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# Supervisor Communication 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 (SME)
- 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 — effective tools for managing, monitoring, and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to 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. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

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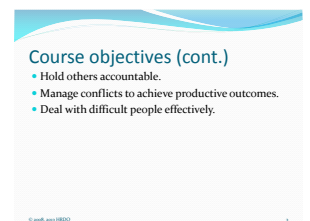
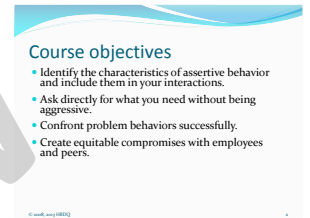
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# Course objectives

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

- ◇ Identify the characteristics of assertive behavior and include them in your interactions.
- ◇ Ask directly for what you need without being aggressive.
- ◇ Confront problem behaviors successfully.
- ◇ Create equitable compromises with employees and peers.
- ◇ Hold others accountable.
- ◇ Manage conflicts to achieve productive outcomes.
- ◇ Deal with difficult people effectively.



PREVIEW

## Chapter One



# ***PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION***

Ice breaker: Use your favorite ice-breaker activity, or we listed a couple suggestions below:

Two truths and a lie: Each participant writes down three pieces of information about themselves; two are true and one is a lie. The group guesses which one is the lie.

Adjective alphabet: Each participant thinks of an adjective that describes them that begins with the same letter as their first name, e.g., Pianist Pat, Detail Dan.

Activity: Have participants spend a few minutes answering the questions on this page. As they share their obstacles record them on a flip chart and revisit them throughout the day to make certain they are getting solutions to their obstacles as much as possible.

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## Introduction

Write down what your day would be like if all your communications were smooth and productive.

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Write down the obstacles that prevent you from experiencing the day you just described.

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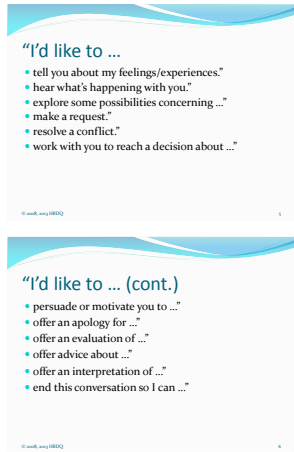
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PREVIEW



In order to reduce possible misunderstandings, begin important conversations by inviting the other person to join you in the specific kind of conversation you want to have. Share your direction with the other person



The more the conversation is going to mean to you, the more important it is for the other person to understand the big picture. If you need to have a long, complex, or emotion-laden conversation with someone it will make a big difference if you get their buy-in by briefly explaining your intention.

Why explain? When people agree to talk to us, they will be more invested in the conversation and more willing to meet our needs or thoughtfully explain why not (and perhaps offer an alternative we hadn't thought of).

If the other person says, "No, I can't talk now," then schedule another time to talk. Don't just let it go.

## Explain what you want

- ◇ "Hi, Steve. I need to ask for your help on my project. Got a minute to talk about it?"
- ◇ "Wendy, can you sit down for a minute and let me tell you what happened?"
- ◇ "Hello there, Mr. Sanchez. Say, uh...I'm not completely comfortable about this job. Can we talk about it for a few minutes?"

## Benefits of getting buy-in from the other person

- ◇ Show respect for the other person's time and schedule, etc.; generate goodwill.
- ◇ Engage the other person more fully in the conversation and its outcome; empathy is more genuine and agreements are more reliable.
- ◇ Share the big picture and overall goal.
- ◇ Prepare the other person for what is coming, especially if topic is emotionally charged.
- ◇ Help the other person understand what role we want them to play: listener, problem solver, implementer of instructions, etc.

## Practice

*Instructions: In the situation you identified on the previous page, write an "invitation" to engage the other person in your conversation.*

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Review the information about communicating feelings. Emphasize that awareness is the first step to controlling and communicating feelings. Without awareness, you have no chance of being proactive in managing your emotions.

Activity: Expressing emotions. Working in small groups, have participants complete the chart. Many answers will work as long as they are candid about the emotion felt. A helpful tool is to remind participants that if they can substitute "I think" or "I feel as though" or "I feel that," then they haven't really expressed an emotion. For example, "I feel you hurt my integrity" can be substituted with "I think you hurt my integrity" or "I feel as though you hurt my integrity." A true feeling statement is "I am hurt because what you said damaged my integrity."

## Communicate feelings appropriately

One way to gain emotional control is to figure out what triggers intense emotions. Awareness of these triggers can help you maintain a detached engagement: the ability to separate issues and personalities in a conflict.

Ask yourself ...	Ask others ...
When do I get frustrated or complain, or become obsessed or mentally exhausted?	When have you seen me upset?
When have I avoided dealing with a person or situation?	What situations seem to upset me the most?
When have I talked about people behind their backs?	What behaviors tell you that I am mad, sad, glad, or afraid?
What is guaranteed to put me in a bad mood?	When am I difficult to get along with?

