

Assertiveness communication situations



2/4 Assertiveness Essay

Assertiveness is a unique tool for any manager's toolbox or for anyone who can apply it in their daily lives. Assertiveness allows one to express true feelings or emotions and personal rights, as well as the rights of others. Assertiveness is for the most part is straight forward, honest and identifies personal needs to another person. There are people that have a knack for assertive communication where others can develop there own style as a learned behavior. Those who have supreme skill with assertiveness will reduce conflict in the workplace, at home and other social environments. Assertive behavior seems to be the stress reducer in awkward situations and usually becomes the peacemaker in chaotic environments.

There is a difference between being assertive and aggression. These two behaviors can cause confusion. When people are aggressive they are usually reacting to the given situation in a rude, derogatory, sarcastic manner that only increases the anxiety and stress of anyone involved. On the other hand assertiveness allows one to stand up for their feelings while respecting others rights and feelings in the process. This causes a neutral line of communication that does not escalate the situation. Assertiveness can give both parties the " benefit of doubt". There is a philosophy that Humans naturally want to do the right thing. People don't wake up in the morning and deliberately insist on causing mayhem. The trick is to be able to harness that instinct and apply it to a " win-win" situation reducing unnecessary conflict.

There is a population of people that naturally become passive to situations. These people are experiencing fear, and don't really know how to

communicate their feelings to the offender. The fear is the fear of losing or becoming dominated so, they pretty much avoid conflict. This can evolve into poor self-esteem. Passive behavior can be stereotyped as a "win-lose" but in reality everyone loses because there was no communication, only interpersonal conflict.

Assertive situations can be identified on a daily basis. To identify this behavior, it needs to be identified to actually witness the effects on people.

Example 1:

While walking in the park someone nearly runs into you on their bike.

The natural reaction or aggressive reaction would be to claim they intended to crash into you. "Goofball! you're not supposed to run your bike into people!" Another response is the passive route and just ignores the situation and move on pretending it never happened.

The assertive way to communicate would be. "Excuse me, could you please be more careful, you almost hit me with your bike."

Example 2:

Your dear spouse calls to complain about a rough day. Too, bad you're busy playing Halo 3 on your new Xbox 360 console. The aggressive response would be "Big whoop, you will always have something to tick you off."

Passive behavior would be to let your spouse pour their feelings out on the table and keep your video game on stand by. Tackling the conflict in an

Assertive manner would be " Crazy day uh? I want to know all the details but I'm tied up right now. Can we chat about it when you get home?"

To apply assertiveness to any conflict that may arise can reduce stress and open the lines of communication. Both parties will win and personal needs will be met with out escalating conflict. Assertiveness is a tactful behavior and can be compared to " tough love." With assertiveness one is identifying with out demeaning the other. Insults, sarcasm, and demeaning comments are the reactive or aggressive approach to conflict.

How can you be assertive? If you don't have the art of assertiveness down maybe it would be wise to look in the mirror and truly identify yourself. What kind of person are you? What kind of person do you want to be? Can you take on criticism from others? Are you able to speak up when you want to? Do you feel singled out?

If you and tuck your feelings aside, be tactful and professional in sticky situations then you can master the art of assertiveness. It may take a little practice, as you may react to conflict instead of acting upon the given problem. Keep in mind that rights are always a factor. There is a choice and right to say whether to agree. It is not bad to say " no" when you want to.

There are many ways to develop an assertive approach for managing conflict. To start the learning curve practicing in minimal risk situations around friends and family. This practice can be the cornerstone for assertive behavior. Always treat others the way you want to be treated. Refer to the Golden Rule: " Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"

You are equal and have rights to be treated as an equal person. No person has the right to mistreat you or even treat you less as another. Each person is different and you may come across one who is self righteous or one with a low self esteem. People have the right to live their lives any way they want. That is the beauty of free agency; it's up to you to understand others rights and freedoms in the society and culture in which you live.

Diversity can play factor in with the situation. Cultures have their own norms they abide by so be courteous when attempting to be assertive in a diverse environment. It is easy to attack others verbally in conflict, don't hurt others when trying to express yourself. Identify your feelings in a respectful manner. After all it's not what is said but how it is said with the tone of the speaker.

Most important of all the factors when developing your assertive style you must listen. There are two parts to assertiveness. Speaking verbally or nonverbally with body language and listening. Becoming a better listener will deeply assist with assertiveness. Paying attention to the other party can help. To not listen would be foolish and you will not hear the message clearly. This would become selective listening and place a barrier in the line of communication.

Assertive behavior come naturally to some and needs to be developed with others. Everyone has rights, and its okay to let others know feelings you have in hostile situations with out antagonizing others. It's easier to point the finger but stating your beliefs will reduce the risk of stress and conflict at work, home or other social environments. Develop assertiveness as a tool to

create a better lifestyle for not just you but for others. If active passive then it can only hurt the situation and can erupt into an unwanted event. By communicating assertively you minimize a hurtful event. In the end assertive behavior will not hinder or harm the conflict. Assertive behavior is the medium that makes everyone come out on top feeling better about the situation. Everyone wins when assertiveness is used properly.

References:

Kriesberg, Louis, Constructive Conflicts - from Escalation to Resolution, (Lanham MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998)

Zartman, I William ed., Preventive Negotiation - Avoiding Conflict Escalation, (Lanham, Boulder, New York & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001)

GOODWORTH, C.: 'The Secrets of Successful Leadership and People Management', (Heinman Professional Publishing, 1988)