

Confident Communication at Work

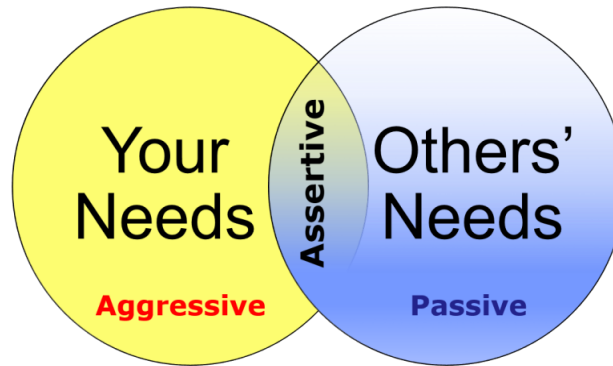
How to be assertive about what you need!

with Brook Thorndycraft

What is Assertive Communication?

Dorland's Medical Dictionary defines assertiveness as:

A form of behavior characterized by a confident declaration or affirmation of a statement without need of proof; this affirms the person's rights or point of view without either aggressively threatening the rights of another (assuming a position of dominance) or submissively permitting another to ignore or deny one's rights or point of view.



<p>Effective Communication usually includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A clear message 2. Appropriate words 3. Congruent body language 4. Appropriate mode 	<p>Assertive Communication includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offering your opinion 2. Saying no 3. Making requests 4. Giving Feedback 5. Receiving challenging feedback
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Assertion is:

- Not about getting your way, but about clear communication
- Behaving and speaking in ways that maintains our integrity AND that of others
- About learning from the process and being willing to change

Communication Styles

Characteristics of Aggressive Communicators:

- Clear in expressing their needs. Ideas and feelings, but do so in a self-focused way
- Often dismiss the ideas of others as invalid or even stupid
- Conveys a readiness to fight in order to meet goals
- **Body language:** is large and imposing. Eye contact is strong and sustained. Voice is often loud.
- **Goals:** to gain control of situations and win at any expense
- **Emotions:** Angry or powerful at the time, and victorious when you win. Afterward: remorse, guilt or self-hatred for hurting others.

Characteristics of Passive Communicators:

- Often keep quiet and apologize when they express themselves
- Find it difficult to express their needs, wants, feelings and ideas
- Will often allow others to dictate what goals and deny that they disagree
- **Body language:** is small and retreating. Tend to avoid eye contact. Voice is often soft.
- **Goals:** to avoid conflict, maintain relationships or please others and give others control
- **Emotions:** Fear of rejection, helplessness, frustration, and anger. Resentful towards others who “use” you. Reduced self-respect.

Characteristics of Passive-Aggressive Communicators:

- Don't meet the expectations of others but through “deniable” means – forgetting, being delayed, and so on.
- Deny personal responsibility for actions.
- **Body language:** usually similar to passive - small and retreating. Tend to avoid eye contact. Voice is often soft.
- **Goals:** to get your own way without having to take responsibility
- **Emotions:** Fear that you would be rejected if you were more assertive. Resentment at the demands of others. Fear of being controlled.

Beliefs of the Different Styles

Beliefs that support Aggressive Communicators:

- If I don't express myself nothing will get done
- "Nice guys finish last!"
- My anger is justified
- I am only being honest
- I need to maintain control
- There are goals to be met and I know how to accomplish them

Beliefs that support Passive Communicators:

- Kindness matters and we should be sensitive to others
- We need to be careful not to offend others, being accepted is very important and I don't want to risk rejection
- My opinion is not as important as others who know more about this topic – I trust others
- It is selfish to think of your own needs before those of others
- I might explode if I start talking

Beliefs that support Passive-Aggressive Communicators:

- I am entitled to get my own way, even after making commitments to others
- I am not responsible for my actions
- It's too risky to speak up, I'm afraid of trying to be assertive and failing
- People should know how I feel and what I want, and take that into account

Checkpoint: The Most Important Belief

Take a look back to the beliefs on the past several pages. Which belief has the biggest effect on you? Which one holds you back from being assertive the most?

Does this belief cause you to become more passive, aggressive or passive-aggressive?

What types of situations or which relationships does it affect the most?

When the belief above begins to affect you, what could you say to yourself in response?

Points to help Aggressive Communicators:

- You can reach your goals without being aggressive
- Let go of the fear that no one will listen to you if you're not aggressive
- Remind yourself that just because others hold different opinions than your own does not mean that they do not value yours
- Do not interrupt when others are speaking
- Ask questions to make sure you understand the other person before you state your interests

Points to help Passive Communicators:

- Your feelings, wants and ideas are worthy of being heard and met
- Tell yourself that you deserve to be heard and that you'll ultimately become resentful if you're not
- Remind yourself that people who think differently than you want to hear your thoughts
- Ask questions to build rapport and demonstrate interest

Assertive Communication

Characteristics of Assertive Communicators:

- Are clear in expressing their needs, ideas and feelings directly and honestly
- Don't assume they are correct or that everyone will feel the same way
- Allow others to hold other views without dismissing or insulting them
- **Body language:** is relaxed, movements are casual. Eye contact is frequent but not glaring.
- **Goals:** both you and others keep their self-respect. Express yourself without having to win all the time. No one controls anyone else.
- **Emotions:** Feel positive about yourself and the way you treat others. Self-esteem rises.

