



PROACTIVE  
COMPLAINTS  
MANAGEMENT

TRAINING • COACHING • CASE MANAGEMENT

## **The process of communicating assertively**

### ***What is assertiveness?***

- Assertive individuals maintain their values, needs and rights and are very rarely dominated by others nor do they dominate or violate other individual's needs;
- While freely expressing their own ideas and opinions to others, they also listen intently and reflect on other individuals ideas and opinions;
- Someone who is assertive conveys a message of – *“My need to achieve an outcome are just as important as your needs to achieve an outcome and we must work together to reach an agreement”*

### ***How can you express your opinion in an assertive manner?***

- Being assertive means expressing your point of view in a way that is direct and clear i.e. to the point with an emphasis of not using words that may have a hidden meaning or agenda;
- When you communicate assertively this allows you to minimise conflict , to control your and other parties anger and more importantly to have your needs met whilst still allowing for the development of more positive relationships with other individuals;

### ***What is aggression?***

- Aggressive behaviour means standing up for your rights but in a way that violates the rights of other people;
- It means saying what you believe in a way that assumes that it is the only truth and that any contradictory statement is wrong;
- Aggressive people often use anger, aggressive body language and other threatening behaviour to bully, subjugate and dominate other people;
- They will use punishing language to infer guilt and create shame;
- They will use overt techniques of conversion to create unquestioning compliance;
- Frustration may lead to aggression;
- Frustration could be seen as the interference with or blocking of a particular goal by one person against another;

## **What does aggressive communication mean?**

- You can however still be assertive and come across as aggressive therefore we need to be aware of examples of the two types of styles.

<b>Aggressive</b>	<b>Assertive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You force your needs or opinions onto others</li> <li>• You often use bullying tactics to push other individuals around;</li> <li>• Your needs are the most important and no other persons needs matter;</li> <li>• You never compromise;</li> <li>• Your conversations end up damaging relationships however this is not your concern;</li> <li>• You communicate by shouting or you use physical aggression to get your point across;</li> <li>• You aim to damage another person's self-esteem e.g. you are hopeless, do you know what you are doing, and how long have you been doing this work for?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You express every need in a clear and respectful manner e.g. I need to achieve the following how can we work together?</li> <li>• You treat all other people that you communicate with respect irrespective of their position, sex or skin colour;</li> <li>• You consider your needs to achieve an outcome and you also respectfully consider the other person's needs;</li> <li>• You often reach a workable and achievable compromise;</li> <li>• You formulate and nurture very strong interpersonal and professional relationships;</li> <li>• You use clear statements and language to make yourself understood without belittling or intimidating the other party;</li> <li>• You assist other people to build their self-esteem by using nurturing and encouraging language during all communications;</li> </ul>

- Allow the other party an opportunity to speak and explain their position without any interruptions;
- Respect the other party's opinion even though you may disagree;
- Offer your opinion without being condescending, belittling or down playing the other party's opinion;

## **What do we mean by Passive Communicators?**

- If you sit back and listen without providing an opinion even though you may disagree you are now entering the realms of Passive Communication.
- A passive communicator does the following:

- You do not speak up, a reason for this is that you may be of the opinion that your views do not matter or because you want to be liked or because you just want to keep everyone happy;
  - You never concern yourself with what you want you believe keeping others needs at the forefront of all discussions is more important;
  - You give permission (by not acting) to other people to bully you or ignore you without speaking up;
  - Whenever you speak up your body language tells the other person you are not sure e.g. looking away or at your feet when you speak. You tend to speak very softly or you hesitate mid-sentence when you are making a suggestion or comment;
  - You make comments that contradict your original statements e.g. “Can we do this but only if you don’t mind” or “I don’t mind if we don’t do as I suggested”;
- If you are a passive communicator you will end up damaging your own self-esteem and your long term relationships as you never make decisions yourself – others make your decisions for you and you just follow.
  - You may in private feel hurt, angry or isolated as you believe no one listens or cares about my opinion.

### ***Suggestions for communicating assertively?***

1. Ensure that you speak up and state your point of view clearly and without hesitation however be respectful to those present and do not be demeaning or offensive to others present.
2. Ensure that both your tone and volume are appropriate to the situation. Ensure that you speak at a normal volume rather than shouting or whispering what you want – sounding firm and not aggressive is extremely important for effective communication;
3. Ensure that your body language reflects the meaning that you intend to send out e.g. stand up right or sit straight in your chair, look the other party in the eyes and do not look down and finally relax your hands and shoulders;
4. Do not use over exaggeration to emphasis your point e.g. “You are always rude” or “You always shout at me when you speak”.

Considering saying “I don’t appreciate the way you are speaking to me please stop immediately” or “I would like you to stop screaming at me and speak in a reasonable tone”;

5. Ensure that you use facts when you try to communicate e.g. “What specifically are your concerns?” rather than “You are always complaining about something”;

### **The 4 Step “I” Message**



#### **The assertive 4 step “I” message**

1. **Describe the behaviour of the other party:**
  - **“when you speak / act this way”**
2. **Describe how you feel:**
  - **“I feel this way because you are not providing me with an opportunity to discuss the issue”**
3. **Describe why you feel this way:**
  - **“I feel this way because you are not providing me with an opportunity to discuss the issue”**
4. **Describe the behaviour that you would expect from the other party:**
  - **“I would like you to discuss this issue with me in a calm and respectful manner as I will with you”**

### **Conclusion**

If you do not normally communicate assertively you will need to practice, practice and practice.

Like every new skill or refining an existing skill you should consider situation that you have been involved in where you felt uncomfortable and practice how you could have handled these in a more assertive manner.

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