

Using Assertiveness to Sustain Our Advocacy

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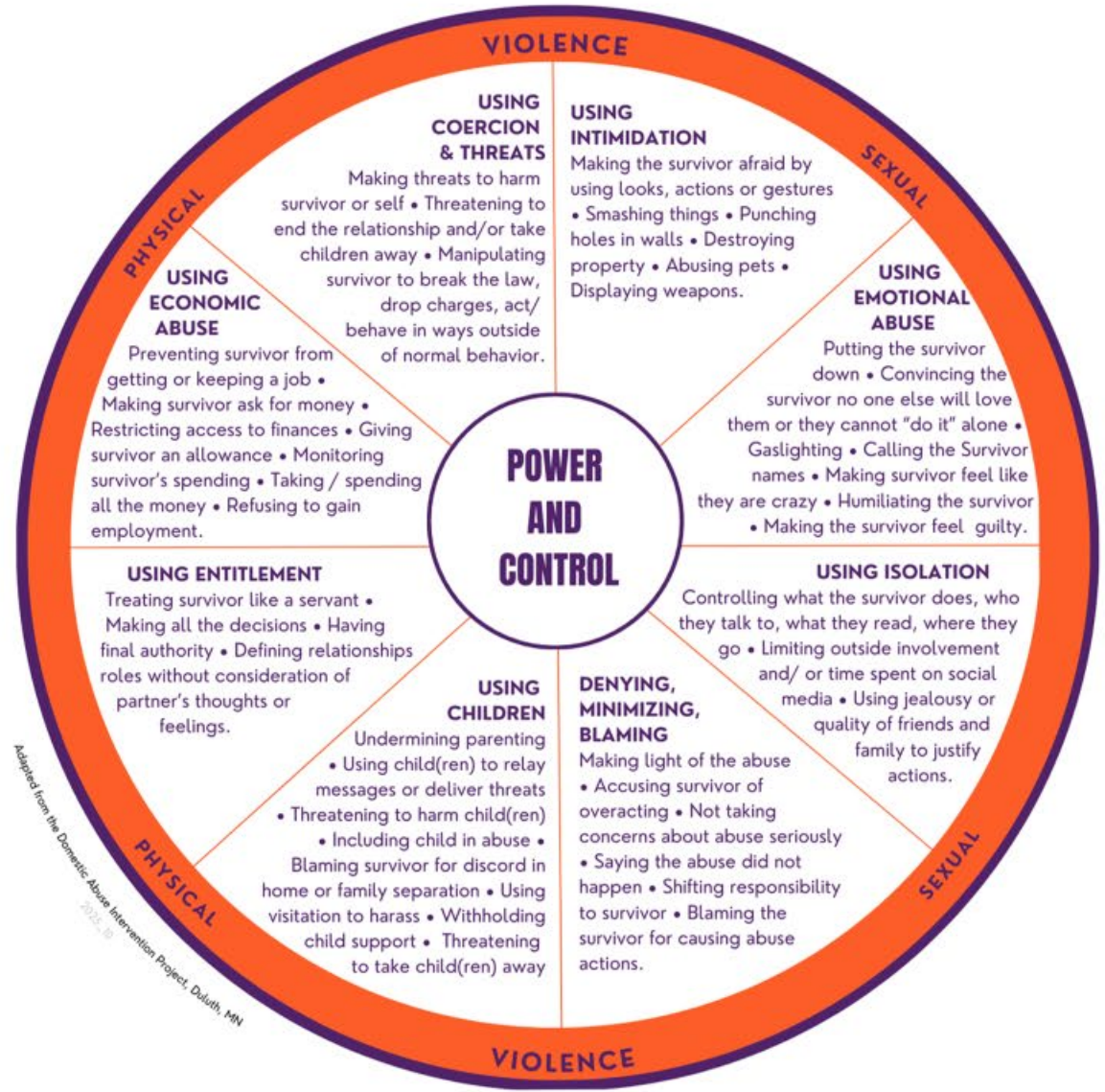
Author, Drowning in Timidity: Women, Politeness, and the Power of Assertive Living

Overview

- **Welcome**
- **Who We Are in the Room**
- **Assertiveness Training 101**
- **Embracing Assertiveness for Ourselves**
- **Maximizing Persuasion**
- **Key Advocacy Negotiation Tactics**
- **References & Recommendations**

Power & Control

As always, power differentials matter. Who we are and the influence we hold can vary by relationship and environment.