### Use language to express feelings

- ◇ Express, don't dramatize.
- ◇ Four basic feelings: mad, sad, glad, afraid

Emotion	Less effective	More effective
Mad	Screaming, swearing, throwing things	
Sad	Crying	
Glad	Not expressing any emotion	
Afraid	Denial, looking scared	

Have participants read as a group and decide which response is the assertive one. For each situation, the assertive answer is pretty obvious; however, that doesn't mean it's the answer that participants would typically choose in real life.

Situation 1: "Emily, please case the mail."

Situation 2: "I want you to stop now."

Situation 3: "I think being rude isn't necessary."

In each situation, we choose a certain behavior to either get something we want, or avoid something we don't want. We tend to fall into a pattern, but we need to realize if it's not working the way we want it to, it might be time to try a different approach.

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## Self-assessment: How assertive are you?

*Instructions: Read each situation and place a checkmark next to the box that best describes the behavior you would normally use.*

### **Situation 1:**

You are in the section and a bucket of mail appears to be ignored by route #1. You say:

- "Someone needs to case that mail."
- "How come no one but me sees all the mail that needs to be cased!"
- "Emily, please case the mail."

### **Situation 2:**

At the end of a very busy day, a window clerk touches you with more affection than you're comfortable with.

- "I want you to stop now."
- You say nothing and walk away.
- "If you touch me again, your body will be in pieces."

### **Situation 3:**

You come in to work in a fine mood and say to John, "Good morning, how are you?" He snaps in response, "Just leave me alone."

- "And a very good morning to you, too ... jerk."
- "I'm very sorry I bothered you."
- "I think being rude isn't necessary."

## Styles of assertive communication



- Declaration
- Confrontation
- Compromise
- Camouflage
- Accountability

**Declaration:** A declarative statement is an “I” statement that tells the other person clearly and specifically what you want. It is made without apology, and it is delivered calmly and rationally. It does not need to include the reason for what you want, although sometimes it should (for example, if you’re dealing with your boss you may want to give your reasons). Reasons can sometimes bog down the discussion into an argument over whether your reasons are good. However, it may work well to talk with the other person about your objectives (what you want to achieve in a given situation) because if they know what you want, they may be able to offer a different or better way to achieve the same objectives.

Possible response (there are many possible responses): “Roberta, I have chosen not to continue serving on the committee.” Optional: “I want to devote more time to ...”

Note that tone of voice is critical in all of these approaches. Your words may seem assertive, but you undermine yourself with a passive, apologetic tone of voice (or an intense, aggressive one, or a sarcastic, sniping one).

**Confrontation:** Assertive confrontation describes the unacceptable behavior and its consequences, and gives expectations of future behavior.

# Styles of assertive communication

## Declaration

“I” statements with direction or explanation of what you want to think (reasons are optional).

### **Practice**

You have served on a committee in your community for three years and decide that you no longer wish to do so. Roberta, the chairperson of the committee, phones you to ask you to serve on the committee again.

Direction or explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

## Confrontation

Describes unacceptable behavior, offers consequences, and gives expectations for future behavior.

### **Practice**

When a carrier returned from the street, John asked him to pivot to another route. He later learned that the carrier had gone home instead. How could John handle this problem with the carrier?

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Consequences: \_\_\_\_\_

Expectations: \_\_\_\_\_

It is very straightforward and direct.

Possible response: “I asked you to pivot to another route and you went home instead. Because of that I had to scramble and find someone else to complete the work. In the future, I expect you to comply with my request, or discuss with me at the time if you have a problem with the request.”

## Use positive language

Cooperative language focuses on solving problems, emphasizes the present and future, lets the other person save face, uses words with reduced emotional impact and demonstrates sincerity, trust, and respect.

### “I” messages

- ◇ Wrong way: “You drive me nuts when you ignore my suggestions.”
- ◇ Right way: “I feel ignored when you don’t respond to my suggestions.”

### Rephrasing negative messages

One trick to sounding more cooperative is to always say what you *can* do, not what you *can’t* do.

*Instructions: Rewrite the following statements, stating them in a more positive way.*

Negative	Positive
1. I can’t process your request because you forgot to fill out all the information.	1.
2. That’s not my job.	2.
3. It won’t be ready until next week.	3.
4. I don’t know.	4.
5. You need to call another department.	5.

When the other person (or you) is ready to talk, consciously use positive language.

Emphasize that this is one of the simplest but most effective ways to minimize conflict or keep it from escalating.

Activity: Rephrase negative statements. Possible answers:

1. I can process your request as soon as you complete all the information.
2. Ms. Jones can help you with that.
3. It will be ready next Wednesday.
4. I don’t know, but I’ll find out.
5. The finance department can handle that issue.

