

## **ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING SERIES**

These sessions are part of a series that follow one another in sequence. Each session builds on the skills learned earlier. They are designed for a low functioning group that has basic literacy skills. The first two sessions are designed for group development. They teach the skills needed to function in a small group. PART III focuses on hypothetical situations that are designed to help participants distinguish between assertive, aggressive and passive behaviours.

## ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING SERIES - PART I

### **GOALS:**

- To get to know one another.
- To practice introducing ourselves and others in a group setting.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Flipchart, markers, 5" x 7" piece of paper or card and pencils for each participant.

### **METHOD:**

#### **Note to Coach:**

Discuss the overall goals of the series with participants.

#### **Warm up:**

Participants introduce themselves to the group.

#### **Exercise 1: Casual Introductions**

Explain that there are several ways to introduce oneself - each dependent upon the social context. Give examples of both formal and casual introductions.

"The focus for today is on casual introductions and getting to know one another better. A casual introduction may be something similar to: "Hi, my name's Sue."

- Have one participant say "*Hi Sue, my name is Sandy*".
- Then have Sandy turn to another person and say "*Hi, my name is Sandy*".
- The other participant responds "*Hi Sandy, my name is ...*"
- Continue until everyone is introduced.

Point out the following:

- Knowing a person's name is an ice-breaker and opens the way for further conversation, in the work place or in social groups.
- Forgetting someone's name immediately after an introduction isn't necessarily an indication that you have a bad memory, or that there is nothing worthwhile remembering about the other person. Most people do forget. It is okay to ask again. Reasons why we forget: shy (nervous) - concentrating on other things - forget - more nervous - don't follow the conversation - forget more - nervous. This becomes a cycle. Just ask again.
- Brainstorm how to remember names. Examples: repeat it immediately; use it in the conversation; attach something to it; think and remember it later; constant contact; write it down.

## **Exercise 2: Name Tags**

This is an exercise to first acquaint oneself with another individual, and then practise addressing a group.

Proceed as follows:

Each participant is given a 5" by 7" piece of paper or a card and a pencil.

Ask participants to write their name in the middle of the card.

Then:

- In the top left corner, write what they did on the weekend that they really enjoyed
- In the top right, write their favourite meal
- In the bottom right, write their favourite season and why
- In the bottom left corner, write their favourite thing to do in their free time

Participants pair off. Each person explains their own card to their partner. The partner then explains the owner's card to the whole group.

**Variation:**

Ask each person to identify at least one *positive* aspect of the other person's introduction. Responses are flipcharted. Suggest that attaching this positive description can help group members remember the names of other participants.

Highlight the following:

- The type of introduction depends on the social context. Example: it is different for a job interview than at a dance.
- Speak with each other but also address your comments to the whole group. Even though a particular person may ask the question, address everyone else as well as the person who asked.
- Contributing to the group also means helping one another. Try to think of helpful comments and pass them on to the others.

**Action Plan:**

Ask each person to practise using a casual introduction with someone they don't know within their work setting and report to the group next session. Encourage participants to remember everyone's name.

**EVALUATION:**

Review the session and ask participants what they have learned.

**REFERENCE:**

YWCA Discovering Life Skills Volume 4: **Assertiveness Training Series**. Reprinted, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. YWCA of Greater Toronto, 1997.

# ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING SERIES - PART II

## **GOALS:**

- To practise introducing ourselves formally.
- To learn and practise speaking in small groups.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Flipchart, markers, file cards with a conversational topics for each participant.

## **METHOD:**

### **Warm up 1:**

Review the previous session and ask each participant to report to the group on their assignment of introducing themselves casually.

### **Warm up 2: Name Circle**

Give the following instructions:

*"My name is... (and turning to your right say) and this is ...."*. The person to the right of the coach then says, *"My name is .... (and turning to her right says) and this is ..."*. The process of giving your name and introducing the person on the right continues until it returns to the coach.