ASSERTIVENESS

WHAT IS IT?

Assertiveness is a:

- Skill that can be learned
- A mode of communication

Assertive communication means standing up for yourself or for others in a way that acknowledges your position, thoughts, and/or concerns, in a way that does not sacrifice yourself for others and does not harm (or “steamroll”) others.



RECONSIDER AND REFRAME

Assertiveness is actually:

- Respectful
- Efficient
- Fair
- Polite
- Goal-oriented



ASSERTIVENESS

WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

Passive, Aggressive and Assertive

Assertiveness is often seen as the balance point between passive and aggressive behavior, but it's probably easier to think of the three as points of a triangle.



Assertiveness means standing up for your personal rights - expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways.

Those who behave assertively always respect the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of other people as well as their own. Assertiveness concerns being able to express feelings, wishes, wants and desires appropriately. Assertiveness enables individuals to act in their own best interests, to stand up for themselves without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably and to express personal rights without denying the rights of others.

Responding in a passive or non-assertive way tends to mean compliance with the wishes of others and can undermine individual rights and self-confidence. By being aggressive towards someone else, their rights and self-esteem are undermined.

WHAT HOLDS ME BACK

FROM USING ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION CONSISTENTLY

PERSONALLY

- Socialization/way I was raised
- Would require changing settle relationships
- Worry about how I'll be perceived
- Others?

PROFESSIONALLY

- Company culture
- Supervisor might not like it
- Worry about how I'll be perceived
- Others?

Self-Advocacy

Assertive communication and behavior is crucial for effective self-advocacy.

For Safety

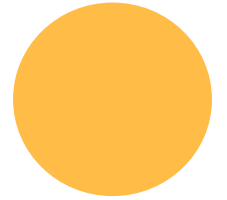
- Direct resistance
- Indirect resistance

For Well-being

- Boundary setting (calendar, relationships)
- Boundary maintenance
- Authentic engagement

For Advancement

- Participation
- Negotiation
- Promotion



ASSERTIVENESS

FOR WELL-BEING

Some of us may have an easier time displaying assertiveness when we know someone's behaviour is clearly wrong, but we struggle to honour our own wants and needs in our interactions and relationships with our friends and family.

Do you:

- **Say yes when you want to say no to social activities?**
- **Spend money you do not have in order to go along?**
- **Change your look in order to fit in with a certain crowd or please your parents?**



S O M E T I M E S B O U N D A R I E S A R E B E A U T I F U L

Sometimes, we need to assert ourselves in order to receive the recognition that we deserve, that we may not be getting for a variety of reasons:

- **Fit or favoritism of others**
- **Distance**
- **Workload**
- **Existing relationships**
- **Competition**

Self-promotion comes more easily to some of us than others. Studies show that some advantages in access and opportunity may be self-perpetuating, as experience builds confidence and entitlement fuels a person's ability to take up space and time and get in front of those with resources and decision-making authority.



FOR ADVANCEMENT

ASSERTIVENESS

Using Assertiveness Fairly

Once you learn it, don't overdo it.

Prioritize fairness.

If you think you came on too strong, circle back to others for feedback they may have felt unable to share during the meeting or conversation.

Avoid asserting yourself unnecessarily, if your wants and needs do not need to be prioritized. Remember, embracing assertiveness for daily living is about creating a fairer, more equitable community.



Share Space

Minimize interruptions

Consider seating arrangements

Create structure where needed

Amplify the voices of others

FREE PRACTICE

Consider incorporating these free, easy practices into your routine this week:

- Make some noise. Take up space. Move with purpose.
- Write yourself a pep talk.
- Say no. Without apologizing.
- Say yes.
- Ask for something.

You must identify your own fear and offense responses before you can figure out what form of assertiveness you need to employ.

Understanding your personal response allows you to exert control over myself, to identify what I will do before it happens, and assess the tactical costs and benefits to a certain type of behavioral response.

If something did not come to mind right away, make a list of 3 times you felt unsafe. What did you do? How did you wish you had responded? Can you identify your instinctive pattern of responses, or does your response vary widely?

"It's not always about overcoming fear; sometimes it's about learning how to use and harness you fear to achieve what you truly want out of life, to become the strongest version of yourself that you can possibly be.