Ask participants to identify other typical negative statements and suggest positive alternatives.  
Examples:

You should have/you must — If you will ... we can ...

You failed to ... — One option for you is ...

We insist you ... — I suggest you ...

# Understand the escalation process

## Psychological changes

- ◇ Trust is broken and is difficult to re-establish.
- ◇ Using selective perception: Looking for evidence to reinforce your judgments about the other person, and ignoring evidence to the contrary.
- ◇ Moving from self-concern to getting even.
- ◇ Moving from one issue to many or from a specific issue to general complaints.
- ◇ Attempting to draw others into the conflict.

## Visible signs of anger

- ◇ Change in vocabulary and/or tone of voice
- ◇ Abrupt mood shift
- ◇ Tightness in facial or neck muscles, facial flush, and/or teeth clenching
- ◇ Physically or verbally acting out

## Subtle signs of anger

- ◇ Chronic lateness or delays
- ◇ Gossip
- ◇ Sarcasm and backhanded compliments

## How to de-escalate

- ◇ Respect the angry person's perceptions as real to him or her.
- ◇ Move the angry person to a neutral environment.
- ◇ Create a cooling-off period.
- ◇ Stay out of the angry person's physical space.
- ◇ Use a nonthreatening tone of voice and body language.

When confrontation language is not reined in, communication breakdown is likely to occur, leading to escalation. At this point, both parties need to de-escalate before productive problem-solving can occur.

**Signs of escalation**

<p><b>Obvious</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Demanding and lack of cooperation</li> <li>• Lack of concern for others</li> </ul>	<p><b>Subtle</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiding behind rules</li> <li>• Fueling the rumor mill</li> <li>• Absenteeism</li> <li>• Low productivity</li> <li>• "Yes" man to the boss</li> </ul>
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**Selective perception examples:** If you think the other person is a liar, you'll try to catch them in a lie. You'll never notice anything good she does; if you see her talking to someone, you'll think she's gossiping about you.

**Specific to general example:** "You didn't complete the report by 3:00 as you promised" becomes "We can't work together."

**How to de-escalate**

- Respect the angry person's perceptions.
- Move the angry person.
- Create a cooling-off period.
- Stay out of the angry person's physical space.
- Use a non-threatening tone of voice and body language.

# "Get-it-done" people

## Summary of behavior

**Values:** Tasks

**Positive intent:** To get it done

**Behavior:** Focused, to the point, blunt

**Needs:** To be in control

**Communication style:** Direct and to the point

Strengths	Weaknesses

## Behaviors to expect under pressure

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## How to deal with them

What works	What doesn't work

**Strengths:** Decisive, gets things done, confident


**Weaknesses:** Intimidates and alienates people, uses force instead of cooperation

**Under pressure:** Yells, bullies, takes potshots, and is arrogant

**What doesn't work:** Being "on the fence," spending too much time on one problem or issue, being unprepared, having a lack of focus, not being in control.

**What works:** Support their goals, get to the point, be businesslike, be task-oriented, take risks, one-on-one communication, have a clear vision, let them be in control.

**Dealing with "get it done" people**



- Hold your ground and stay calm.
- Interrupt their interruptions.
- Stop and backtrack often.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Recognize their contributions and get on with the task.
- Give them an out and the last word.

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# "Get along" people

## Summary of behavior

**Values:** People

**Positive intent:** To get along

**Behavior:** Agreeable, personable, friendly, caring, helpful

**Needs:** To be liked

**Communication style:** Direct and considerate

Strengths	Weaknesses

## Behaviors to expect under pressure

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## How to deal with them

What works	What doesn't work

**Strengths:** Likeable, loyal, team player, steadfast, patient

**Weaknesses:** Indecisive, wastes time, gullible, over-emotional, illogical decisions


**Under pressure:** Submits, accommodates, gunnysacks, passive-aggressive

**What doesn't work:** Forcing a decision, ignoring feelings, being too intense or formal, threatening, not recognizing the "people" aspect of problems.

**What works:** Be casual and sincere, listen, slow down, set goals, emphasize self-development.

**Dealing with "get along" people**

- Help them focus on tasks and prioritizing.
- Clarify conflict.
- Encourage input.
- Strengthen the relationship.
- Ensure their commitment.
- Thank them for their help.





Be casual and sincere: People and relationships are a priority for “get along” people. Harsh, aggressive behavior will cause the “get along” person to shut down.

Slow down: “Get along” people need a chance to tell how they’re feeling about a situation. Make sure you understand their perspective. If the “get along” person gets the impression that you’re not listening or that you don’t sincerely care about what’s being said, you’ll have a tough time getting them on your side.

