

SAY WHAT YOU WANT – GET WHAT YOU NEED

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Workshop Description

Assertive communication is an important key to communicating clearly and creating a framework for cooperation. In this workshop we will explore the essential elements of effective assertive communication and ways to empower ourselves, and others, to say what they want and get what they need.

Introduction:

- 1 - What does the Bible say about communication?
 - A - The way that we communicate is important to the Lord. He wants us to be able to use our words to build relationships, maintain our integrity and to obtain those things that we really need.
 - 1 - Eph. 4:15 – “Speaking the truth in love. . .”
 - 2 - Mat. 5:37; James 5:12 – “Let your yes be yes and your no, no.”
 - 3 - James 4:2 – “You do not have, because you do not ask God.”

What is Assertive Communication?

- 1 - Assertiveness can be defined as “a positive and constructive way of relating to other people that respects their needs, wants, and rights as well as one’s own needs, wants, and rights.” (Stephen Ministries Training Manual)
 - A - Assertiveness is a communication skill. It means expressing yourself effectively, standing up for yourself and your point of view, while respecting the rights, feelings and beliefs of others.
 - B - It is a way of behaving that is based on mutual respect.
 - 1 - You respect yourself so you are willing to clearly express your thoughts, feelings and needs and to stand up for your interests.
 - 2 - You respect others so you communicate in ways that honor their rights, feelings and beliefs.
 - C - Someone who behaves assertively expresses her feelings, opinions and needs honestly and appropriately without exaggerating or insulting anyone else.
 - D - Communicating assertively allows us to take responsibility for ourselves and our choices.

Styles of Communication

- 1 - There are four different ways of relating to others.
 - A - **Passively** – allowing others to make unreasonable demands on you or make decisions for you. Passive people do not stand up for themselves or others. They allow their rights, needs, feelings and opinions to be overlooked and disregarded. They are afraid of what others will think of them.
 - 1 - Passive communicators often speak softly and do everything they can to avoid conflict and arguments.
 - 2 - They are usually afraid or uncomfortable saying “No.”
 - 3 - Passive people can experience a lot of anger and resentment because they feel disrespected or that their needs are not being met.
 - B - **Aggressively** – disregarding the feelings, opinions and needs of others. Aggressive people will use manipulation and intimidation to get what they want from others. Often they will resort to physical means to get what they want including yelling, overt anger and even physical violence.
 - 1 - Aggressive communicators frequently speak in a loud voice and don’t care if they offend others.
 - 2 - They are willing to go to great lengths to get what they want without regard to how it impacts others. They often come across as bullies.
 - 3 - They can become very vindictive when they don’t get what they want and often humiliate and intimidate others.
 - C - **Passive-Aggressively** – does not respect either their own feelings and needs or the feelings and needs of others.
 - 1 - They frequently feel like a victim and avoid taking responsibility for their own behavior.
 - 2 - They often speak of others in very negative ways. They can be very sarcastic and complain frequently.
 - 3 - They will often spoil the plans or projects of others because they feel resentful of the things others achieve.
 - D - **Assertively** – respecting the dignity of self and others, recognizing and treating all people as people of worth.

- 1 - People who communicate assertively are clear and direct when they communicate expressing their thoughts, feelings and wants in easily understandable ways.
 - 2 - They are honest and their communication reflects their self-confidence.
 - 3 - They are usually able to get what they need without offending others.
- 2 - Before going on we need to acknowledge that there are times that we may legitimately choose one style of communication over another.
- A - If your life is in danger you may need to respond very aggressively.
 - B - If you are being reprimanded by your boss you might decide to respond passively.
 - C - There are other times you may decide that a particular situation is not worth the effort needed to communicate assertively.
 - D - These are appropriate choices you make in a given situation.
- 3 - The benefits of assertive behavior.
- A - Assertive communication helps you to successfully convey your message. It improves your communication.
 - B - It reduces stress and anxiety. Assertive people feel more empowered and less threatened when facing changes or challenges.
 - C - It increases your self-esteem and earns respect from others. If you don't respect yourself you can't expect to be respected by others.
 - D - It improves your coping skills and helps you recognize and understand your feelings and to control your emotions.
 - E - It helps you to improve your decision-making skills and to achieve your goals. Assertive individuals are better problem solvers who are willing to find and implement solutions to the challenges they encounter.
 - F - It helps you gain more satisfaction in your life and in your job. Assertive people feel confident and comfortable exercising their power to get the job done.
 - G - It helps build honest relationships that enrich everyone involved.
 - H - Assertive communications clearly establishes expectations making it possible for all parties to be successful.
 - I - It helps to create win-win situations. Assertive communication helps us to see and value the positions of other people which help us to resolve disagreements and arrive at mutually beneficial solutions.