-- Evy Poumpouras,
Special Agent, U.S.
Secret Service



Choices

What can be done?

Aspects of identity, role variation, and power differentials in our workplaces mean we cannot all engage the same way, in similar situations and expect the same results.



**Passivity
(Do Not Engage)**



**Engage
Passive-Aggressively**

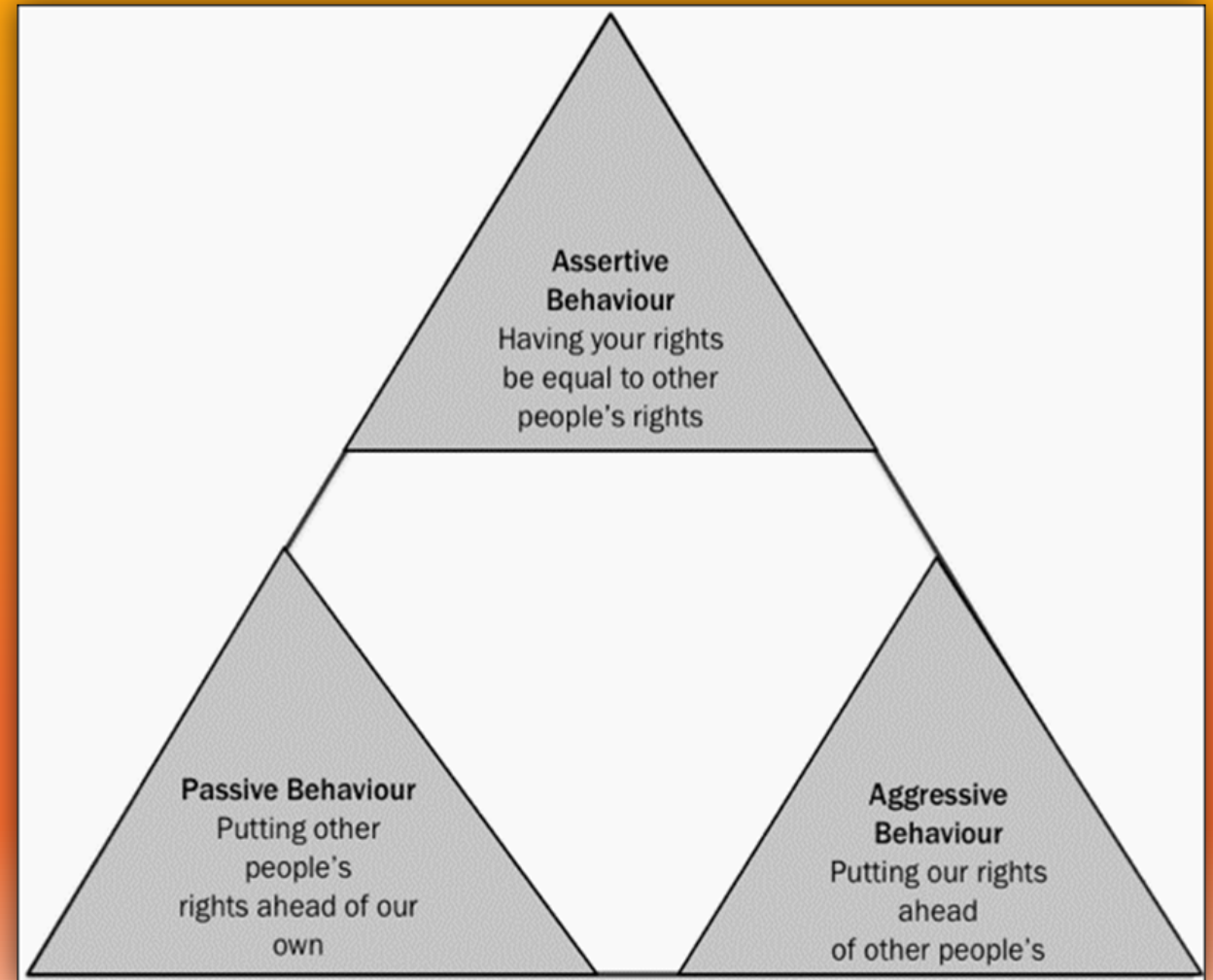
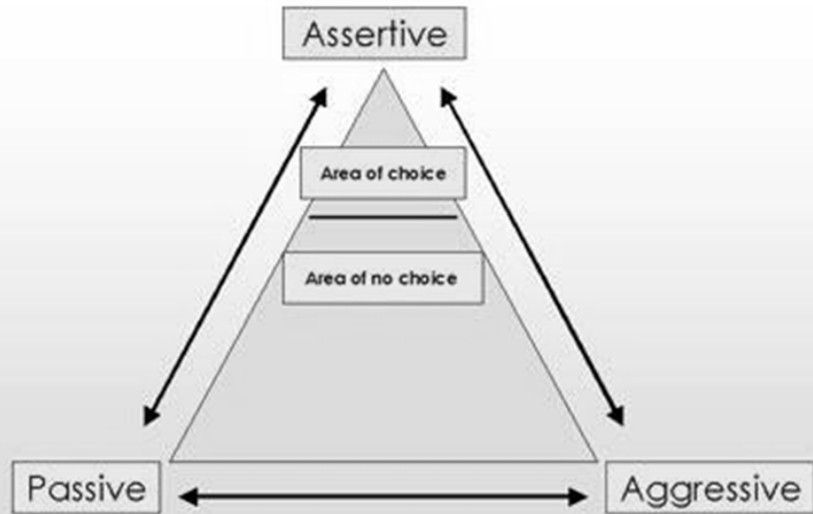