Make honesty safe. Remember, the “get along” person’s goal is to have things run smoothly. They may tell you what you want to hear or simply say nothing at all if they feel telling you the truth would destroy the relationship.

Set goals: Show the “get along” person that small achievements are all that’s necessary to move forward. Make sure you involve the “get along” person in the goal setting. Otherwise, they may not follow through the way you’d like them to.

Build them up: Tell the “get along” person how important it is to you that you continue to work on the relationship. Pace yourself and be patient in building that relationship.

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## Sample words to use when dealing with “get along” people

- ◇ Be casual and sincere.
  - Reinforce your interest in getting along with this individual. “Robert, I really enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ with you and because of that, I’m hoping we can find a way to make that happen more smoothly.”
- ◇ Slow down and listen.
  - Give your “get along” person a chance to tell you how they are feeling about the issue. “Tell me about \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - Ask clarifying questions until you thoroughly understand their perspective.
- ◇ Make honesty safe.
  - Be open and patient. “Our relationship is important to me. I really want to hear what you think about this, good or bad.”
- ◇ Set goals.
  - Work with your “get along” person to set goals that will improve the relationship. “Based on what you’re telling me, it sounds like what we need to do is \_\_\_\_\_ How does that sound to you?” Once you’ve decided on something mutually acceptable, confirm and reconfirm.
- ◇ Build them up.
  - Reinforce to your “get along” person how important it is to you that you both continue to get along. “It sounds like this may work better for both of us, and I’m so glad. It’s really important to me that we \_\_\_\_\_ together.”

Suggestions for Maria: Maria needs to approach Jim in a nonthreatening manner. She can start the conversation with something like, “You have so many responsibilities. It must be hard to juggle so many requests from so many people.” This makes honesty safe for Jim. By asking clarifying questions and finding out exactly what other orders, responsibilities, and requests Jim has, Maria may come to better understand why he has a hard time meeting deadlines. Maria should explain to Jim that she would rather be told he can’t make the deadline than have him promise to ship orders that don’t go out: “When I ask if you can ship an order by a certain time and you say yes, I call the customers and tell them when to expect their products. When the order doesn’t get there on time, I feel like I’ve let them down. What can we do so that doesn’t happen?”

To ensure follow through, Maria needs to get commitment and confirmation from Jim. “So, Jim, you’ll call me every day at 3 p.m. and you’ll tell me if my orders are going to be shipped. Is that right?” Maria needs to end the conversation by reinforcing that they get along. “Thanks so much for your cooperation on this, Jim. It’s nice working with people like you.”

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## “Get along” case studies

Jim was in charge of shipping for his company. Maria was getting more and more frustrated with him, because several times when Jim had agreed to ship out some orders by a certain day, he hadn’t done it. “I had too much to do” Jim would explain, and then he would promise Maria, “It won’t happen again.” But unfortunately, it did happen again. What could Maria do to deal with Jim more effectively?

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Kent was ready to tear his hair out. Mary, an acquaintance at church, was working with him on the fund-raising committee—and she was making things difficult. Whenever Kent asked Mary to commit to a task for the fund-raising effort, she would answer with something like, “Well, I’m not sure if I can do that. I’ve got a lot going on right now. But maybe I can. Can I tell you next week?” What should Kent say and do?

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Suggestions for Kent: Kent needs to have a one-on-one meeting with Mary and find out what else is going on with her. “I’m so grateful to have you on this committee, and I feel like you’d be helping more if you didn’t have so much else to do. Can you tell me what’s going on?” This will help make honesty safe for Mary. By asking some clarifying questions, Kent can understand Mary’s position more clearly and find out if she has any hidden fears or concerns. Once he has enough information, Kent can help Mary make a good decision about her continued involvement on the fund-raising committee. By letting Mary select one simple thing she can help with, Kent can assure her success in being an asset to the committee. Kent should end the conversation by reinforcing Mary: “I’m so glad you’re a part of this group.”

# Course review

- 1. List three of the five principles of assertiveness.

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- 2. Write a clouding response to the following statement: "Nice of you to join us."

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- 3. If you're dealing with an aggressive person and you tend to be aggressive yourself, you should:

- a. Stand your ground and remain committed to your position
- b. Allow the other person to talk and use the skills of compromise

- 4. Rewrite the following negative statement into a positive one: "You can't leave until Jake is back from his route."

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- 5. List the five steps of the confrontation model.

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1. Ask others for what you need, show concern for everyone's feelings (including your own), be self-accountable and expect others to be also, use appropriate body language, use appropriate vocal traits

2. "Where do we stand on the budget numbers?" Note: There are many possible responses.

3. b.

4. "You may leave as soon as Jake is back from his route." Note: There are many possible positive responses.

5. State your observation, state your emotions—describe the effect of the behavior, state your reasons for your emotions, suggest specific alternatives behaviors, state the positive outcome or result you expect

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