

Assertive Communication

Communication is very important. Learning to be assertive – not aggressive—is one way to build good communication habits. The following activity is designed to help you think and work through how to have an assertive conversation with someone (and avoid using anger and frustration) even when the situation is sensitive.

Think of a real-life situation you would like to practice. You can get volunteers to be the receiver and the observer (or just practice by yourself).

- First, the speaker discusses the situation so the receiver can assume the role.
- The speaker begins with “I am concerned about ...;” then, “I feel ... when you ... because ... I would prefer”
- The receiver response naturally.
- The speaker repeats steps. Shares how they felt.
- The observer gives feedback to the speaker.

If you are practicing on your own, write it down. Consider:

- Have you stated your comments in the least offensive way?
- Is there a more positive way to state your concerns?
- How would you feel if someone said these things to you?
- Is the conversation putting someone on the defense?
- Are you stating your feeling in a calm, cool demeanor?
- Examine your comments closely.

Below are three concepts for learning to speak and behave in a manner that shows respect and helps you communicate your feelings in a positive manner. Practice using each of the three components for behavior, speaking for yourself and using feeling words.

1. **COMPONENTS OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR** - Behavior
2. **“I” COMMUNICATION** - Speaking for yourself, not others
3. **“FEELING” WORDS TO USE IN EFFECTIVE DIALOGUES** - Using feeling words

Review in-depth details listed below:

1. COMPONENTS OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR:

A. EYE CONTACT:

Looking directly at another person when you are speaking is an effective way of declaring that you are sincere about what you are saying.

B. BODY POSTURE:

The weight of your messages to others will be increased if you face the person, stand or sit appropriately close, lean forward, and hold your head erect.

C. GESTURES:

A message accented with appropriate gestures takes on an added emphasis (over enthusiastic gesturing can be a distraction).

D. FACIAL EXPRESSION:

Ever see someone trying to express anger while smiling or laughing? It just doesn't come across. Effective assertions require an expression that agrees with the message.

E. VOICE TONE, INFLECTION, VOLUME:

A level, well-modulated statement is convincing without intimidating.

F. TIMING:

Spontaneous expression will generally be your goal. However, select an appropriate occasion such as speaking to your boss in privacy of his office, rather than in front of a group of subordinates.

G. GESTURES:

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2. "I" COMMUNICATION

5-Step Process of Assertion

Step 1: I am concerned about....

(the purpose for this discussion)

Step 2: I feel....

(choose feeling from list)

Step 3: When you....

(describe the behavior or situation; no judgment or exaggeration)

Step 4: Because....

(why or how you are affected)

Step 5: I would prefer you to....

(describe desired change)

3. "FEELING" WORDS TO USE IN EFFECTIVE DIALOGUES

*Words related to **ANGER***

aggravated	agitated	angry	annoyed	bitter
cranky	cruel	enraged	exasperated	frenzied
furious	hostile	incensed	indignant	infuriated
irritated	outraged	resentful	steamed	vicious

*Words related to **HAPPINESS***

amused	beautiful	blissful	calm	charmed
cheerful	contented	delighted	ecstatic	elated
excited	fantastic	giddy	glad	gratified
happy	high	joyous	jubilant	pleased
proud	soothed	thrilled	tickled	turned-on

*Words related to **HURT***

abandoned	abused	awful	cheated	deprived
deserted	desperate	dismal	dreadful	forsaken
ignored	isolated	hassled	jealous	oppressed
pathetic	rejected	rotten	scorned	slighted
snubbed	terrible	trapped	upset	wiped-out

*Words related to **BELITTLED***

betrayed	crippled	defeated	deflated	foolish
helpless	incapable	incompetent	inadequate	inept
inferior	insulted	intimidated	persecuted	powerless
run down	unfit	unworthy	useless	worn out

*Words related to **LOVE***

affectionate	amorous	aroused	gentle	gracious
heavenly	passionate	sensitive	tender	vivacious

*Words related to **EMBARRASSED***

anxious	awkward	chagrined	conspicuous	disgraced
doomed	humbled	humiliated	jittery	overwhelmed
regretful	ridiculous	silly	troubled	thwarted

*Words related to **DISGUST***

disgusted repulsed revolted sickened wary

*Words related to **ENERGETIC***

assured bold brave clever confident
determined eager firm frisky genial
hardy inspired lively peppy potent
robust secure strong tough vigorous

*Words related to **LONELY***

abandoned alone bored deserted empty
excluded forsaken ignored jilted lonely
lost rejected scorned slighted snubbed

*Words related to **SURPRISED***

astounded baffled bewildered confused distracted
flustered jarred jolted mystified perplexed
puzzled rattled shock startled stunned

*Words related to **SAD***

blue burdened dejected depressed downcast
frustrated gloomy led-down low melancholy
miserable moody pained trouble weary

*Words related to **FEAR***

alarmed boxed-in cornered fearful frightened
jittery jumpy nervous petrified scared
shaken terrified threatened troubled uneasy