**Engage
Assertively**



**Engage
Aggressively**

The assertiveness triangle





How Assertive Communication is Trauma-Informed

Remember, it is aggressive communication that may be problematic.

Assertive communication is:

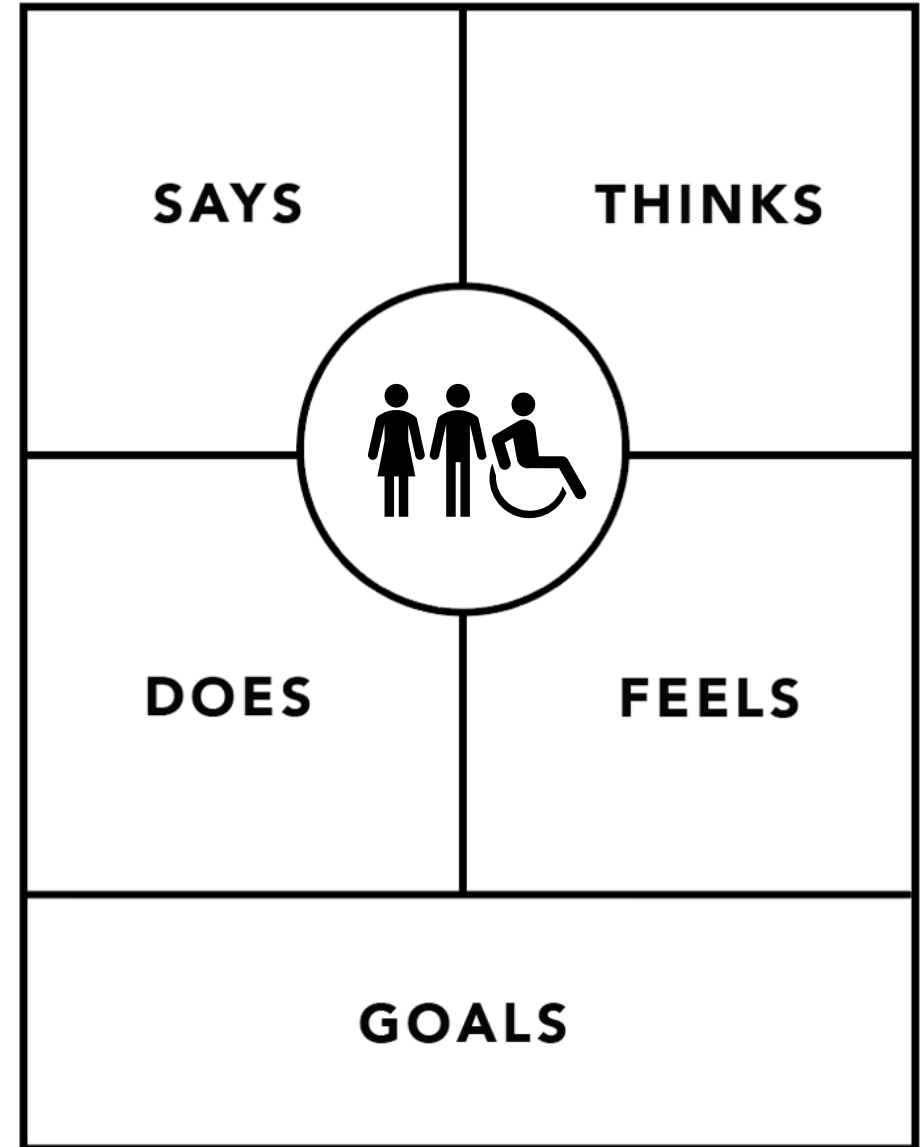
- Clear
- Efficient
- Fair
- Balanced, and it
- Models and reinforces boundary-setting

