Don’t Just Stand There,

SAY SOMETHING!

Donna Scemons PhD FNP-C CNS
donnahs@earthlink.net
Objectives

- Identify assertive & nonassertive behaviors
- Describe your personal rights
- Describe assertiveness rights

© D. Scemons 2009
Personal Inventory

Review these questions, assign a # 1 to 5, 1= never 5 = always

1. I ask others to do things without feeling guilty or anxious.

2. When someone asks me to do something I don’t want to do, I say “No” without feeling guilty or anxious.

3. I am comfortable when speaking to a large group of people.

4. I confidently express my honest opinions to authority figures (such as my lecturer/faculty/supervisor/boss).
Personal Inventory
1= never to 5 = always

5. When I experience powerful feelings (anger, frustration, disappointment etc.) I verbalize them easily.

6. When I express anger, I do so without blaming others for “making me mad”.

7. If I disagree with the majority opinion in any meeting (even with friends or others), I can “stick to my opinion/s” without feeling uncomfortable or being abrasive.

8. I do not find myself exhausted by catering to the wishes of others
Personal Inventory  
1= never to 5 = always

9. When I make a mistake, I will acknowledge it.

10. I tell others when their behavior creates a problem for me.

11. Meeting new people in social situations is something I do with relative ease & comfort.

12. When discussing my beliefs, I do so without labeling the opinions of others as “crazy”, “dumb”, “stupid”, “ridiculous”, “irrational”.

13. I assume that most people are competent & trustworthy & I do not have difficulty delegating tasks to others.
Personal Inventory
1= never to 5 = always

14. When considering doing something I have never done before, I feel confident I can learn to do it.

15. I can say “no” if necessary when friends/people that matter, ask favors of me.

16. I choose not to do things for others to the extent that I feel resentful.

17. Fear of conflict does not scare me from saying what I think/feel.

18. I believe my needs are just as important as those of others.
Assertion Theory

Based on the belief that:

Everyone has basic human rights that are to be respected.

Everyone can develop assertion skills.
Assertion

The art of being confident; consistently having clear & honest communication while respecting others rights & taking responsibility for one’s actions. (Dainow & Bailey, 1988; Boggs, 2003, Lange & Jakubowski, 1978; Petronkon, 1987)
Only You Know

- What is the reason you selected this session today?

- Are you as assertive as you would like to be?

- Who in your life seems to be positively assertive? At home? At work? At school?
Being Positively Assertive

Is a skill that allows you to:

Make requests of others in a way that has a greater potential of a positive result.

Directly express your feelings/emotions.

Give & receive compliments.

Give & receive constructive criticism.
Being Positively Assertive

Set limits & say No

Value & respect human rights in a way that has a greater potential of receiving the same from other people.

Create positive relationships with others.

Implements communication.
Communication

Human beings rely on communication in our personal & professional lives:

Actual words = 7%

Tone of voice = 38%

Nonverbal body language = 55%

for understanding the message!
Seven Messages in Any Communication

• What you mean to say.
• What you actually say.
• What the other person/s hear/s.
• What the other person/s think/s they hear.
• What the other person/s say/s.
• What you hear the other person/s say/s.
• What you think the other person/s say/s.
Assertive Communication Is NOT

- Chronic forgetfulness
- Breaking confidentiality
- Procrastinating
- Over helpful/stifling
- Nagging
- Somatization/withdrawal
- Wish to escape
Assertive Communication Is NOT

- Guilt induction
- Unfair criticism
- Teasing
- Passive resistance
- Intimidation through dependency
- Over agreeableness
Assertive Communication Takes Practice

When in a situation you know is going to be difficult or where the potential for multiple interpretations & misinterpretations is high assertive individuals:
  – Mentally go over what they want to say & how to say it.
  – Practice at least 3-5 ways of expressing what they want.
  – Choose the one that sounds/seems the least offensive & defensive.
  – Evaluate the results & change what they determine is necessary for the future.
    • Remember, Assertive Communicators are always looking for improvement.
Assertive Listening: Part of Effective Communication

• Barriers reduce everyone’s ability to reach mutual understanding of any communication:

  – Message overload: how many messages are you receiving at the same time? (i.e. ringing telephones, several conversations, etc).

