

## **WHAT ARE THE THREE RESPONSE STYLES (AGGRESSIVE, PASSIVE AND ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOURS)?**

### **Aggressive behaviour**

Being aggressive is often defined as establishing one's rights in a way that violates or ignores the rights of others: In other words, getting your own way at other people's expense. Aggressive behaviour often involves putting people down, making them feel guilty, intimidated, small, incompetent, foolish or worthless. Aggression does not necessarily mean being confrontational; sarcastic humour can be very aggressive. Aggressive behaviour has control at its heart; aggressors get an instant 'behavioural pay-off' or reward if they get the other party to comply with their wishes by backing down or getting out of the way. It produces quick results (which often consolidates the behaviour as acceptable in the mind of the aggressive person). Aggressive people focus on task issues when making decisions i.e. the end result and can easily dismiss people's feelings when talking to them.

### **Passive behaviour**

Being passive can be defined as failing to stand up adequately for your rights. It usually means putting up with a situation in which you feel uncomfortable rather than being honest about what you really think or feel. It involves being apologetic about your own views and putting yourself down rather than expressing them positively. Passive people concentrate on relationship issues when making decisions; *"I'll feel really bad if I ask them to stop doing that."*, *"Will I feel silly..."*; *"They won't like me if I do that."*; *"I'll feel guilty about turning them down."*

Passive people are often referred to as 'People pleasers' as they would rather please the other person and avoid conflict rather than make their point. They find it difficult to separate the person from the situation i.e. they think "I don't like letting them down by saying no" as opposed to "I'm turning down the task not the person".

### **Assertive behaviour**

Being assertive is usually defined as standing up for your own rights without dismissing on the rights of others. It means being honest with yourself and others, putting forward your own views and stating clearly and honestly what you want, think and feel. It means being self-confident and positive but not dogmatic. Behaving assertively means being firm in expressing an opinion but understanding the other person's point of view and being prepared to reach a workable compromise.

Assertiveness can be defined simply as 'making your point of view in a clear and tactful way'. It does not necessarily mean winning the argument or making the other party fall in line and agree with you. Remember the other party may also demonstrate assertive (or aggressive) behaviours and disagree with you so don't confuse assertive with 'always getting your way'; being able to argue or negotiate or debate or stand your ground or persuade may allow you to gain an advantage but being assertive will start the process where you move towards your stated objectives. The old adage 'if you don't ask - you don't get' is very pertinent in assertive communication.

Simply put, the more you make your opinions known; the more you ask for what you need; the greater chance you have of achieving your aims.

**EXERCISE**

**Assertiveness Scenario:** A week ago you purchased a jumper, which you found to have a hole in it when you got home. You have decided you want your money back (not a replacement), and you are just about to speak to the sales assistant.

**Below write your responses to this situation indicating what you would say in an assertive manner:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....