Acknowledgment:

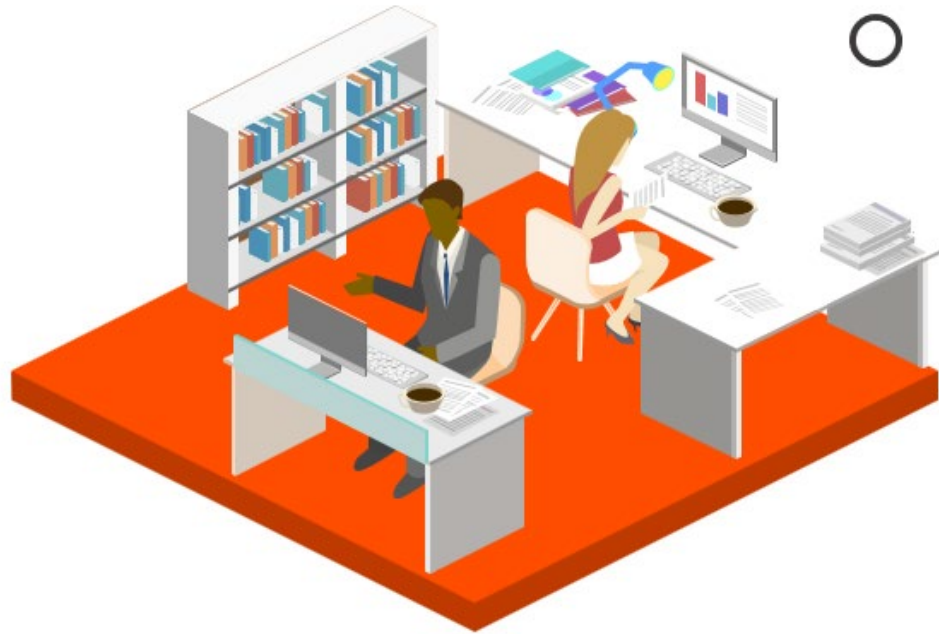
Sometimes assertive communication may feel risky due to power differentials and concerns about safety and retaliation. Prioritize safety.

Effective Assertive Communication

An **empathy map** is a collaborative visualization used to articulate what we know about a person. It externalizes knowledge about others in order to 1) create a shared understanding of the needs of those involved, and 2) aid in our decision making.