  – On-off listening: most individuals who are fluent in a particular language can process at least 500 words per minute, but most of us speak at only 125 wpm.
Assertive Listening: Part of Effective Communication

• Red flags & stop signs: all of us have various words that stop listening when we hear them.
  – What are some of yours?
• Open ears BUT closed minds: AKA constipation of the brain:
  – Too often many of us assume that the message is old information, boring, unimportant, or makes no sense.
• Subject-centered versus speaker-centered:
  – Some of us concentrate on the speaker rather than on the message. Easy to miss the nonverbal message.
Are you a ‘good’ listener?

Answer the following questions with YES or NO…. Just YES or NO, not ‘sometimes’ or ‘with certain’ people or in ‘certain circumstances’.

1. Do you frequently find yourself thinking about something completely different when someone is talking?
2. Do you doodle, shuffle papers, make lists, look at the clock or your wristwatch, or look out the window/door when someone is talking?
3. Do you argue silently with the individual who is talking?
Are you a ‘good’ listener?

YES or NO

4. Do you listen only for facts or ideas that fit what you already believe or think?
5. Do you feel that most people have little that is important or interesting to talk about?
6. Do you listen passively, without any change in facial expression?
7. Do you interrupt others in the middle of a sentence or idea?
Are you a ‘good’ listener?

YES or NO

8. Do you try to complete another person’s sentence when that person seems to be at a loss for words?

9. Do you criticize a speaker’s looks, voice, and/or manner of speaking?

10. Do you have to ask a speaker to repeat something because you have forgotten what was said?
Assertive Communication Improves Information Received

- Avoid these listening & responding traps:
  - Evaluating or judging: evaluating an individual’s behavior may create blocks in the communication. Save this for the right time. (You should… You know better… Bad or Good idea…)
  - Giving advice: save this for the end of the conversation when all other actions have failed to obtain the necessary result. Giving a person the answer does not empower them or create positive growth. Instead challenge their Critical Thinking.
Assertive Communication Improves Information Received

- Asking open-ended questions that require a more detailed response.
  What   Who   Where   When   Why   How
- May need to establish boundaries when using the technique.
- Avoid closed-ended questions whenever possible.
  – Usually require a single word as an answer.
  – Not the most appropriate unless you are trying to clarify specific points, obtain quick answers, or close the conversation.
  Did   Do   Is   Will   Can   Could/should/would
Assertive Communication Improves Information Received

– Bragging or topping: People want to be listened & responded to not competed with in conversation. Avoid the “When I was going to school I had to walk fifty miles in the blizzard barefoot.”

– Being a psychiatrist: Most effective communication is based on reflection of the feelings others express not in interpreting what they really mean.
Assertive Communication Improves Information Received

- Prying or looking for motives:
  - Explaining your actions puts you in an uncomfortable situation & many people will resist the communication.
  - Avoid ‘why didn’t you,’ ‘aren’t you,’ & ‘didn’t they.’

- Rephrase these questions as statements for improved results.

- Warning, admonishing, or commanding:
  - produces resentment, resistance, & rebellion.

- Logical reasoning or lecturing:
  - creates an atmosphere of inferiority & defensiveness. You don’t need the hard sell to persuade people.
Assertive Communication Improves Information Received

– Devaluing or denying feelings:
  • “you don’t really mean that!” produces resentment & resistance.

– Withdrawing or avoiding or closing up:
  • stops communication & implies that the fault lies with the other person.

– Criticism or labeling:
  • When it is negative in nature, seldom changes behavior over the long term & may create rebellion & resistance with a counterattack.
  • Describe behavior when necessary do not label it.
Components of Effective Direction Giving.

- **Who?**
  best suited for the job? best suited to assume this responsibility?
- **What?**
  tasks are to be performed?
- **Where?**
  is the work to be accomplished?
Components of Effective Direction Giving.

- When? is the task to be done (short or long term)?
- Why? does this job need doing?
- How? is the task to be performed (on which procedures/standards)?
Assertive communication:

• Honest  Ø rude or hurtful
• What you really want
• Allows others to feel safe & also get what they want
• Respectful of yourself & respectful of others
• Ø intentionally hurt people
• Gentle on the individuals while tough on the problem
• Maintains relationships
Passiveness or Passivity Ø
Assertiveness

Appeasing other people & avoiding conflict!

Common behaviors:

• Putting yourself down
• Putting other peoples' needs first
• Saying "It doesn't really matter" when it does.
• Not saying what you really want
• Letting others choose for you


2009 © D. Scemons
You May Be Behaving Passively When

YOU DO:
• Hope that you will get what you want.
• Sit on feelings
• Rely on others to intuit what you want.
• Avoid distress/conflict

YOU DON’T:
• Ask for what you want.
• Express your feelings.
• Usually get what you want.
• Upset anyone.
• Get noticed.

