



REPRODUCIBLE TRAINING LIBRARY

Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

Assertiveness Skills



Instructor Guide

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Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- *Brainstorming sessions with target audience*
- *Library research*
- *Online research*
- *Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)*
- *Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)*
- *Interviews with trainers*

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- *Learning objectives provide effective tools for managing, monitoring, and evaluating training*
- *Meaningful connections between the topic and students' past, present, and future*
- *Appropriate organization of essential ideas helps students to focus on what they need to know in order to learn*
- *Modeling techniques demonstrate useful behaviors and problem-solving skills*
- *Active application, the cornerstone to learning, helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation*
- *Consistent instructions and design help students learn and retain new information*
- *Accelerated learning techniques create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles*

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course to appeal to all learning styles and ensure that the ideas and information will be retained.

Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy (cont.)

Customizing Your Program

There are two ways you can customize this program: 1) Customize the content and 2) Customize the format.

Customizing the content is easy. The Instructor Guide and Participant Guide are created in Word, so you can simply modify the content just as you would any Word document. Some common reasons for customizing content include:

- *Changing examples to fit your industry or work environment*
- *Modifying content to match work rules and procedures*
- *Adding, deleting or rearranging content to meet training time constraints*

The other way to customize the program is to change the formatting. Typically, organizations will do this to add their corporate logo and/or colors, or it may just be an issue of personal preference. Again, treat the Instructor Guide and/or Participant Guide as you would any Word document. For help using Word, consult the Microsoft website.

Preparing for the Training

As you know, preparation is the key to conducting an effective training. Here are some issues to consider:

Logistics

- *Advertise the training with enough advance notice that participants can block it out on their calendar. Consider contacting potential participants' managers to encourage their attendance.*
- *Send a confirmation notice before the training, reminding participants of the date, time and location.*
- *Room setup: Ideally, use round tables to facilitate partner and small group interaction.*

Equipment and Supplies

In order for the training to go smoothly, have these supplies and equipment on hand:

- *Name tags*
- *Flip chart and markers, tape*
- *Laptop with projector (for the PowerPoint)*
- *Blank paper and pens/pencils, sticky notes*
- *Timer or watch*
- *Water for yourself and the participants*
- *Beverages and snacks (optional)*

Please note: Only the pages highlighted in yellow below are those featured in this preview.

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Module One



Understanding Assertiveness

Course Objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Define assertiveness
- ◇ Recognize the assertiveness continuum
- ◇ Identify personal blocks to assertiveness
- ◇ Demonstrate assertive language and behaviors
- ◇ Avoid language and behaviors that are not assertive (passive, aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviors)
- ◇ Use assertive behaviors in everyday situations

Trainer Notes

5 minutes

Introduce yourself and provide a brief background if participants don't know you. Go over logistics (schedule, breaks, restrooms, etc.) and any ground rules for the day. Typical ground rules include no electronics in use, show respect for every participant, participate fully, no dominating or interrupting, etc.

Review the course objectives with participants.

Assertiveness Skills

Course Objectives

- Define assertiveness
- Recognize the assertiveness continuum
- Identify personal blocks to assertiveness
- Demonstrate assertive language and behaviors
- Avoid language and behaviors that are not assertive (passive, aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviors)
- Use straight talk in any situation (conflict, criticism, etc.)

Definition of Assertiveness

Your definition of assertiveness:

Practical definitions

- ◇ Stating your views clearly and articulately
- ◇ Having the ability to express your own feelings, even about difficult issues, in a way that is respectful and honest
- ◇ Standing up for your own needs without violating the needs of others

Benefits of assertiveness

- ◇ Express your own needs and get them met
- ◇ Respect and communicate with others effectively
- ◇ Influence others in order to gain acceptance, agreement or behavior change

"Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind."

-- Dr. Seuss

Trainer Notes

5 minutes

Activity: Before sharing the "official" definition of assertiveness, have participants define assertiveness in their own words. They can work in small groups, or you can work as an entire group and record their answers on a flip chart. Debrief by having participants or groups share their answers.

Review the practical definitions of assertiveness and the benefits of assertiveness.

Emphasize right away that assertiveness is not aggressiveness—it's not about getting what you want at others' expense. It's about communicating effectively to get your own needs met without disrespecting others.

Definition of Assertiveness

- **Dictionary:** A method of training individuals to act in a bold self-confident manner
- **Practical:** Standing up for your own needs without violating the needs of others

Foundations of Assertiveness

- ◇ Self-worth
- ◇ Knowledge
- ◇ Practice and experience

Your assertive rights

- ◇ “My needs are as important as (but not more important than) anyone else’s.”
- ◇ “It’s OK to meet my needs and/or ask to have them met.”
- ◇ “I accept responsibility for my thoughts, feelings, opinions and behavior. I cannot be responsible for the thoughts, feelings, opinions and behaviors of others.”

Activity

Instructions: Replace each negative “block” statement with positive self-talk.