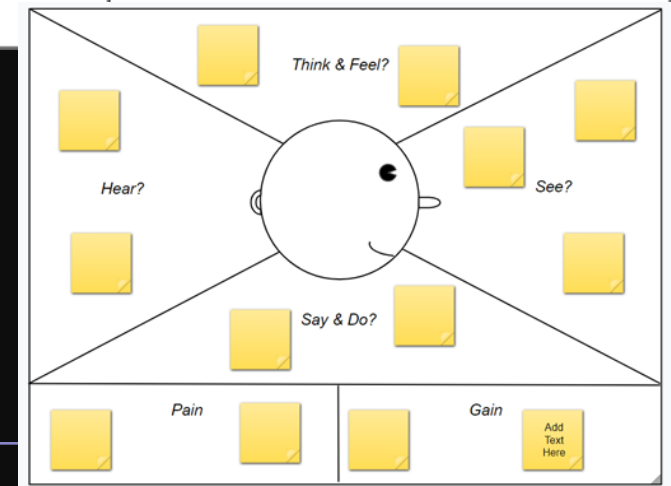
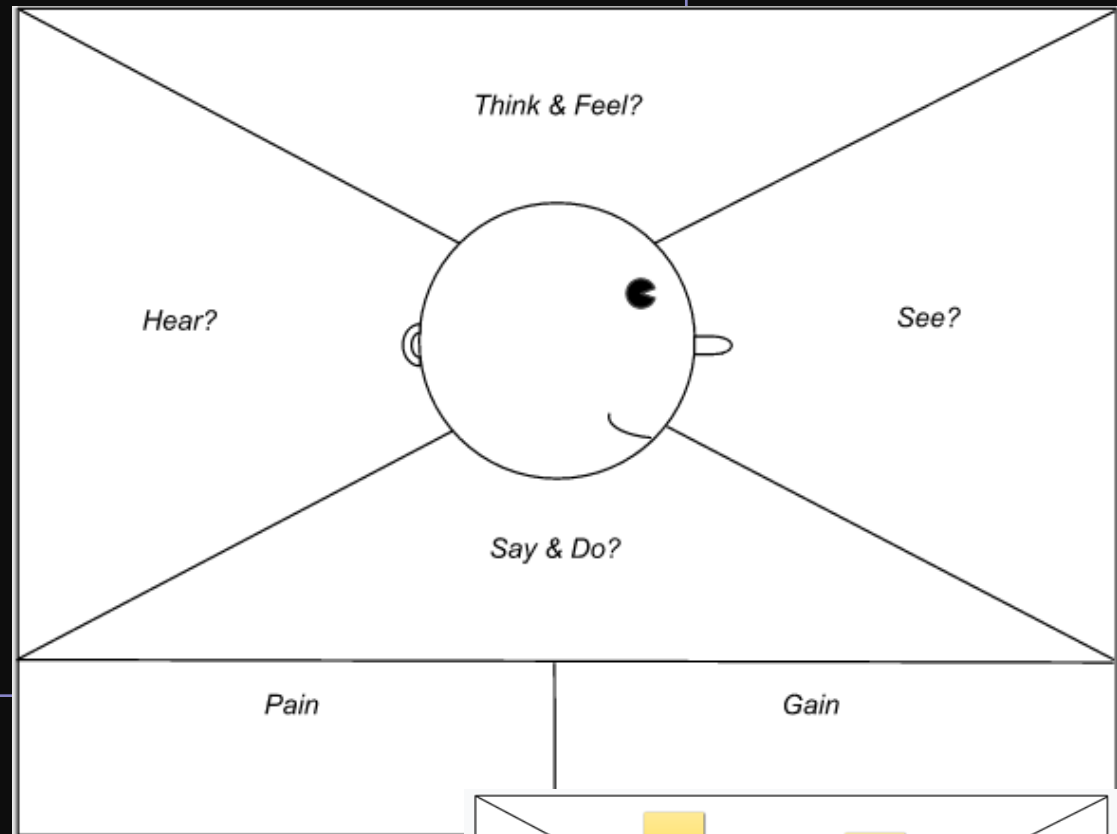


Empathy Mapping



- What might the person to whom we are speaking might be thinking and feeling?
- What are some of their concerns for the conversation?
- What would the person hear if I say something in a particular way?
- What will the person see while I'm talking?
- What might the person ask during our conversation?
- How might those questions be impacted by our roles?
- What are some of the user's pain points or fears for the conversation?
- What gains might the person leave with, if the conversation goes well?

Empathy Mapping



APPLYING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

EMPATHY MAPPING & ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Consent approach
 - Understanding assertive communication as fair and ethical, we can embrace it as a consent-based practice
- Transparent and predictable
 - As we strive to communicate clearly and efficiently, we avoid contributing to the noise, overwhelm, and confusion that can trauma survivors already must navigate
 - We listen and we explain
- No shame, no pressure
 - We are not using indirect communication or persuasive tactics when we communicate directly
 - We convey our needs (our timeline) and others have the opportunity to share theirs

FOR A MORE RESISTANT AUDIENCE



3 VARIABLES TO CONSIDER AS YOU PREPARE

- **Degree of Change**
 - Significant changes require a sensitive, comprehensive message that acknowledges and proactively addresses the inevitable questions and concerns.
- **Degree of Involvement**
 - The more you ask of the audience, the more they need to believe in you and your message.
- **Degree of Skill**
 - Your level of persuasive communication. Can you get them to hear your message? To care? To act?

