

Assertive Communication

Three Facets that Define Assertive Communication:

1. Confident Expression: Assertive communication is the art of confidently expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs in a way that is clear, respectful, and considerate of others, without resorting to passivity or aggression.

2. Balanced Self-Advocacy: Assertive communication is a balanced form of self-advocacy that involves standing up for yourself while acknowledging the rights and opinions of others. It is a constructive way to express your desires and boundaries.

3. Effective and Honest Interaction: Assertive communication is an effective and honest way of interacting with others, where you openly and truthfully convey your ideas, emotions, and requirements, fostering mutual understanding and positive relationships.

Traits of Assertive Communication:

Clear and Direct: Assertive communicators are clear and straightforward in their messages. Assertive individuals are comfortable expressing their feelings and emotions without fear of judgment, making it easy for others to understand their point of view.

Respectful: They show respect for themselves and others. They avoid aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviour, instead choosing to treat others with kindness and consideration.

Active Listening: Assertive individuals are not just good at expressing themselves, but they also actively listen to others. They pay attention to what others have to say and seek to understand their perspectives.

Setting Boundaries: They establish and maintain personal boundaries. They are not afraid to say "no" when necessary, and they clearly define what is acceptable and what is not in their interactions with others. Assertive communicators will often use "I" statements to express emotions and needs (e.g., "I feel..." or "I need...").

Problem-Solving: Assertive communication involves seeking solutions to problems rather than dwelling on blame or conflict. They focus on finding common ground and mutually beneficial resolutions.

Examples of Effective Communication:

Scenario 1: Requesting Help from a Colleague

Context: You are working on a project with a colleague who is not contributing their fair share. You need their help to meet a deadline.

You: "Hey [Colleague's Name], I've noticed that the workload on the project has been uneven, and it's been putting a lot of pressure on me. I believe that for us to meet our deadline, we need to distribute the work more evenly. Could we discuss how to balance our responsibilities?"

Why the above dialogue shows effective assertive communication:

- It starts with an "I" statement to distinctly express feelings and concerns.
- It addresses the issue directly and provides a clear reason why the issue is bothersome.
- It suggests a solution and invites open communication.

Scenario 2: Declining an Invitation Politely

Context: You have a busy schedule and can't attend a friend's event.

You: "Thank you so much for inviting me to your event. I wish I could be there, but my schedule is quite packed right now. I hope you have a fantastic time, and I look forward to catching up with you soon."

Why the above dialogue shows effective assertive communication:

- It expresses gratitude and appreciation for the invitation.
- It provides a valid and honest reason for declining.
- It maintains a positive tone and leaves the door open for future interaction.

Scenario 3: Expressing Feelings and Addressing Personal Boundaries in a Relationship

Context: Your partner has been cancelling plans with you frequently, and it's making you feel neglected.

You: "I've been feeling neglected and bothered when our plans are frequently cancelled. I value you, I value our time together and I value our relationship. As such, I believe it's essential that I ask you to make a stronger effort to stick to our established commitments. Can we work on a solution to improve this situation?"

Why the above dialogue shows effective assertive communication:

- It communicates the importance of the relationship and commitment.
- It uses "I" statements to express the issue clearly and its impact on the relationship.
- It invites cooperation and finding a resolution together.

Practice Scenarios Using Assertive Communication:

In these scenarios, you are required to respond assertively by expressing your feelings, setting boundaries, and suggesting solutions, which are all essential components of assertive communication. These practices can help individuals develop the skills necessary for effective communication in various settings and scenarios.

| Given Practice Scenario: | Assertive Response: |
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| <p><i>Example:</i> Scenario: Borrowed Items Context: A friend borrowed something without asking and damaged it.</p> <p>Friend's Dialogue: "I'm sorry, I didn't ask, but I broke it."</p> | <p><i>Example:</i> "I understand accidents happen, but I would have appreciated being asked before you borrowed it. Let's work out a solution to repair the damage together."</p> |
| <p>Scenario: Setting Boundaries with Friends</p> <p>Context: A friend frequently asks for favors and help with their problems, overwhelming you.</p> | |
| <p>Scenario: Requesting a Raise</p> <p>Context: You've been working at your job for a while and believe you deserve a raise due to your contributions and increased responsibilities.</p> | |
| <p>Scenario: Discussing Household Chores</p> <p>Context: You and your partner live together, and you want to have a conversation about dividing household chores more evenly.</p> | |
| <p>Scenario: Requesting Flexibility in Your Work Schedule</p> <p>Context: You have a personal situation that requires more flexible working hours, and you need to request a schedule change.</p> | |