“When you act assertively you act fairly and with empathy. The power you use comes from your self-assurance and not from intimidation or bullying. When you treat others with such fairness and respect, you get that same treatment in return. You are well liked and people see you as a leader and someone they want to work with.”

<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Assertiveness.htm>

- 4 - Things that block assertive ways of relating to others.
- A - Lack of self-confidence
 - B - Fear of others
 - C - Worry about hurting someone's feelings
 - D - Trouble changing learned patterns of behavior

The Starting Point for Assertive Communication:

- 1 - Know yourself and the value you bring to a relationship, which is the basis of self-confidence.
 - A - This includes understanding your strengths as well as your weaknesses.
 - B - Understanding God's purpose for your life helps you to be aware of what you need to do and where you need to be.
- 2 - Know your primary style of communication and take the steps necessary to become more assertive.
 - A - If you tend to be more passive in your communication style you need to consider ways to be more direct and honest in your approach and deliberately choose to be more decisive in your communication.
 - B - If you tend to be more aggressive you need to intentionally dial it back a notch and actively listen to others.
- 3 - Learn your legitimate rights and recognize that they are as important as everyone else's.
 - A - You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.
 - B - You have the right to express your feelings when you share them in appropriate ways. You do not have the right to badger or berate others.
 - C - You have the right to ask for what you want and to express your needs. You also have the right to find ways to get your needs met as long as you do not sacrifice the needs and rights of others.
 - D - You have the right to hold your own opinions even when others disagree with you. You do not have the right to impose your opinions, beliefs or standards on others.

- E - You have the right to say “No” and to express negative thoughts and feelings as long as you do so in a healthy and positive manner.
- F - You have the right to make your own decisions.
- G - You have the right to change your mind.

Developing Assertive Communication Skills

- 1 - Elements of Assertive Communications.
 - A - Body language
 - 1 - Make sure your facial expressions and body language are consistent with your message.
 - a - If you are very serious or sad don’t smile. The inconsistency sends mixed messages.
 - 2 - Make eye contact as you speak with others. Looking away makes you appear indecisive and your words unimportant.
 - 3 - Maintain an appropriate body posture.
 - a - Sit or stand straight without slouching or hanging your head.
 - b - Don’t stand too close as it could feel threatening to the other person.
 - 4 - Use appropriate gestures.
 - a - Opening your arms or using soft hand gestures can give the other person a sense of warmth and openness.
 - B - Setting
 - 1 - When and where you choose to communicate assertively is very important.
 - 2 - Choose the timing carefully in order to maximize the impact and outcome of your conversations.
 - 3 - Select a setting that is conducive to the discussion.
 - C - Language
 - 1 - Use “I” statements to communicate your feelings clearly without attacking the other person.

“I feel really hurt when someone shouts at me because I feel like they don’t respect me.”

 - a - We take responsibility for our feelings “I feel really hurt . . . “
 - b - Give the other person a specific example “when someone shouts at me”
 - c - Explain way we are bothered “because I feel like they don’t respect me.”
 - d - “I” statements help us not be accusatory or vague and gives others the opportunity to change their behavior.
 - 2 - “When” messages - “When I feel” Describes a specific behavior and how it affects you.