The Secret To Persuasive Communication (2017)
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/10/02/the-secret-to-persuasive-communication/?sh=5bc4b0042939>

PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION



1. Reciprocity

People feel obligated to give back.

2. Scarcity

People want what is rare or unique and to feel special.

3. Authority

Hang those diplomas! Mention experience and titles.

4. Consistency

Start small and build; increase their action/role.

5. Liking

Build rapport. It pays.

6. Social Proof

Point out what many are doing; highlight those who agree with you.

7. Unity

Again, take time to build rapport. Shared traits increase liking and a sense of belonging.

- “Just”
- “Sorry”
- “I hope that’s okay”
- “I’m not sure if...”
 - Instead, say, **“Would you like to?”**
- “I hate to bother you” or “I’m sorry to bother you”
 - Instead, say, **“When you have a minute,...”**
- Passive voice that erases your contribution
 - Instead, use “I” statements
- Over explaining
- Too few words (comes across terse and as an order)
- Putting your ask last
 - Ask early and directly, then explain
- Misspelling or mispronouncing names
- Starting work/job search calls like personal calls
 - Skip the lone “Hello?” and go right into your introduction: **“Hello! This is Cara Tuttle, Director of Project Safe at Vanderbilt University.”**



Words, phrases, and habits to avoid

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/20/9-words-and-phrases-that-make-any-professional-look-weak.html>; <https://www.businessinsider.com/introduce-yourself-first-thing-on-the-phone-2016-10>

Making an Ask

Prepare

Know your ideal outcome, your acceptable outcome, and your limit before you initiate the negotiation conversation.

Ask Directly

Be pleasant and direct. Keep the ask simple, if possible. Ask first, then make your case (briefly), and create time for consideration.

Stop Talking

If a phone call, get off the phone. If an in-person ask, get out of there! Answer questions, offer to provide further information, be polite but do not linger.



Believe in Your Ask

Start polite and optimistic

Thank them for their time and offer and acknowledge any possible constraints:

- “Thank you for the offer. I’m excited about this opportunity. I understand that it has been budgeted for [X amount] but I am hoping to explore if additional funding is available.”
- “I appreciate you taking the time to discuss this with me, and I understand some of the budget limitations may be beyond your control or require discussion with others. I am hoping we can explore options for a salary increase or bonus at this time.”
- Don’t present all of your options right away. Maybe you would be happy with flex time if a raise isn’t available. Maybe you could get both!

Timing

Our goal is to maximize your position.

- Don't mention what little you might accept
- Stall as needed
- Ask questions
- Build in something for you to concede





When to Hold Firm

Bad Reactions

Some supervisors may react badly, as if they are caught off guard or offended that you might ask for more money or some other accommodation. Considering that you need them to say yes, try to avoid becoming activated by their bad behavior.

Red Tape

Sometimes we may have to go through a lengthy process to get a reclassification or raise. Sometimes we just have supervisors who aren't equipped to lead, who delay or avoid paperwork or making decisions that might bother others. Revisit your ask.

It Really Matters

If you're ready for the ultimatum, hold firm. But unless you are willing to walk away, avoid coming on too strong too early or too often. When it's really worth it to you, then strongly make your case. Just be prepared for the possible no.

- You can call people out for the actions without labeling them a bad person.
- Consider how or to what extent “cancel culture” creates change.
- What can you do to help the person understand that what they did or said impacted others and that such behaviors are not welcome in this environment?
- How can you disrupt the behavior in such a way to minimize the harm without amplifying the distress, embarrassment, or discomfort of the person targeted?
- How can you address the behavior in such a way that the person who committed the act will ponder their responsibility in the situation?



Confront the Behavior

NOT THE PERSON

WANT TO BE CONVINCING? BE POSITIVE.

Non-task communication (that is, the conversations before and after the presentation or negotiation) is crucial to consider.

- Prime your audience by getting them thinking of happy things
- Remember, people like people who like them
- Consider your posture, volume, tone, and body language
 - Positive expressive movement is encouraged!



Use positive emotions in your communication to influence and gain trust (2020) <https://cuttingedgepr.com/use-positive-emotions-in-your-communication-to-influence-and-gain-trust/>



USE POSITIVE EMOTIONS

No matter how scientific, medical, or mathematical your topic, don't discount emotion.

