

Pondering Point

There are many facets to assertive communication. Largely, it is the ability to communicate your feelings in a way that considers and respects other view points while remembering to stand up for your own rights and preserve your self respect.

For those times when we find it hard to speak up, it is important to remember that everyone has a right to be heard. You have a right to voice your needs and concerns. Ask yourself, "what is the worst thing that could happen if I speak up here?" Chances are the answer to that question isn't nearly as terrifying as you may have thought and you will begin to calm down.

Being able to communicate assertively affords you the opportunity to participate fully in a rich conversation that reflects your opinions, defines your needs and promotes a more informed, well-rounded outcome to any situation.

Have you ever walked away from a conversation wishing you had said how you really felt?

Have you ever been caught off guard and forgot what you came to say?

Have you ever walked away and felt there was something still left on the table?



Imagine... finding the courage to express yourself fully while showing respect to yourself and others.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

In a conversation where you want to communicate something important, being met with adversity, hostility, or avoidance can cause our defense shields to go up and our message to weaken and sometimes dissolve completely. A good way to avoid this is to do a bit of "Scenario Planning" in advance to take some of the mystery out of the proposed conversation and give you back your confidence.

First, write down a list of all the major areas that you want to be sure to cover. If everything on this list gets addressed, then there are no items 'left on the table' if you were to walk away. This will focus you on what is really important without the emotions of the conversation steering you away.

Next, think of all the possible excuses or defenses that the other person(s) might have with each issue.

Identify possible "triggers" in your argument that might elicit emotional responses from them. Predicting the emotions of others (even if incorrect), will keep you from being caught off guard and distracted from your point.

Also, try to play the discussion out as if you were a third party watching the conversation. Ask yourself, "If I wasn't in that scenario – and my friend was – what type of advice would I give him/her on the situation?"

Self Reflection Activity

Think about the last time you had a confrontation about something that was important to you.

What did you NOT say? Why?
Were you nervous? Were you defensive?
Was there an issue about where the confrontation occurred?

Now think about the outcome, was it satisfactory for you?

What does this have to do with how you communicated it?

Did you celebrate what went right with that experience? Can you find confidence in these successes? Remember tiny wins = courage for the next time!

"The basic difference between being assertive and being aggressive is how our words and behavior affect the rights and well being of others."

- Sharon Anthony Bower, author