



## Participant Guide

# Effective, Assertive Communication Improving Your Skills



# Effective, Assertive Communication

## Improving Your Skills

### Overview

Our topic today is Effective, Assertive Communication. We will cover the various modes of communication and learn to develop or enhance open interpersonal styles for the betterment of our personal and professional relationships. Having good talking and listening skills can also reduce misunderstandings and facilitate creativity and problem solving.

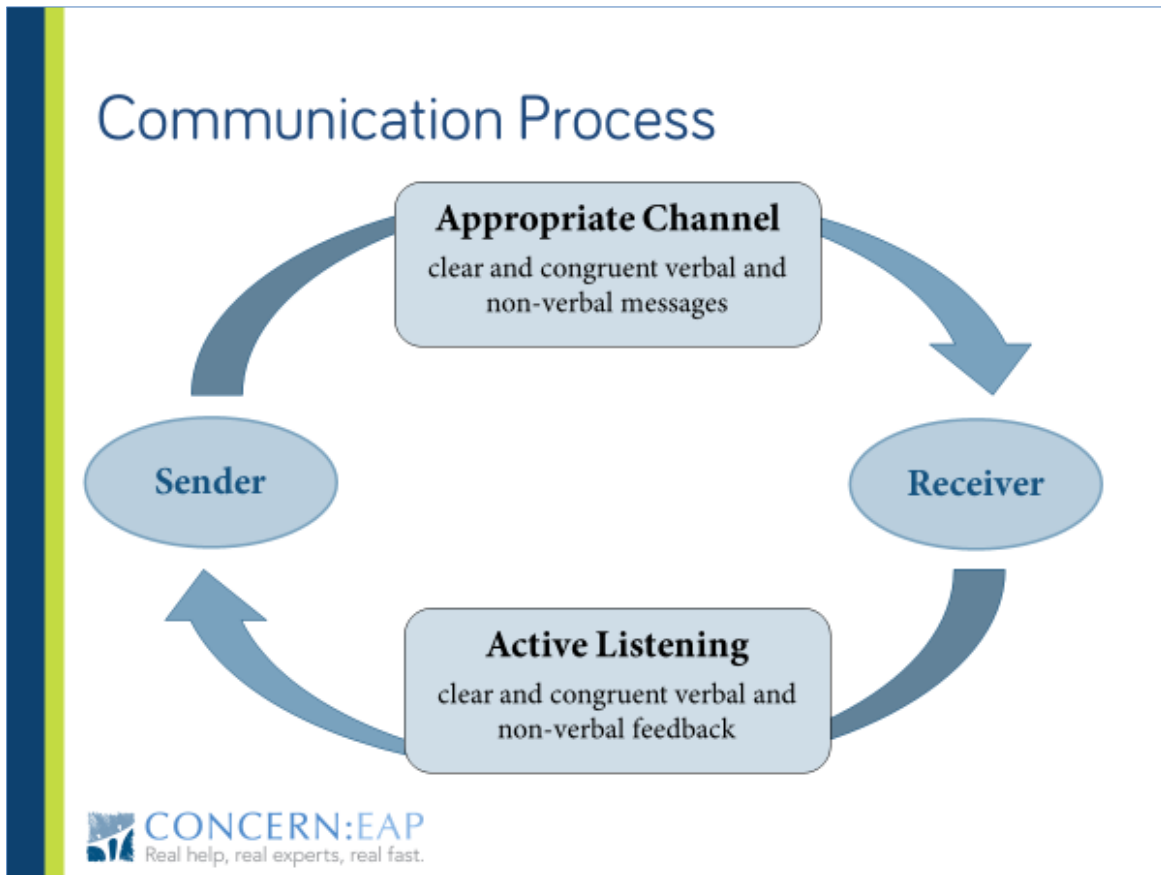
### Agenda Topics

- Welcome and Introduction
- What is Effective Communication
- Communication Styles
- Techniques to Improve Communication Skills
- Non-Verbal Communication & Communication Barriers

**Seminar Length:** Approximately 1 hour



## The Communication Process



- The sender is responsible for designing a clear, concise message, gearing the message to the receiver, selecting an appropriate channel and asking the receiver for feedback.
- The message is what the sender wants the receiver to understand.
- The channel is how the sender sends the message.
- Feedback is a link which ensures understanding between people. The sender should remember to ask for feedback and make it comfortable for the receiver to give it.