Dunn, Jennifer & Schweitzer, Maurice. (2005). Feeling and Believing: The Influence of Emotion on Trust. *Journal of personality and social psychology*.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7842418_Feeling_and_Believing_The_Influence_of_Emotion_on_Trust

- Happy audience members were significantly more trusting than were sad ones; sad audience members were significantly more trusting than were angry ones.
- Gratitude is the most powerful trust-building emotion, followed by pride
- Sadness challenges trust and anger typically erodes it among audience members
- These effects are strongest when the speaker is unfamiliar to the audience
- “Emotions may play an important role in trust judgments precisely because people are unaware of the significant influence their emotional state has on their judgment.”



DROWNING IN TIMIDITY

WOMEN, POLITENESS, & THE
POWER OF ASSERTIVE
LIVING

TO ACCESS YOUR
FREE COPY OF THE
ASSERTIVENESS
WORKBOOK



CODE: ASSERTIVE

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RECOMMENDED READING



Ask for It: How Women Can Use the Power of Negotiation to Get What They Really Want by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever

The Assertive Woman by Stanlee Phelps and Nancy Austin

Untamed, Glennon Doyle

Brave, Not Perfect: Fear Less, Fail More, and Live Bolder, Reshma Saujani

The Likeability Trap: How to Break Free and Succeed as You Are, Alicia Menendez

Becoming Bulletproof: Life Lessons from a Secret Service Agent, Evy Pompouras

Boundaries and Protection, Pixie Lighthouse

Your Perfect Right: Assertiveness and Equality in Your Life and Relationships, Robert Alberti, Michael Emmons

Where to Draw the Line, Anne Katherine

Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times, Carla Bergman and Nick Montgomery

RECOMMENDATIONS

It's Not Manipulation, It's Strategic Communication, Keisha Brewer, TEDxGeorgetown <https://youtu.be/QGeHS4jO0X0>.

Toastmasters International (You don't have to join! There are many free public speaking resources at <https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/>.)

Danny Rubin's Series on Business Insider <https://www.businessinsider.com/author/danny-rubin>
(Including How to Write an Email to Someone who is Frustrated with You <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-write-an-email-to-someone-who-is-frustrated-with-you-2016-1>)

Harvard Business Review Power of Persuasion Collection <https://store.hbr.org/product/the-power-of-persuasion-collection/0007BN>

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In by Roger Fisher and William Ury, Penguin (1983).

Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations by William Ury, Bantam (1993).

Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive by Noah J. Goldstein, Steve J. Martin, and Robert B. Cialdini, Simon & Schuster (2009).

Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek, Portfolio (2011).

Niro Sivanathan: The counterintuitive way to be more persuasive, TED https://youtu.be/hK8kk_3WA7w.

You are Contagious, Vanessa Van Edwards, TEDxLondon <https://youtu.be/cef35Fk7YD8>.

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9 Words and Phrases that Make Any Professional Look Weak, CNBC (2018), <https://www.cNBC.com/2018/02/20/9-words-and-phrases-that-make-any-professional-look-weak.html>

The 3-Second Trick to Impress Anyone on the Phone, Danny Rubin, Business Insider (2016), <https://www.businessinsider.com/introduce-yourself-first-thing-on-the-phone-2016-10>

7 Principles of Persuasion <https://www.influenceatwork.com/7-principles-of-persuasion/>

Cialdini's 7th Persuasion Principle: Using Unity in Online Marketing, <https://cxl.com/blog/cialdini-unity/>.

Dunn, Jennifer & Schweitzer, Maurice. (2005). Feeling and Believing: The Influence of Emotion on Trust. Journal of personality and social psychology. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7842418_Feeling_and_Believing_The_Influence_of_Emotion_on_Trust

Use positive emotions in your communication to influence and gain trust (2020), <https://cuttingedgepr.com/use-positive-emotions-in-your-communication-to-influence-and-gain-trust/>

Looking to Make a Sale or Get Promoted? Emotions Will Help Determine the Outcome (2005), <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/looking-to-make-a-sale-or-get-promoted-emotions-will-help-determine-the-outcome/>

Harnessing the Science of Persuasion (2001) <https://hbr.org/2001/10/harnessing-the-science-of-persuasion>

The Secret To Persuasive Communication (2017), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/10/02/the-secret-to-persuasive-communication/?sh=5bc4b0042939>.