

The Assertiveness Skills Pack

– Activity Summary –

1. **Who Am I? – An Icebreaker**

A weak start to a course can seriously impede the achievement of your desired outcomes. In this activity, participants compare their assumptions of the image they present with the impressions formed by others. This clears the way for real progress, by allowing participants to get to know each other and to settle into the activity.

2. **Rights in Assertiveness**

The concept of rights often causes difficulty because of the perception of ‘standing up for your rights’ as being aggressive. This activity enables participants to understand the concept of rights in assertiveness and identify the rights they give themselves and others. This activity, together with Activity 3: Behaviour Styles, forms the basis of all work on assertiveness.

3. **Behaviour Styles**

In this activity, participants are introduced to the three broad styles of behaviour within assertiveness: aggressive, non-assertive and assertive behaviour. Participants are enabled to identify their own, and other people’s, behaviour characteristics. This activity, together with Activity 2: Rights in Assertiveness, forms the basis of all work on assertiveness.

4. **Every-Day Aggressive Behaviour**

Low-level aggression can take a large number of forms. This activity enables participants to develop the skills needed to behave assertively in the face of every-day aggressive or manipulative behaviour.

5. **Higher-Level Aggression**

The purpose of this activity is to enable participants to develop strategies for behaving assertively in the face of higher-level aggressive behaviour. Rather than the possible sarcasm of every-day aggression, higher-level aggression is more likely to consist of argument and/or verbal attack. Participants consider examples of higher-level aggression and learn how to maintain assertiveness in the face of such behaviour.

6. Dealing With Non-Assertive Behaviour

This activity is designed to enable participants to recognize non-assertive behaviour and to deal with it assertively. They look at how such behaviour affects them, and consider a range of assertive responses.

7. Customer Care

The purpose of this activity is to enable participants to guide their staff in communicating assertively with customers. Participants consider the rights and responsibilities of customers, staff and the organization and, from these, define a standard for customer care. This leads to the identification of the knowledge, skills and attributes needed by staff and the ways that management can provide positive support.

8. Making Requests

This activity enables participants to identify how they affect the way that others respond to their requests, and provides them with the opportunity to experiment with, and practice, the skill of requesting assertively. The activity also focuses on aspects of non-assertive and aggressive styles, in addition to moving toward an assertive one.

9. Refusing Requests

It's often very difficult to say 'No'. Many people try to refuse requests and fail, which results in low self-esteem, resentment and bad feelings for all concerned. The objective of this activity is to enable participants to refuse requests in a polite but firm manner.

10. Asserting Yourself in Meetings

Many people find it hard to express themselves in meetings and thus don't make their points clearly, if at all. Those who are more confident can dominate meetings, with the ensuing potential for unsatisfactory outcomes and resentment. In this activity, participants look at ways to contribute assertively and therefore more effectively, to meetings.

11. The Assertive Chairperson

In this activity, participants discuss and practice the skills of chairing meetings assertively. Assertiveness is a vital requirement if the chairperson is to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, to draw out participants who are reluctant to contribute, and to deal with those who tend to dominate.

12. Giving Criticism

The goal of this activity is to enable participants to give criticism in an assertive manner. Criticism given in the wrong way is almost certainly going to make the situation worse. There are various factors that might lead a person to criticize aggressively, non-assertively or in other ways that will not produce the desired outcome.

13. Taking Criticism

If criticism is to have a beneficial effect, it must be given and received assertively. In this activity, participants consider and practice the skill of assertively accepting criticism.

14. Time Management

To help participants improve their use of time, this activity places the emphasis on their taking responsibility for their own situations, and on taking positive action to improve time management through improved dealings with the people who cause problems or who can help. The interpersonal aspects of time management and the benefits that assertive skills can bring to participants' use of time are also considered.

15. Tackling Interpersonal Problems – A Model Approach

If we are to get others to change their behaviour, we need to approach them in a calm and controlled manner and explain ourselves in a way that minimizes the risk of their becoming defensive. In this activity, participants study a calm and assertive model approach to asking others to change their behaviour.

16. Handling Responses to the Model

This activity looks at a range of the possible negative responses to the model approach in Activity 15: Tackling Interpersonal Problems: A Model Approach. Participants consider the response that their model is likely to receive, and plan how to deal assertively with the behaviour, whether aggressive, non-assertive or assertive.

17. The Assertive Team

The purpose of this activity is to enable teams to improve their communication skills and increase their effectiveness. Participants consider the way their team works, in the light of assertive communication, and make plans for changes and improvements.

18. Assertive Appraisal

The effects of aggressive and of non-assertive behaviour, on either side of the equation within the appraisal environment, can seriously undermine the whole process. In this activity, participants consider appraisal interviewing in light of assertive behaviour, and prepare strategies for dealing with difficult interviewees.

19. The Internal Customer

This activity is designed for staff who need to communicate effectively with each other, to enable them to develop and improve communication between their departments. Participants consider their internal customers and the support and information they should offer.

20. Assertive Negotiation

Successful negotiation, in which neither party is the loser, is crucial to the operation of any organization. This activity encourages participants to consider negotiation in terms of assertive skills, to identify the key elements of successful negotiation and to practice those skills, so that they can negotiate mutually satisfactory outcomes to problems.

21. Handling Complaints

To enable participants to maintain their assertiveness in the face of complaints, this activity looks at the effects of different behaviour styles when dealing with complaints, then helps participants to prepare and practice strategies for handling complaints effectively.

22. Giving and Receiving Praise

The ability to give and to receive praise and compliments, and to perceive the need to do so, is fundamental to the smooth running of an organization. In this activity, participants discuss the basic skill of giving and receiving praise, and then develop this into the professional skill of giving praise in the workplace.

23. The Superstar Syndrome

In this activity, participants with family and other commitments look at the pressures they face, then discuss and practice possible solutions that will enable them to maximize efficiency and save time.

24. Image and Body Language

Even though a person may be behaving assertively, a mismatch in body language or image can dilute or even completely negate the effect. This activity enables participants to consider the image they project, and the effects of body language in supporting their assertive behaviour, so that they can project a positive image with positive body language.

25. Manager and Personal Assistant – An Assertive Team

This activity is designed to improve the working relationship between managers and Personal Assistants. Managers and PAs discuss the effectiveness of their partnership, assess their current communication style and make plans for future change and improvement.

26. Surviving Change – The Assertive Angle

In this activity, managers and supervisors in an organization or department where change is planned or is under way, discuss the effect of change on individuals. They identify the interpersonal aspects of handling change, and look at ways to help their staff through transition in a positive manner.

27. Short Debates

To enable participants to focus their views on the theory, purpose and effects of assertiveness, they join in a short debate on a topic related to assertive communication.