

WHAT IS ASSERTIVENESS?

Assertiveness: Expressing one's thoughts, feelings, needs and wants in a manner which does not harm the self, others or the environment

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR

1. Eye Contact- Looking directly at a person helps to communicate your sincerity and to increase the directness of your message. Do not stare too intently or the person may feel uncomfortable.
2. Body Posture- An active, erect posture facing the person directly will help communicate assertiveness. Sometime when one is trying to stand up for oneself, one may decide to do just that- stand up (particularly if the other person standing).
3. Distance/Physical Contact- Distance from another person has a considerable effect on communication. Being too close may frighten or intimidate someone-it may be interpreted as aggressive. Being too far away from someone may enable them to not take you seriously enough.
4. Gestures- Using gestures as one communicates can add emphasis, openness and warmth. Uninhibited movement while one is talking can suggest self-confidence and spontaneity.
5. Facial Expressions- It is important that a person's facial expression matches what he/she is communicating. Sometimes people laugh and smile when they are trying to express anger. One's anger will not be taken seriously unless one's expression is serious.
6. Voice Tone/Volume- The way we use our voice is one of the most vital elements of assertive communication. Imagine the same words spoken in three different ways: 1) Through clenched teeth in anger; 2) Shouted with joy; 3) Whispered in fear. They would suggest three different messages. The loudness of your voice also affects the way your message is received.
7. Fluency- Is the ability to speak smoothly with a comfortable flow of words. Speech that is too rapid or that has long periods of hesitation is less persuasive and difficult to listen to. Listeners may get bored or think one is unsure of oneself.

RELATIONSHIP ASPECTS OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR

8. Timing- It is important to consider timing when being assertive. Mostly, it is best to assert oneself spontaneously in the moment but often that may not be appropriate. For example, it is probably not wise to confront someone in front of the group because he/she will be more defensive. You may also need some time to think about what one is going to say.
9. Listening- Listening while being assertive involves an active commitment to the other person. It requires one's full attention. It demonstrates one's respect for the other person and involves tuning in to the other person and actively attempting to understand them.
10. Content- It is important to express oneself spontaneously and honestly but one must be careful about what one actually says and be willing to take responsibility for it. It is much more appropriate to say, "I'm damn mad about what you just did!" , rather than "You're an SOB." It is much more effective to state how one feels as opposed to calling someone a name. Use "I" statements such as "I feel angry" in order to take responsibility for one's own feelings rather than blaming the other person as in, "You make me so mad!"