel your rights are and be able to stand up for those rights. There are many ways to get in touch with these rights. During the course of this workshop we will use group discussion and stimulus films to begin the process.

On your own you may begin by looking at your feelings. Focus on interpersonal situations when you have felt used, hurt, angry, hostile. Very often these situations will involve nonassertive or aggressive behavior on yours or another’s part. Feeling used is a good example. When you feel taken advantage of it is usually because you non-assertively allowed it to happen. You denied your own rights concerning an issue, or perhaps another ignored your rights. If you could assertively relive the situation what would you change? Would you refuse a request, state an opinion, insist on being taken seriously? These are rights you “feel” you have. Think about these rights and how you respond to them in different areas of your life.

References

For your further reading:


**Handout #2: A comparison of Non-Assertive, Assertive and Aggressive Behavior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Non-assertive behavior</th>
<th>Assertive behavior</th>
<th>Aggressive behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the behavior</td>
<td>Emotionally dishonest, indirect, self-denying, inhibited</td>
<td>( Appropriately) emotionally honest, direct, self-enhancing, expressive</td>
<td>(Inappropriately) emotionally honest, direct, self-enhancing at expense of another, expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your feelings when you engage in this behavior</td>
<td>Hurt, anxious at the time and possibly angry later</td>
<td>Confident, self-respecting at the time and later</td>
<td>Righteous, superior, deprecatory at the time and possibly guilty later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The other person’s feelings about him- or herself when you engage in this behavior</td>
<td>Guilty or superior</td>
<td>Valued, respected</td>
<td>Hurt, humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The other person’s feelings toward you when you engage in this behavior</td>
<td>Irritation, pity, disgust</td>
<td>Generally respect</td>
<td>Angry, vengeful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Handout #3: Assertion Hierarchy**

Name: ________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Impersonal/Commercial</th>
<th>Social/Work</th>
<th>Intimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>0–20 SUDS</td>
<td>0–20 SUDS</td>
<td>0–20 SUDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>21–40 SUDS</td>
<td>21–40 SUDS</td>
<td>21–40 SUDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>41–60 SUDS</td>
<td>41–60 SUDS</td>
<td>41–60 SUDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>81–100 SUDS</td>
<td>81–100 SUDS</td>
<td>81–100 SUDS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout #4: Components of Assertive Behavior

Being assertive is more than using a certain set of words. Following is a list of components you will need to attend to in developing assertive behavior.

- **Eye contact**: Direct eye contact when you are speaking to a person clearly communicates you are sincere about what you are saying, and that you are saying it to him or her.

- **Body posture**: The impact of your statement may be increased by facing the person you are talking to, standing appropriately close, leaning slightly forward, and holding your head erect.

- **Facial expression**: Effective assertions require a facial expression that agrees with the message, both in content and degree.

- **Voice, tone, inflection, volume**: A level, well-modulated statement is perhaps the most convincing. Being careful to not intimidate or sound deferential is important. Neither extreme is effective in being assertive.

- **Timing**: A spontaneous expression is usually best. Hesitating may reduce the effectiveness of the assertion, but it is essential that you use care in selecting the appropriate setting. An inappropriate setting may increase defensiveness or cause anger on the part of the person you are addressing.

- **Content**: The content of an assertive statement is of obvious importance. Much of this workshop will be devoted to learning appropriate content. Very often, though, what is said is of much less importance than how it is said. Too much time spent focusing on content can get in the way of spontaneity. Remember the ultimate goal of assertion training is that you be able to express yourself honestly and accurately.
Handout #5: Assertion in Relation to Other Social Skills

A high level assertive response is a complex communication. Developing your assertive skills will necessarily require developing some other social skills. These are • confrontation, • empathy and • persuasion.

**Confrontation** is a communication that brings a person face-to-face with something you have observed about him or her or something he or she has done. Very often the word *confrontation* implies a negative interaction. This is not necessarily so. Confrontations is a neutral act. It can be used to create a positive interaction as well as a negative one. Confrontation in relation to assertive behavior is only concerned with the direct communication of observations.