### **Exercise 1:**

Briefly describe the difference between casual and formal introductions and demonstrate each. Ask participants to give examples of when formal introductions would be used.

Participants pair off and then formally introduce themselves to their partner:

*"Hello, I'm ...."*. Partners then switch.

Ask participants to name the important components of a formal introduction. Flipchart suggestions. These should include:

- . Firm handshake
- . Eye contact
- . Confident voice
- . Remembering the other person's name.

## **Exercise 2: Role-Play**

Instruct participants to enter the room as if they were going to a job interview. Explain that they should knock and enter individually, saying something like:

*"Hello, my name is .... I'm here for a job interview".* Shake hands, and the interviewer says: *"Hello, I'm Mr. .... have a seat."*

### **Action Plan:**

Explain to the participants that during the next session, they are to enter the room at the beginning of the group after formally introducing themselves to the group leader or someone assigned to be the interviewer.

## **Exercise 3: Speaking in Small Groups**

Discuss the essential differences between talking one-on-one with a person and speaking while in the company of several others and make the following points:

- While talking with one other person, listening, making eye contact and responding all are important.
- In a small group setting it is important to try and include all the people in the group while you are speaking. Important points:
  - . Look from person to person
  - . Make eye contact with each person as you talk
  - . Make eye contact with others as they talk
  - . Listen
  - . Ask others for their opinion
- Even when specifically asked to respond, try to address your answer mainly to the questioner, but include the other group members too by glancing at them every so often.
- Avoid speaking just to the group leader with statements such as, "I think she could...."

Hand each participant a file card with a topic written on it. Each person asks each of the other group members a question about that topic.

Sample topics:

- . Favourite leisure activity
- . Favourite jobs and why
- . Least favourite jobs and why
- . Areas of the city they live in and how they get to the group
- . Other groups they belong to, if any

Interject (coach and participants) and comment on ways each questioner and respondent could improve their skill when speaking in small groups.

You may wish to address other important issues at this point, for example:

- . The stigma of being on welfare
- . The stigma of being labelled psychiatric

**Questions to consider:**

- Do you feel that you are treated as being inferior because of either, or both, of these labels?
- If yes, how do you cope with the situation?
- How do you treat other "minority" groups, or other people who are seen as "different"?

**Note to Coach:**

The content of the discussion is important, as well as providing practise for speaking in a group.

**Closer:**

Summarize the main points of this exercise and indicate what each person individually needs to focus on in order to improve their skills for small group discussion.

**EVALUATION:**

Review the session and ask participants what they have learned.

**REFERENCE:**

***YWCA, Discovering Life Skills, Volume 4:***

Assertiveness Series Lesson 2, Reprinted. YWCA of Greater Toronto, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1997.

# ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING SERIES - PART III

## GOAL:

- To learn the difference between Aggressive, Assertive and Passive behaviour.

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, *Situation-ResponseCards* for each participant.

## METHOD:

### Warm up:

Following up on the action plan from the second session, participants formally introduce themselves as they enter the room for a job interview. Coach and group members comment on each person's introduction.

Briefly review session, **PART II**, highlighting the main points of speaking in small groups, and point out that this skill will be practised throughout the training.

### Exercise 1:

#### **Aggressive Behaviour**

Ask participants what they think it means to be aggressive. What would the person be like? Responses are flipcharted and may include:

- shout, yell
- angry
- slap, hit
- sarcastic
- manipulative
- face red, contorted
- motivation to hurt or get revenge
- argue loudly
- name calling
- threaten
- indirect
- body tense
- fists clenched

#### **Assertive Behaviour**

Ask participants what they think it means to be assertive. What would the person be like? Responses are flipcharted and may include:

- diplomatic
- say what's on your mind
- polite
- calm
- stick up for yourself
- self control
- cool
- firm
- direct
- get your point across

Assertive people say what's on their mind in a manner that is not intended to hurt the other person. The intention is to be clear and to get your point across.