Beliefs that support Assertive Communicators:

- My needs and those of others are equally important.
- We have an equal right to express ourselves
- We both have something valuable to contribute
- I am responsible for my choices and behaviour, and others are responsible for theirs

What Stands in the Way of Assertive Communication?

- Stress response
- Social barriers
 - History with certain people and resistance to change
 - Short-term pain
 - Gender conditioning and expectations
- Beliefs

Reflection:

I am already quite assertive when...

My biggest fear or barrier to being assertive is....

Two people/situations in my life where I'd like to be more assertive are...

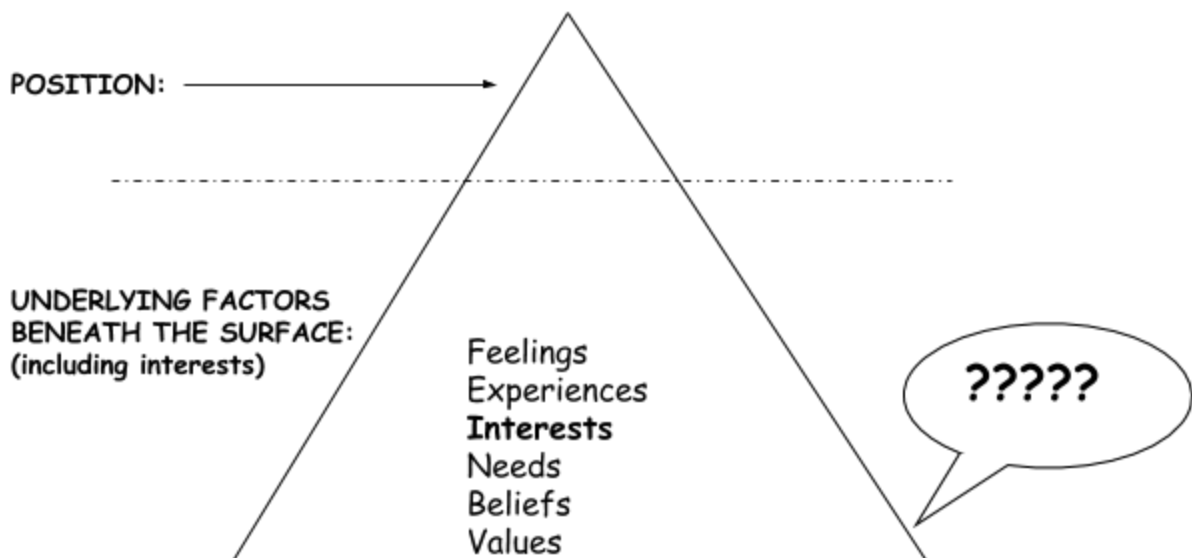
Listening to Understand

How to Know What you Need AND What They Need

“Everything we say and do is an attempt to meet a need or value.” –
Marshall Rosenberg

We need to look at the **underlying factors** that motivate and fuel the positions people take. These are the things that are of most importance to people.

- Understanding them clears up mistaken assumptions
- Understanding their interests (see below) leads to better solutions



Different Types of Interests

Substantive Interests (result) “What”	Psychological Interests (emotional)	Procedural Interests (process) “How”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Things · Resources · Time · Money · Food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Respect · Having a voice · Feeling included · Saving face · Feeling cared about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · When · How long · How transparent · Fairness · Confidentiality

Feelings You May Have If Your Needs Are Not Satisfied

AFRAID

apprehensive
dreading
full of foreboding
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED

aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated
irked

ANGRY

enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

AVERSION

animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED

ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled

DISCONNECTED

alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed
uninterested
withdrawn

SAD

depressed
dejected
despairing
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn
gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy
unhappy
wretched unsettled
upset

FATIGUED

beat
burnt out
depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

EMBARRASSED

ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

DISQUIET

agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved

PAIN

agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

TENSE

anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety
frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

VULNERABLE

fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

YEARNING

envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic

Needs and Values

CONNECTION

respect
acceptance
belonging
love
affection
kindness
compassion
consideration
thoughtfulness
friendliness
empathy
understanding
patience
nurturing
sensitivity
gentleness
generosity
sharing
mutuality
family
friendship
community
support
cooperation
teamwork
communication
trust

AUTONOMY

choice
freedom
independence
self-reliance
individuality
solitude
space
privacy
confidentiality

STRENGTH

resourcefulness
power
agency
self-discipline
endurance
resilience
competence

RESPONSIBILITY

commitment
accountability
reliability
consistency
hard work

RECOGNITION

appreciation
acknowledgement
good reputation

FAIRNESS

justice
equality
inclusion
participation
consultation
openness
accessibility

HONESTY

integrity
directness
transparency
clarity

POLITENESS

tact
diplomacy

ORDER

organization
efficiency
accuracy
punctuality
neatness
professionalism
attention to detail

FLEXIBILITY

spontaneity
innovation
open-mindedness
creativity
self-expression

PEACE

quiet
calm
ease
tranquility
serenity
harmony
relaxation

FOCUS

concentration
attention

SAFETY

security
stability
familiarity
predictability

HEALTH

exercise
nutrition
rest

PRACTICALITY

pragmatism
realism

MEANING

contribution
purpose
growth
discovery
learning
challenge
stimulation

SPIRITUALITY

faith
religious practice

TRADITION

history
cultural heritage

ENJOYMENT

fun
celebration
beauty
humour
play

Making Requests

We often need to ask people to support us, lend a hand and to work alongside of us. When we make requests of others we need to allow the space for either “yes” or “no”.