Block Statement	Positive Self-Talk
“If I assert myself, no one will like me.”	<p>“It’s okay for my wants and needs to be as important as those of others.”</p> <p>“I am worthy and deserve to have my needs met.”</p>
“If I’m not demanding, no one will listen to me.”	“I can express my needs clearly without disrespecting others.”
“I have to give in to keep the peace.”	“Conflict isn’t always harmful and can lead to productive solutions.”
“If I make one person happy, that will make someone else unhappy.”	“I am not responsible for other people’s happiness.”

Trainer Notes

15 minutes

Self-worth: Assertive behavior begins with belief—the belief that you have value and are as worthy as anyone else.

Knowledge: Assertive behavior is built on your knowledge of assertive language and behaviors to use, and non-assertive language and behaviors to avoid—that is the focus of this training.

Practice and experience: Assertive behavior is built on practice and experience—as in most activities, if practice doesn’t make perfect, it at least makes improvement.

Assertive rights: These are statements that participants should internalize until they become second nature. If some participants really struggle with these, suggest writing them on index cards and keeping them at their desks for review.

Activity: Have participants read each block statement and replace it with a building block statement. It may help to think of statements that begin with “I can” or “I will” or “I am.” Debrief by sharing responses. We’ve listed some options, but there are many possibilities.

Foundation of Assertiveness

- Self-worth
- Knowledge
- Practice and experience



Assertive Language

Use “I” statements

- ◇ *Wrong way: “You always interrupt me.”*
- ◇ *Right way: “I would like to complete my explanation without interruption.”*

Use factual statements

- ◇ *Wrong way: “You’re lazy and you don’t care about your work.”*
- ◇ *Right way: “I noticed that you arrived late three times this week.”*

Make clear, direct requests or directives

- ◇ *Wrong way: “Don’t you think you should review your presentation?”*
- ◇ *Right way: “Please review and practice your presentation before the meeting this afternoon.”*

Express feelings honestly (don’t dramatize)

- ◇ *Wrong way: “Could that meeting have been run any worse?”*
- ◇ *Right way: “I feel that we strayed too far from the agenda and digressed on issues we can’t control.”*

Tips for Success

Tell, don’t ask
Use your words
Add a consequence
Repeat if necessary

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Although assertiveness begins in your head, there are concrete, specific communication techniques you can use to convey your assertiveness appropriately.

Use “I” statements: Take ownership by using “I” statements instead of starting with “You...”

Use factual statements: Avoid stating judgments and exaggerations as fact. Stick to observable behaviors in your comments about others.

Make clear, direct requests or directives: Don’t be subtle or indirect. You may choose to add a consequence for non-compliance (and then follow through!).

Express feelings honestly and realistically, without exaggeration or sarcasm.

Tips for success: Use your words—don’t pout or shout. Express yourself calmly and clearly.

Remember, this doesn’t mean ignoring or disregarding others’ needs or feelings. You must be accountable for what you say and do.

Assertive Language



- Use your words
- Don’t pout or shout
- Express yourself calmly and clearly
- Repeat if necessary

Putting It Together

Rehearse your approach

- ◇ *What are your objectives? What outcome would you like to achieve?*
- ◇ *What is your point of view?*
- ◇ *What are the main points you want to cover?*
- ◇ *What will be your opening statement?*
- ◇ *What are your needs?*
- ◇ *What are the needs of others involved?*
- ◇ *What issues and feelings are likely to arise?*
- ◇ *How will you handle those reactions?*
- ◇ *What consequences will you impose, if necessary?*

Activity

Instructions: Describe a situation in which you will need to act assertively.

Thinking of the questions above, jot down what you will say, what you think the other person will say, and how you will respond.

Trainer Notes

15 minutes

In most situations, if you have time to think ahead, plan and prepare, you will greatly increase your chance of success—that is, of saying what you want and need, and getting your needs met, without backing down or losing your cool.

Review the questions to help you rehearse your approach.

Activity: Participants will begin this activity working on their own to think of a situation in which they will need to act assertively. Tell them to write down what they want to say, based on the questions listed on this page. Then, have them practice saying it to a partner. Switch places so everyone has a chance to practice. Debrief by having participants share their thoughts and feelings about the activity. Did thinking about the questions help them feel more confident? Encourage them to commit to addressing the situation they described in the near future.

Passive-Aggressive Language and Behaviors

Underlying attitude

- ◇ Cares about “getting even” with others for real or imagined slights
- ◇ Wants to act aggressively but can’t (authority situation)

Body language

- ◇ Lack of eye contact
- ◇ Aggressive stance (sometimes)
- ◇ Pouting
- ◇ Sarcastic smile

Vocal behaviors

- ◇ Indirect responses
- ◇ Sarcasm
- ◇ Sniping
- ◇ Criticism camouflaged as a joke

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Someone who is passive-aggressive can be difficult to pinpoint ahead of time—they often display normal behavior until they get fed up and use a passive-aggressive approach.