Aggressiveness or Aggression Ø
Assertiveness

• ... expressing thoughts & feelings, in a way that is often dishonest, usually inappropriate, & violates the rights of others.

• ...The goal of aggression is domination & winning.

You May Be Behaving Aggressively When

You:

• Meet your own needs at the expense of others.
• Make choices for other people.
• Hurt others to get what you want.
• Have low self-esteem.
• Regularly lose relationships (not deaths).
• Hurt people that matter to you.
Manipulation or Manipulative Behavior
 Ø Assertiveness

- Sarcastic remarks and put-downs
- Insincere flattery
- Making excuses
4 Types of Assertion

1. Basic assertion
   This is a simple, straightforward expression of your beliefs, feelings, or opinions.
   “I would like” or “I feel” statement

2. Empathic assertion
   Conveys some sensitivity to the other person
   Usually contains 2 parts:

   Recognition of the other person’s situation or feelings,
   Statement in which you assert your rights.
3. Escalating Assertion

If other person fails to respond to your basic assertion & continues to violate your rights you gradually escalate the assertion & become increasingly firm.

4. ‘I’-Language assertion

“‘I’ language assertion is usually about behavior change.

Useful for expressing negative feelings.
Assertive Behavior

- Say or do what is necessary as soon as possible.
- Express positive feelings first.
- Plan what you want to say or do.
- Be specific & direct.
- Take cultural background into account.
- Appear relaxed.
- Choose the appropriate behavior for the specific situation.
The Assertive Message

I feel _______ (describe concretely how you feel) about or when _______ (concretely describe the behavior).

I would prefer or I would appreciate _______ (describe concretely how you want the behavior to change)
Dealing with difficult situations

Suggestions:

• Meet privately.
• Expect that difficult situations will take time to resolve
• Don’t take things personally.
Tips For Difficult Situations

**Identify:** the problem/situation

**Listen:** actively

**Pay attention:** to your limits

**Solve** the situation: with the individual/s involved

2009 © D. Scemons
Improving Saying: NO!

Practice NOT beginning your responses to requests or demands with NO (shuts down communication)

Ask these self-inventory questions:
1. When is it most difficult to say NO?
2. Who is it most difficult to say NO to?
   - What roles do they fill in your life?
3. Where do you experience the MOST difficulty saying NO?
   - Work? Home? Other?
4. Who have been your role models for this?
Inventory Your Emotions/Feelings About Saying NO!

- Fearful?
- Flattered?
- Guilty?
- Important?
- Responsible?
- Self-deprecating?
Improving Your Ability To Say NO!

• Identify the emotions/feelings that occur when you are not able to say NO but want to!

• What are your beliefs about saying NO in these situations?

• Mentally restate your human rights in the situation
  – If this is a new experience select low risk situations first!

2009 © D. Scemons
Improving Your Ability To Say NO!

• With your verbal and nonverbal behavior say NO directly to the person!

• At the end of the situation evaluate the outcomes
  – How did you feel at the time?
  – How do you feel now?
  – What was positive?
  – What would you do differently the next time?

• Practice Practice Practice
Commonalities in the Inability to Say NO!

• Choose to avoid situations we think are or will be unpleasant.

• Choose NOT to please other people.

• Have negative feelings about not being liked or thought well of by other people (specific or in general).
Tips: Situations We Think Are Or Will Be Unpleasant

You have a right to ask for what you want and need, just as the other person has a right to refuse.

The best way to get your needs met is to be direct about what they are.

How can you logically expect people to read your mind?
Tips: Situations We Think Are Or Will Be Unpleasant

If others do become angry & unpleasant, I can handle it without falling apart.

You are **NOT** responsible for anyone else’s anger!

You choose to be vulnerable of **NOT** to another person’s moods.

You are **NOT** responsible for anyone else’s feeling hurt **IF** you are communication assertively.

If another is hurt when I am assertive I can communicate that I care for them.
Tips: Not Pleasing Others

It is NOT selfish to communicate my needs assertively.
All requests can be refused assertively even legitimate ones.
Considering my needs before those of other people is appropriate sometimes.
No one can please everyone all the time.
If I do not like myself how can other people honestly like me?
Tips: The Gender Game

Assertiveness does not belong to either females or males

Assertive human beings are just that: assertive human beings NOT aggressive!