Example Request Situations

- Request time off from work for medical appointments;
- Request overtime when you have previously been “volunteering” your time;
- Request that your workload not be increased for the next few months while you catch up;
- Request more time to finish a project that your boss thinks should be done faster;
- Ask for a raise.

Specific Way for Making a Request

Describe – Clearly state what is happening, the context.

e.g. “We have a lot to do to meet this deadline this morning.”

Express – State your feelings/needs in the situation.

e.g. “ I’m worried that we won’t be ready on time.”

Request – Be specific about what you are asking

e.g. “Could you set aside 20 minutes to do an edit of the story?”

Outcomes – State you goals/objectives/hopes

e.g. “I’d be grateful for your support so that we can meet our goal of two local stories by noon.”

Your Request:

1. Choose a request, either from the list above, or your own.
2. Write out the request following the format above.

The “No” of Assertion

Being responsible for yourself means you need to be able to say “no.” If you rarely say no, it means others are charting your course.

Strategies around Saying No:

- ✓ **Wait to be asked:** Sometimes we offer to help out even before a request has been made.
- ✓ **Formulate your position before you speak:** Know what you are willing to do before you speak. If you’re unsure, say that you need some time to think about the request
- ✓ Be assertive with your **body language:** Eyes and head up, speak loudly enough to be heard clearly. If your body language is unsure, people may continue to push for a yes.
- ✓ **Do not feel compelled to explain or rationalize your “no.”**
- ✓ Repeat: Be **prepared to state your “no” several times** before it is heard and accepted. It may be necessary to set limits with someone who is having difficulty getting out message.
- ✓ **Allow others their own response:** they may not like your “no.” They may be hurt or angered, but they are theirs to deal with and you’ll both get through it!

Practice Saying “No”

1. Think of a request that you’d like to say no to.

(If you can’t think of anything, imagine someone at work asks if you can proofread a report, due this afternoon)

2. Write down how you will say no to this request.

Undermining Email Structures - from *Playing Big* by Tara Mohr

Hi Chris and Susan,

Thanks for the meeting today. In thinking about it more, I'm just not sure we are going in the right direction with the launch event. **I know both of you have done a lot more research on this than I have, but** I'm wondering: **Is the event we are planning really going to speak to our target customers?** I do think we need to engage other stakeholders too, but I'm **actually** not convinced this event is the venue for that. **I almost think** this needs to feel more like the series we did in 2012 - more experiential, outside the box. **Does that make sense?**

Cara

Hi Chris and Susan,

Thanks for the great meeting today. **I always enjoy brainstorming with you both.**

I've been reflecting on it more, and I don't think we have something yet that will speak to our target customers. My take is that this event needs to reach them, and that we can engage our other stakeholders in other ways. For this event, I think we need something more experiential and outside the box - like what we did in 2012.

I would love to hear your reactions to this. Let me know what you think.

All the best,

Cara

Sample #2

Hi Margaret,

I wanted to touch base about our conversation yesterday concerning my specialist appointment. I understand you not wanting to set a precedent that people can go to appointments during work hours, and I'm sorry if I have given you the impression that I will not be able to meet our deadline if I take that time. That being said, I'm pretty sure I have the right in the collective agreement to schedule appointments during work hours, if I can't do so outside of work time. I know you have been working as a manager here for a long time, and are much more familiar with the CA than I am. I just wonder if maybe you might not be remembering Article 13:14, which states that I am allowed to make appointments during work hours when other options are not available.

Maybe we could talk about which of the available appointments would be the least disruptive?

Thanks,

Angela

Your Turn:

Remember:

1. I am responsible for my choices and my behavior
2. I will judge my own actions, the appraisal of others is up to my discretion to accept or refuse
3. I do not have to explain myself to others, nor them to me
4. Others are free to make requests of me, and me of them, and we are free to say no
5. People can change their minds
6. I can speak up in a straightforward way when needed

Assertive Communication Skills Includes:

- Offering your opinion
- Saying no
- Making requests
- Giving Feedback
- Receiving challenging feedback
- Asking about and listening to what others' needs are

Where are you already the most confident? The least confident? Where do you want to practice?

Going Forward

1. Self-awareness. I'll find out how my communication at work is perceived by....

2. Request or Giving Feedback

A concern I need to raise or a request I need to make is.....

I'll do this by.....

3. Small Steps

Two small things I can commit to doing over the next month are...

- 1.
- 2.