Assessive Communication Practice

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skill(s)</th>
<th>• Assertive communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>• 3</td>
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| Learning Objectives | • Distinguish between assertive, aggressive and passive communication  
                      • Understand how being assertive, aggressive or passive affects oral communication  
                      • Practise assertive communication |
| Time Required | • 45 minutes              |
| Materials     | • Flipchart or whiteboard  
                      • Flipchart or whiteboard markers  
                      • Scenarios for groups (cut up individually and placed in envelopes)  
                      • Handout: Styles of Communication Chart - Completed (Handout 3-3) |
| Special Note  | • It is recommended to do this exercise as a follow-up to the Introduction to Assertive Communication, unless the group is already fairly aware of what assertive communication means. |

Facilitation Steps:

1. Set-up

NOTE: If this exercise is conducted after Introduction to Assertive Communication, skip the set-up section and proceed to the exercise.

- Give each participant the completed Styles of Communication chart handout.
- Review the definitions of passive, assertive and aggressive communication, asking for input/examples from participants.
- Review the examples, implications and boundaries for each of the three styles.
- Ensure that participants clearly understand what being assertive means.
- Refer to the instructions provided in the Introduction to Assertive Communication for guidelines on how to lead this discussion.

2. Exercise

- Divide participants into small groups with four to five.
- Give each group an envelope containing one of the four scenarios.
- Explain to participants that they are to create a two- to three-minute role play, based on the scenario they have been given, and present it to the whole group.
• Instruct each group to select two people for the role play. Person A will play the character described in the scenario, and B, the character’s colleague/subordinate/boss.
• The others in the group help to create the role play.
• The key task for B is to provide an assertive response to A.
• Instruct participants to refer to the *Styles of Communication* chart to see examples of assertive statements.
• Give the groups about 15 to 20 minutes to prepare their role plays.
• Announce when time is finished.
• Ask each group to present their role play. After each presentation, ask participants:
  o What examples of assertive communication did we see?
  o Is there anything that can make this communication more effective/assertive?

3. **Debrief**

• Ask participants the following questions:
  o When people speak assertively, what is the **tone** of the communication?
  o When people speak assertively, what is their **body language**?
    Sample responses might include:
    • Strong, confident
    • Facing the person, making eye contact
    • Open posture (not arms crossed across the chest)
    • Words are clear, precise
  o Do you have any stories/experiences with speaking or being spoken to assertively? How did that go? What was the outcome?
  o What about experiences of passivity and aggression? How did they turn out?
  o Why do we need to understand the difference between the three communication styles?
    Sample responses might include:
    • Affects our relationships—how healthy/productive they are
    • Can create or destroy a team
    • Affects how others view us

• **Summary Comments:**
  o Speaking up in assertive ways is important.
  o Communication is about ensuring that the sender receives the message sent.
  o People don’t generally listen to others who are passive and they may not listen to those who are aggressive.
  o Being aggressive with others makes people fearful; this prevents building healthy and productive relationships.
  o People are more likely to listen and respect those who speak assertively; this will make communication more effective.

• **Option:** depending on the make-up of the group, you may wish to discuss the impact of culture on communication. For example, what is considered ‘assertive behaviour’ in North-American culture may be considered passive or aggressive in another culture.
Scenarios for Groups

Photocopy the following scenarios on coloured or white paper, cut them out individually and place each in an envelope.

Scenario A:
Tim is a member of your team working with you on a specific project. He has consistently been late meeting his commitments on this project. In the beginning you covered for him, doing his work as well as your own; however, this has now been going on for two weeks and it does not appear to be changing.

Scenario B:
Melanie is an exceptional client service representative. She is cheerful, knowledgeable and friendly. Clients really like working with her and so do the people in the organization. But she takes a lot of sick days—averaging three or four per month. In the beginning, it was perhaps one per month. In the past two months it has increased to three or four. It affects team performance because she is no longer reliable.

Scenario C:
Maureen is your boss. You love working for her—she is dynamic and interesting and she really knows her stuff, but she consistently asks you to stay late to work on projects that, to her, are a priority. It is beginning to affect your family and personal life. You need to speak with her about this.

Scenario D:
Dr. Vinko is a very knowledgeable man and an important part of your organization, but when he submits reports, the language in them is so complex and the ideas so vague, that it is difficult for others to understand what he is saying. Initially, not wanting to appear stupid, you take his work and do the best that you can with what you think he is saying. But it’s time to ask him to ‘simplify’ his language. No one understands what he means and you need to find a solution to this issue.