

# ASSERTIVENESS COURSE

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## ASSERTIVENESS

Let's assume your boss asks you to prepare a report by the end of the week, and you already have a full workload.

### ASSERTIVE

An **assertive** response might be:  
*"Rosie, I can see that you need the report urgently. I'm pretty loaded with work at the moment and I'm concerned that I may not finish it. Can we look at my task list and agree which task I should drop if I don't complete on time?"*

**This manager believes that she and her boss have needs and rights of equal importance. She acknowledges her boss's need, and suggests a compromise. Her aim is to satisfy both the needs of herself and her boss.**

### PASSIVE

A **passive** response might be:  
*"Hmm, . . . well, I'm pretty busy with the extra statistics. Perhaps I've been slow with them. Oh, well I'll try to do as much of the report as I can."*

**This manager believes her needs and rights are less important than those of her boss, and ignores her own needs. She puts herself down and doesn't want to upset anybody. She is aiming to please her boss and avoid conflict.**

### AGGRESSIVE

An **aggressive** response might be: *"How on earth do you expect me to do your report this week, on top of all that extra work you've already landed me with?"*

**This manager believes his needs and rights are more important than those of his boss, and ignores his boss's needs and rights. His aim is to win, if necessary at the expense of others and is not concerned about how his manager feels or what his manager needs.**

These are typical examples of aggressive, passive and assertive behaviour and dialogue. Ideally we would all like to become more assertive in our daily lives, both in and out of work (family, friends etc). This course allows you to assess the internal dialogue that controls our thoughts, feelings and possible actions and also our external dialogue (what we say to others and the messages we give out through our body language). It gives you the opportunity to examine the benefits of assertiveness techniques and determine which are the most effective for you.

Changing your behaviours is not easy and if you are to become more assertive you will find it useful to complete the next task, *"What do I want from this course?"*

## WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM THIS COURSE?

Let's look at your reasons for attending this course, and what you hope to achieve from it. Think through the reasons why you decided to attend, and then write down as specifically as you can what you hope to achieve. Use the box below.

Perhaps you have a general feeling that you are suffering from stress, although you're not sure why, and you want to find out more about assertiveness; or perhaps there is a specific problem you want to resolve, such as too much work or feeling let down by your current actions. If someone suggested you should attend the course, it might be helpful to ask them why they think you will benefit from it. Be selfish, for once, and think about only what **you** need to achieve and why.

**TIP:** Make your statements positive; rather than stating "I don't want to be the office pushover, anymore" say instead "I wish I could say no more often" or "I would like to express my real feelings more often".

### WHAT I WANT FROM THIS COURSE?

# THE THEORY OF ASSERTIVENESS

A friend asks to borrow your new and expensive camera. Someone pushes in front of you in a queue. A salesperson is annoyingly persistent. Someone criticises you angrily in front of your colleagues...

For many people, these examples represent anxious, even stressful situations to which there is no satisfactory response. One basic response theory being taught more and more frequently in training programmes is the theory of assertiveness.

Some important aspects of this theory include:

- The philosophy underlying assertiveness
- The three possible response styles in a situation
- Some means of recognising these response styles
- Some functional distinctions between the three styles
- Understanding the components of task versus relationship behaviours
- Six components of an assertive situation

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF ASSERTIVENESS

Assertion theory is based on the premise that every individual possesses certain basic human rights. These rights include such fundamentals as the right to refuse requests without feeling guilty, the right to acknowledge that one's own needs are as important as the needs of others, the right to make mistakes and the right to express ourselves – ensuring that we do not violate the rights of others.

## 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 small, incompetent, foolish or worthless. It does not necessarily mean being confrontational; sarcastic humour can be very aggressive.

### 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 rather than expressing them positively.

### Assertive behaviour

Being assertive is usually defined as standing up for your own rights without impinging 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.

## Session 8

	Final Role-play - Putting it all together	Action Required
8.1	Explain to the group that this final session allows them to put all of their new techniques into action. The final role-play will be a group session, with the aim for delegates to observe, assess and review assertive techniques in action.	<b>HO 3 / 4</b>
8.2	Split delegates into two groups: A and B. Circulate HO 3, ' <i>Final Role-play A</i> ', and HO 4, ' <i>Final Role-play B</i> ', with the relevant copy going to each group, i.e. Role-Play A to group A. Each group will select a delegate to role-play the scenario with the selected role-player from the other group. Remember, only one person in each group will role-play with the rest observing the role-play.	
8.3	Explain to the groups that they will be allowed 5 mins to plan their strategy - with one of the groups leaving the room to allow both groups to plan in privacy. Delegates will also be given the opportunity to review and assess each group's progress during the role-play. Both the role-players and the observers have two ' <i>time-outs</i> ' to be used during the role-play, should it become too difficult and should they need to regroup to redevelop their strategy – during the ' <i>time-outs</i> ', the current role-player can be exchanged to allow others to role-play, however this is not essential.	
8.4	Once initial planning has been made, role-play can proceed.	
8.5	<b>TRAINER NOTE:</b> Whilst the role-play is in progress it is a good idea for the trainer to make notes so that when the groups reconvene after each time-out the trainer can recap what was said on either side.	
8.6	Once the role-play has concluded, discuss with the groups how the strategies helped with the role-play.	
	Finish off the day by asking the delegates to complete their action plans and course evaluation form.	