“When a mess is left in the kitchen, I feel frustrated and used.”
 - 3 - Actively listening to what others say is a vital part of assertive communication. We have to listen to others mindfully, giving them our full attention.
 - a - This involves really listening to what they have to say verbally and non-verbally. Resist the temptation to yawn or look away.
 - b - It also involves listening empathically, which means that you are attempting to listen to what they are feeling.
 - c - Validate others, reflect back what they are saying, and ask questions when needed.
 - d - Help them understand that what they are saying is important to you.
 - D - Other important things to keep in mind.
 - 1 - Be very clear about what you want.
 - a - This means that you need to think through the outcome you want and then communicate that honestly, specifically and concisely.
 - 2 - Learn how to identify your feelings and express them in healthy ways without attacking, demeaning or intimidating others.
 - 3 - Keep your emotions under control and express them only in healthy ways.
 - a - Don’t blame or judge the individual(s) you are speaking with.
 - b - Take a break if you need to in order to control your emotions.
 - 4 - Apologize when appropriate, but don’t apologize all the time.
 - a - You don’t have to apologize for your opinions or feelings.
 - b - Don’t minimize yourself by putting yourself down.
 - 5 - Acknowledge the compliments and criticisms of others.
 - a - Recognize that criticisms can be an indication that you are important to someone. They care enough about you to want to give you some feedback.
 - 6 - Say “No” when you are not able or don’t want to do something. You don’t have to give a reason if you don’t want to.

- a - Some studies indicate that you may have to say “No” 3 to 5 times before it is accepted.
- b - When others say “No” respect them enough to accept it graciously. It is not a personal rejection.
- 7 - Speak clearly and at a level that can be heard.
 - a - Shouting crosses the line from assertiveness to aggression and can make the other person feel threatened.
 - b - Whispering or mumbling can make you seem submissive and diminishes your credibility.
- 8 - Practice negotiation and compromise. These skills transform win/lose situations into win/win situations.
- 2 - Assertiveness Techniques
 - A - Behavior Rehearsal – determine how you want to present yourself in the given situation and then practicing how you will look and sound.
 - B - Scripting – Prepare for your conversation in advance.
 - 1 - Describe how you see the situation or problem.
 - 2 - Clearly describe how you feel.
 - 3 - State what you need. Do not “beat around the bush.” It’s not fair to make the other person try to guess what you want.
 - 4 - Describe the positive results.
 - C - Repeated Assertion – establish the central message you want to communicate and then persistently repeating that message in a variety of ways.
 - D - Escalating Assertion – Become more firm as time goes on. You may have to state what you will do next if you do not receive satisfaction.
 - E - Empathic Assertion – recognize the viewpoint of the other person. Acknowledge the challenge they may be facing.
 - F - Fogging – allows you to receive criticism without becoming defensive.
 - 1 - Listen carefully to the criticism.
 - 2 - Acknowledge any accuracies of the complaint.
 - a - You are probably right. I probably don’t always listen to what you have to say.
 - 3 - Speak to the heart of the issue.
 - 4 - Describe next steps.
 - G - Negative Enquiry – ask for honest, negative feelings in order to improve communication.
 - 1 - Listen for the criticism.
 - 2 - Clarify your understanding of the complaint.
 - 3 - Determine if the information is helpful or not, and how you will respond.
 - a - “So you think that I am not interested?”
 - b - “Help me understand, what about my going fishing is bad?”
 - 4 - This technique can help you process negative comments without feeling defensive.
 - H - Start small. At first, practice communicating assertively in situations that are low risk.
 - 1 - Remember that some people may find the changes in your communication style a little confusing. Be patient and gentle as they learn new ways to communicate with you.

Helping Others Communicate Assertively

- 1 - Assertive communication is not just about getting our needs met, but also about helping to meet the needs of others.
- 2 - To that end we also need to help others learn to communicate assertively. Some of the things we can do include:
 - A - Modeling healthy and honest communication.
 - B - Asking good questions
 - C - Being sensitive and listening well.
 - D - Encouraging honest feedback.
 - E - Making suggestions about possible options
 - F - Affirming that their feelings and thoughts are important to you.

Conclusion

- 1 - Read Psalm 19:14