

## **ASSERTIVENESS: GETTING WHAT YOU WANT**

The philosophy underlying assertiveness is that all people are entitled to express needs and opinions without feeling guilty or anxious, despite differences in age, gender, social status, education, or income. Although everyone wisely chooses to be passive in some situations, never asserting one's opinions, complaints or wants often causes people to become angry or apathetic. Neither feeling enhances motivation. People who learn to communicate assertively are the most apt to ask for help when needed and to overcome debilitating feelings.

Being assertive means stating ideas, wants, or complaints directly and candidly, but without the condescension, outrage, insults, manipulation or public humiliation that usually accompanies aggression. Aggression is an offensive, belligerent act against others, whereas assertion is a defensive response to protect and promote ourselves positively.

When being assertive, it is important to maintain direct eye contact, speak clearly, not too loudly or softly, without a hostile or pleading tone, and stand or sit confidently. Choose a time and place that are quiet and uninterrupted for assertive encounters. Pick one concern at a time and avoid dragging skeletons out of the closet or unearthing ancient history.

### **REFUSING REQUESTS**

#### *Ideas to Keep in Mind*

1. You have a right to say no to unreasonable requests.
2. You deny your own importance when you say yes and you really mean no.
3. Saying no does not imply that you reject another person--you are simply refusing a request.
4. When saying no, it is important to be direct, concise and to the point.
5. If you really mean no, do not be swayed by pleading, begging, cajoling, compliments or other forms of manipulation.
6. You may offer reasons for your refusal, but do not get carried away with numerous "excuses."
7. Do not become overly apologetic: this can be offensive.
8. Saying no is a skill that can be learned.

9. Saying no and not feeling guilty about it can become a habit--a habit that can be very growth enhancing and energy saving.

### **MAKING REQUESTS**

#### *Ideas to Keep in Mind*

1. You have a right to have preferences, wants and desires.
2. You deny your own importance when you keep yourself and/or others unaware of your wants.
3. The best way to get exactly what you want is to make a direct request.
4. Indirect ways of asking for what you want may be misunderstood, e.g., complaining of a heavy work load rather than asking for help.
5. Asking for what you want is a skill that can be learned.
6. Directly asking for what you want can become a habit with many pleasant rewards.

### **A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR WINNERS**

From *How to Make Winning Your Life Style* by David S. Viscott, M.D.

1. You have the right to be you--the way you are, the way you want to be.
2. You have the right to grow, to change, to become, to strive, to reach for any goal, to be limited only by your degree of talent and amount of effort.
3. You have the right to privacy--in marriage, in a family, in any relationship, in any group--the right to keep a part of your life secret, no matter how trivial or how important, merely because you want it to be that way. And you have the right to be alone part of each day, each week, and each year, to spend time with yourself.
4. You have the right to be loved and to love, to be accepted, cared for, and adored, and you have the right to fulfill that right.
5. You have the right to ask questions, of anyone, at any time, in any matter that affects your life, so long as it is your business to do so, and to be listened to and taken seriously.
6. You have the right to self-respect and to do everything you need to do to increase your self-esteem so long as you hurt no one in doing so.

7. You have the right to be happy, to find something in the world that is meaningful and rewarding to you and gives you a sense of completeness.

8. You have the right to be trusted and to trust and to be taken at your word. If you were wrong, you have the right to be given a chance to make good, if possible.

9. You have the right to be free as long as you act responsibly and are mindful of the rights of others and of those obligations that you entered into freely.

10. You have the right to win, to succeed, to make plans, to see those plans fulfilled, to become the best that you can possibly become.

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

*How to Make Winning Your Life Style* by David S. Viscott, M.D.