Direct
Honest
Open
Not passive
Opinions

Assertive human beings are humble & modest. Do not believe or act superior to others.

Everyone has the right to show their abilities & be confident in them.

Psychologically & emotionally it is healthy to know & own your strengths as well as areas in which you can improve.

Everyone’s opinion is just that – someone’s opinion.
What If I Make Stupid Statements or Ask Dumb Questions?

To err is human!

To lack information is human.

To not ask the question may create the mistake.
The Anxiety Game

Destructive self-talk:
What if?
Chicken Little!!!!
I can’t do anything about it!
I can’t do anything right/correctly!
I can’t take it!!!
I’m so confused!!
I can’t!
This is a dumb question but -----!
Coping With The Anxiety Game

Learn calming self-talk. It is a skill.
Stop destructive, self-deprecating statements.
4 deep breaths: I’m calm; I can do this; etc.

Set specific goals.
  Break down tasks to manageable chunks.
Concentrate on the task at hand.
If this happens I will -----.
Practice, Practice, Practice.

2009 © D. Scemons
Coping With The Anxiety Game

Practice:
- different vocal tones.
- saying the same thing in 3 to 5 different assertive ways.
- Broken Record.

Keep it simple & short.
Rehearse in your mind whenever it is possible.
- Stop, Think, Orient, & Plan.
Assertive Feedback

- BALANCE positive with negative feedback and start with the positive.

- BE SPECIFIC - don’t generalize.
  Example:
  I didn’t feel you really heard me about the___time/problem.”
  NOT
  “You’re a poor listener.”

- DESCRIBE ACTIONS not traits or characteristics.

  Example:
  “Our problems are not listed on the board.”
  NOT
  “You’re an incompetent facilitator; or You didn’t list--”
Assertive Feedback

ASK for more or less of things rather than make categorical statements.

DESCRIBE the impact of the other person’s actions on yourself. Use “I” messages which describe your feelings, your response, your dilemma etc rather than “you” messages which focus on the behavior of others.

DON’T PUSH the point; say what you feel then listen.
Managing Conflict Before It Becomes Destructive

• Start with a carefully worded statement: i.e. “I have a difficult situation/issue to discuss with you…”
• Acknowledge reservations/vulnerabilities: “I’ve been reluctant to discuss this…..”
• State the original goal/agreement.. use ‘we’ terms.
  – CHANGE your point of view:
    • stop using statements that start with “YOU”
• State what you see… be brief, candid, &supportive.
  – AVOID accusation & blame:
    • do not use “ALWAYS” & “NEVER” or state assumptions as fact.
Managing Conflict Before It Becomes Destructive

• Acknowledge your role or part in the situation.
  – MANAGE your own anger & fear:
    • count to 10, 20, 30; practice deep breathing, ask for time out, recognize your emotions & put them aside
    • OWN the process:
      • identify the issues that drive your anger & be responsible for finding a solution
  – DO NOT escalate the argument:
    • do not shout, interrupt, threaten next steps
    • State that you want to resolve this so……..
  • Ask for the assistance you need & want
Managing Conflict Before It Becomes Destructive

- WATCH your language:
  - do not call names, bully, belittle, or use offensive language
  - NEVER use or threaten to use violence:
  - do not push, shove, throw things, shake your finger or fist, or touch the other person
- Ask how the other person sees it & ‘Zip it up’ BE SILENT!
- LISTEN
  - use active listening skills, empathy, and CLARITY
- Negotiate a different way of working together.
Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflicts move through 5 distinct recognizable stages

Purpose of looking at conflict is to see & manage it before it becomes counterproductive or unmanageable.

1. Anticipation of conflict occurring.
2. Unexpressed differences or disenchantment or disgruntlement.
3. Discussion which includes a stating of the positions of the various people without trying to identify or resolve differences.

© D. Scemons 2009
Conflict and Conflict Resolution

4. Open conflict: differences are sharper & points of view are more clearly defined. Individuals often begin to see ‘wrong’ & ‘right’ or ‘good’ and ‘bad.’

5. Open destructive conflict: people are committed to one position & the outcome is seen as a win or lose situation.
   • Individuals will most often attempt to increase influence & power while undermining the opposition.
New Tricks
THE CREATOR GAVE YOU TWO ENDS--ONE FOR SITTING, ONE FOR THINKING.

YOUR SUCCESS DEPENDS ON WHICH YOU USE. HEADS YOU WIN TAILS YOU LOSE!
Thank You
References


2009 © D. Scemons