Activity: Work in groups of three for this role play. Have the second person role play the following situation: You are working on your department’s annual budget. You’re frustrated because your group didn’t give you detailed input and you’re now re-writing everything they gave you. If you don’t get some help with the budget, you won’t finish it by the deadline. Use a passive-aggressive approach to try to get what you want.

Discussion questions:

Are there times when it’s appropriate to act passive-aggressively? (No!)

Are there times when it’s not appropriate? Yes—it’s never appropriate.

If you behave passive-aggressively more than you’d like, what can you do to behave more assertively?

Passive-Aggressive Style

- Lack of eye contact
- Pouting
- Sarcasm
- “Joking” criticism



Saying No

Be polite but firm

- ◇ Don't say "maybe" when you mean "no"
- ◇ Eliminate hinting
- ◇ You don't have to give a reason
- ◇ Repetition: stay "on message"
- ◇ Pay attention to body language and voice

Saying no to your boss

- ◇ Do give a reason
- ◇ Enlist your boss to help you determine your top priority

Offer an alternative

- ◇ Support the person, if not the specific request
- ◇ "I'd love to help out with that project; unfortunately, that deadline won't work with my schedule. Is the deadline flexible?"
- ◇ "I'd love to participate; however, I'm not comfortable with the role you are proposing for me. Could we discuss other ways I might contribute?"

If you have to (or want to) say yes...

- ◇ Set strict boundaries
 - Agree, but with conditions. "I can get it done by (date)..." or "I can only spend one hour."
- ◇ Get complete info before committing
 - What exactly needs to be done?
 - What is the deadline?
 - How much time will it take?

If You Have to Say Yes



- Set strict boundaries
- Agree with conditions
- Get complete info

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

As you begin this section, remind participants about the root of assertiveness — a sense of self-worth. This is necessary as you work through the situations in this module—saying no, handling conflict and criticism, and dealing with your boss.

Don't say "maybe" when you mean "no"—the requester will assume your "maybe" is a "yes" and be even more disappointed when you eventually say "no."

Eliminate hinting—be direct. Indirectness is the enemy of assertiveness.

You don't have to give a reason. You can if you want to, but sometimes that draws the other person into badgering you until you say yes.

Repetition: Stay "on message"—don't get drawn into an argument or unrelated issues.

Pay attention to body language and voice: make eye contact while speaking, maintain an open and erect posture, etc.

If you need to say no to your boss, do give a reason. Explain your conflict and have him or her help you determine your top priority. For a workload issue, discuss the consequences of taking on extra work (i.e., your current responsibilities will suffer). If the new work is urgent, ask your manager to decide which task takes precedent, or if another team member can help out.

Saying No

Being indirect is the enemy of assertiveness

- Don't say "maybe" when you mean "no"
- Don't hint
- Don't get drawn into an argument or unrelated issues



Dealing with a Boss or Person in Power

Do your homework

- ◇ Before a meeting, get a copy of the agenda and prepare your comments, ideas and input in advance.
- ◇ Research the topic/situation—find out as much as you can about the issue.
- ◇ Get your position set in your mind—know where you'll stick and where you'll be flexible.
- ◇ Be prepared to address your boss's questions and objections.
- ◇ If the situation is really critical, practice with a trusted colleague first.

Activity

Instructions: Think of a recent situation when you and your boss didn't agree on an issue, or you had an idea that your boss wasn't receptive to hearing.

Briefly describe the situation:

List what you know about the situation.

List your position, what is fixed and what is flexible.

List your boss's potential questions and objections.

List your responses to your boss's questions and objections.

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Standing up to your boss or someone else in a position of power can be one of the most difficult situations you'll face. Increase your chances of successfully getting what you need by being prepared!

Get your position set in your mind—this doesn't mean you're completely inflexible, but know on which points you intend to stand your ground and on which you're willing to compromise.

Anticipate your boss's questions, objectives and be prepared to address them—assertively, not using hedge phrases or statements that diminish your opinion. After all, if you've done your homework, you should feel confident about your position.

Activity: Allow several minutes for participants to answer the questions in the workbook.

Debrief by asking for volunteers to share their situations, and offering advice and guidance if they want it.

Dealing with Your Boss

- Do your homework
- Research the issue
- Determine fixed/flexible positions
- Anticipate questions and objections
- Practice with a colleague



Course Review

1. Write a definition of assertiveness:

2. List three types of non-assertive behavior:

3. Which of the following is NOT a common block to assertiveness?

- a. Wanting people to like you
- b. Wanting to like people
- c. Feeling responsible for the harmony of your group
- d. Needing to be responsive to people with different agendas

4. List two building blocks of assertiveness.

5. What of the following is NOT an element of assertive language?

- a. "I" statements
- b. Clear, direct requests
- c. Factual statements
- d. Dramatizing your feelings

Trainer Notes

1. Standing up for your own needs without violating the needs of others

2. Passive, passive-aggressive, and aggressive

3. b

4. Self-worth, knowledge, practice, and experience

5. d

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