Point out that being assertive and aggressive are similar in that the person speaks up and says what's on their mind. The essential difference is **how** they do it. The aggressive person does it in a way that is intended to hurt or put down the other person. The assertive person does it in a calm (perhaps firm) and direct way with no intention to hurt.

## **Passive Behaviour**

Ask participants what it means to be passive. What would the person be like?  
Responses are flipcharted and may include:

- don't stick up for yourself
- uncertain
- shy, passive
- meek
- don't say what's on your mind.
- don't express yourself
- degrade yourself
- not self-confident
- apologetic

The person doesn't say what's on their mind, or is not firm or confident about it. She is overly apologetic.

## **Theory:**

See Theory Box.

## **Exercise 2: Situation-Response Cards**

Proceed as follows:

1. Give each person a card and explain that each one has a situation described on it, and a response to that situation. The response is either assertive, aggressive or passive.
2. Ask each person to read their card silently and come to some decision as to which of the three behaviours the response represents.
3. Request a volunteer to read their card aloud.
4. Ask other group members which behaviour the response represents.
5. Ask the card bearer if she agrees.
6. Discuss why the group decided on their answer.
7. Continue steps 3 to 6 around the group.

**Options:**

8. You can ask the card bearer to frame the responses in a manner which represents the other behaviours.
9. You can ask the card bearer to role-play each card the way it is written and then the other two ways.

**EVALUATION:**

Review the session and ask participants what they have learned.

**REFERENCE:**

***YWCA, Discovering Life Skills, Volume 4: Assertiveness Training Series: Lessons 3, 4 & 5*** Reprinted. YWCA of Greater Toronto, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 1997.

**CREDIT:**

The Salvation Army, Booth Industries.

## THEORY BOX

### **Assertiveness:**

- Direct communication of one's needs, wants, desires, and options without punishing, threatening or putting down the other person.
- Respect of self and others.
- Stands up for personal rights.
- Does not involve excessive fear and anxiety.
- Stands up for own rights but without violating others' rights.
- Direct and honest communication between people.

### **Passivity:**

- Failure to express thoughts, feelings, beliefs, needs.
- Expresses thoughts and feelings in an indirect way:
- *"I wish I knew someone who could teach me how to jack up my car"*.
- Indirect expression can be easily misunderstood --denies or restricts your rights because you do not communicate them.
- Feels badly as a result of being unable to express feelings -- guilty, anxious, depressed.
- Can lead to headaches and other physical symptoms.
- After a while may blow up.

### **Aggressiveness:**

- Little or no consideration for feelings and rights of others.
- Can be direct - verbal assaults, threats, name calling, humiliation, hostile remarks.
- Can be indirect - gossip, gestures, throws things, yells, sarcasm.
- May achieve one's goals - but at the expense of others.
- Others may feel taken advantage of, humiliated, abused, embarrassed.

## SITUATION - RESPONSE CARDS

You are at a party and you only know the hostess.

You decide to join a group of strangers who are talking together. You walk over and join the group.

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You are in a store, next in line, and have been waiting for 15 minutes while another customer is served. You are next, but when the sales clerk asks "*Who's next?*", a person beside you, who arrived after says "*I am*".

You say nothing.

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A friend is to come to your place for dinner at 6:00 p.m. Your friend arrives at 7:00 p.m. and says, "*Sorry I'm late; I guess we won't be able to go to the movie.*" You have been really looking forward to seeing the movie and had dinner ready for 6:00 p.m.

You say, "*Oh, that's okay, I don't mind.*"

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Your supervisor keeps pointing out that you are making mistakes.

You say, "*Get off my back and leave me alone!*", and stomp away.

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You have a friend who continually calls you stupid when you make a mistake. In telling a funny story to other friends, she refers to you again as stupid.

You say, "*I enjoy the story, but I don't like being called stupid and I want you to stop doing that.*"

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A friend continually borrows things from you and forgets to return them. She wants to borrow some sugar.

You explode and say, "*What kind of sucker do you think I am, anyway?*"