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ASSERTIVE MESSAGES

SOME OF YOUR LEGITIMATE RIGHTS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

- put yourself first sometimes
- be the final judge of your feelings and accept them as legitimate
- your own opinions and convictions
- change your mind or decide on a different course of action
- negotiate for change
- ignore the advice of others
- say no
- take responsibility for someone else's problem

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

YOU...

- make direct statements regarding your feelings, thoughts and wishes
- stand up for your rights and take into account the rights and feelings of others
- listen attentively and let others know you have heard them
- are open to negotiation and compromise but not at the expense of your own rights and dignity can give and receive compliments

ASSERTIVE STATEMENTS

Your perspective of the situation, your feelings about the situation and your needs regarding the situation

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STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

Assertive vs. Other Styles

"Well, I guess. We can do whatever you want."

OR

"I'll go with whatever you decide."

"If those are your suggestions, don't even bother. I'll do it myself."

OR

"For future reference, if you don't want to hear my opinion then just don't ask me, and do what you think you should."

"Since we disagree, let's try to find a solution that works for both of us."

OR

"That's a valid point, but I think going a different route might be more beneficial because..."

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

- ***Direct eye contact*** shows that the speaker is strong and not intimidated.
- ***An assertive stance or posture*** with the right balance of strength and casualness. For example, standing rigid may come across as aggressive; whereas, slouching may be perceived as weak.
- ***Tone of voice***. A strong voice conveys assertiveness, but raising one's voice shows aggression and is likely to be met with anger.
- ***Facial expression***. Expressions that are neither angry nor anxious are essential for sending the right message.
- ***Timing***. Assertive communication must be executed at the right time (e.g., making requests from one's spouse in the middle of a dinner party is not likely to be well received).
- ***Nonthreatening, non blaming language***. For example, language such as "If you continue to do that, you will be sorry!" is threatening rather than assertive.
- ***Clarity***. For example, "Can you please not be that way?" is vague, while "Can you please not walk away when we're talking?" more clearly conveys the speaker's needs.
- ***Positive language***. For example, making a negative request ("Will you stop leaving your papers all over the house?") is less effective than a positive request ("Here is a divider I've set up. Will you please place your papers here?").
- ***Language without criticism of one's self or others***. For example, phrases such as "I know I'm overly sensitive, but could you please not use that word?" and "Didn't anyone ever teach you any manners?" are critical rather than assertive.

EXAMPLES OF USING "I" STATEMENTS

- "I understand where you're coming from, but I'm afraid I must decline."
- "I don't appreciate that you arrived late for work. I don't want to query you."
- "I want you to file this report."
- "I get frustrated when you consistently miss deadlines."

TEN PHRASES TO TRY

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- *Requesting a resource*: "I'd love to have access to the new software; it would really help me work faster. What do you think?"
- *Sharing an opposing view*: "I'd like to share a different perspective..." or "I've had a different experience..." or "I've got a different viewpoint to share on this."
- *Managing multiple requests*: "I'm glad to help with this task, but could we clarify priorities again to ensure I meet all my deadlines?"
- *Seeking clarification*: "Could you tell me more about..." or "I'm still not totally clear on this aspect; Walk me through..."
- *Proposing an idea*: "I've had an idea that might improve our client onboarding process. Can we find a time to discuss?" or "What if we considered...?" or "I'd like to add to that thought..."
- *Navigating a disagreement*: "We both seem to be dug in. Tell me more about your perspective on this." or "Where do you think the disconnect is?" or "Where do we have common ground so far?"
- *Addressing a problem*: "I've noticed a few errors in our reports, which is creating some confusion on the team. What could help ensure we catch these earlier?"
- *Asking for feedback*: "I'd appreciate your feedback on this project. What's one thing that went well and one thing I could improve?"
- *Responding to unrealistic deadlines*: "That deadline feels fast-approaching. Can we go over the project scope again to ensure it's doable within our timeline?"
- *Giving critical feedback*: "I noticed you talked over others a few times in our last team meeting, which seemed to cause them to hold back for the rest of the meeting. What's been your experience in these meetings?"