**Empathy** is a direct communication that you are feeling *with* the other person. An empathetic statement accurately communicates that you know where a person is coming from, both in terms of what he or she is saying and what he or she is feeling. Empathy does not mean sympathy. When you are being sympathetic you are feeling *for* the other person. Sympathy implies agreement with what the other person is feeling. An empathetic statement does not imply, or state agreement. It accurately reflects an understanding of where the other person is coming from, and what they are feeling.

**Persuasion** is an attempt to influence the other person. This influence may be an attempt to change the behavior or beliefs. In making a persuasive statement, one is using whatever rationale is available to try to convince the other person to change in some way.
Applying the High Level Approach to Assertiveness

Confrontive, persuasive and empathetic responses may vary qualitatively. A high-level empathetic response may bear little or no resemblance to a low-level empathetic response and will definitely produce a different effect. Developing the skill to make high-level responses in all of these areas is important in developing assertive behavior.

The nature of an assertive response is dependent on the quality and quantity of its components. Not every assertive response will contain equal amounts of confrontation, empathy and persuasion.

For instance, if you need to respond assertively to someone you know will be threatened by your assertive behavior, you should use a lot of empathy in your response. Loading an assertive response with empathy will greatly reduce the threatening nature of the statement.

Alternatively, if you want to make an assertive response to a person whose attention is hard to get or hold, using more confrontation could be appropriate. Empathizing confrontation will make the assertive response more threatening, but is also less easily avoided or ignored. With practice, varying the nature of an assertive statement by changing the quantity of each component will become natural.

Examples of Responses

Examples of responses containing different amounts of confrontation, empathy and persuasion:

1. “Would you watch my kids today? I have some errands to run.”
   a) No, I feel you’ve imposed on me too much lately.
   b) Couldn’t you leave them with a sitter? My mother is coming to visit tomorrow and I have a million things to do.
   c) you’ve got to be one of the most demanding, selfish people I’ve ever met. You’re constantly taking advantage of me.
d) I know you have to do and having to take the kids will make it more difficult, but I’ve already plans for this afternoon.

2. “Is dinner ready yet?”

a) No, not yet. I know you’re hungry and tired, but if you watch the kids for a few minutes, I could get done a lot quicker.

b) Get off my back! I’ve worked just as hard as you have today and I’m fed up with your selfish demands.

c) No, it’s not. Maybe you’ve forgotten, but you agreed to get it started before I got home tonight. I could use some help right now.

d) No, not yet. I need some help. If you’d be willing to set the table and get the drinks ready we could eat about 10 minutes sooner. With even a little bit of help, I could get dinner on the table much quicker.
Relationship of Assertive Skills to Other Social Skills

Assertion

Confrontation

Empathy

Persuasion
### Handout #6: Behavior Checklist—Non-Verbal Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Observed (Check if Observed)</th>
<th>Discussant I</th>
<th>Discussant II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Face and Head Movements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Uses affirmative head nods</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Face rigid</td>
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<td>3. Calm, yet expressive use of facial movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Blankly staring</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Turning eyes away when another looks at him or her</td>
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<td>6. Spontaneous eye movements and eye contact</td>
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<td>7. Not looking at other when talking</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Looking directly at other person when he or she talks</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Extraneous facial movements</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Hand and Arm Movements</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Spontaneous and fluid use of hand</td>
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<td>11. Not gesturing (arms rigid)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Makes physical contact with other person (shakes hands, touches arm, etc.)</td>
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<td>13. Uses hand movements for emphasis</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Inappropriate arm and hand movements</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C. Body Movements</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Slouching</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Relaxed posture but not slouching</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Sitting in fixed, rigid position</td>
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<td><strong>D. Body Orientation</strong></td>
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<td>18. Body positioned toward other</td>
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<td>19. Physically distant from other</td>
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<td>20. Sits close to person with whom talking</td>
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<td>21. Not facing other with body</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E. Verbal Quality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Voice quiver</td>
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<td>23. Speech blocks or stammers</td>
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<td>24. Lack of affect</td>
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<td>25. Inappropriate affect</td>
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<td>26. Too loud</td>
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<td>27. Too soft</td>
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<td>28. Excessive use of jargon</td>
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<td>29. Excessive use of “psychologese”</td>
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<td>30. Excessive use of “you know”</td>
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<td>31. Too fast</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Too slow</td>
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