## What is Effective Communication?

### What is Effective Communication?

Effective communication is being attentive

- Distinguishing between *listening* and *hearing*
- Entering the other's *world*
- Not *assuming*



### Attentive Communication

- Acknowledges that the other person may be communicating something other than what we are hearing
- Listening allows us to enter “another person’s world”
- Listening corrects unfounded assumptions



## What is Effective Communication?

### What is Effective Communication?

It also means communicating assertively

- Making relationships more *equal*
- Saying what you *feel*
- Being *straight forward* about what you mean
- Achieving *win-win*



### Assertive Communication

- A technique used to make relationships more equal.
- Overcome feelings of powerlessness or manipulation and to say what you feel, both the good and not so good.
- Characterized by a direct, straight-forward approach to others.
- An assertive person knows that a workable compromise or win-win solution will be the best result for both in the long run.
- It is learning to say yes and no, knowing what you want and setting reasonable limits.



# How Well Do You Assert Yourself?

1. \_\_\_ You choose and make decisions for others.
2. \_\_\_ You are brutally honest.
3. \_\_\_ You demand your own way.
4. \_\_\_ You feel righteous, superior, controlling – later possibly feeling guilt.
5. \_\_\_ You allow others to choose and make decisions for you.
6. \_\_\_ You are indirect and self-denying.
7. \_\_\_ You feel anxious, ignored, helpless, manipulated, angry at yourself and/or others.
8. \_\_\_ Others feel guilty, or superior and frustrated with you.
9. \_\_\_ You manipulate others to choose your way.
10. \_\_\_ You tend towards indirectness with the air of being direct.
11. \_\_\_ If you don't get your own way, you'll make snide comments or pout and be a victim.
12. \_\_\_ Others feel confused and frustrated, not sure who you are or what to expect next.
13. \_\_\_ You choose and make decisions for you.
14. \_\_\_ You are sensitive and caring with your honesty.
15. \_\_\_ You are self-respecting, self-expressive and straight forward.
16. \_\_\_ You are willing to compromise and negotiate.

## Communication Style Key:

If most of your answers are in:

1 – 4

5 – 8

9 – 12

13- 16

Your primary style is:

Aggressive

Passive

Passive Aggressive

Assertive



## Basic Communication Styles

### Basic Communication Styles

- **Passive**
  - I'm not okay
- **Aggressive**
  - You're not okay
- **Passive Aggressive**
  - You're not okay, but I will let you think you are
- **Assertive**
  - I'm okay and you're okay

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**Passive Communication** is a style in which individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs. These individuals believe: *I'm not worth taking care of.*

**Aggressive Communication** is a style in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others. Aggressive communicators may be verbally and/or physically abusive.

**Passive-Aggressive Communication** is a style in which individuals appear passive on the surface, but are really acting out anger in a subtle, indirect way. People who develop a pattern of passive-aggressive communication usually feel powerless, stuck, and resentful. They express their anger by subtly undermining the object of their resentments. They smile at you while setting booby traps all around you.

**Assertive Communication** is a style in which individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and firmly advocate for their rights and needs without violating the rights of others. These individuals value themselves (physically, emotionally and spiritually) and are strong advocates for themselves while being very respectful of the rights of others.



## Characteristics of Assertive Individuals



Characteristics of Assertive Individuals

- Stand up for rights and beliefs
- Convey sensitivity
- Understand other's feelings
- Confront conflicting behavior

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Assertive individuals handle conflict effectively and often strive for a win-win situation. Assertive individuals assess conflict situations and choose an appropriate conflict management method depending on the person and the situation.

You can be assertive without attacking. It lets you:

- Stand up for your rights and beliefs
  - Convey sensitivity to the other person
  - Show that you understand their feelings
- “I know that you’re in a hurry for these reports, but I won’t be able to start on them until I finish this project. That should take about an hour.”*

Confront conflicting behavior. *“I said it was OK for you to use my office when I was gone if you cleared it with me first. Now I have learned that you’ve done so without asking me. What can we do about this?”*





# Techniques for Communicating More Effectively

## Be careful about asking questions that aren't questions:

- *You aren't going to wear that are you?*
- *Doesn't that make you angry?*

## Watch your non-verbal communication, your tone, posture, and eye contact

- Remember that 80 - 90% of communication is non-verbal.

## Use "I" language assertion

- It can be difficult to disagree with someone without their becoming angry or being upset. When conflict occurs, we often make statements about the other person or use "You" messages. Example:

- *You are so rude.*
- *You make me so angry.*
- *You must be crazy.*

- People then become defensive and feel a need to defend themselves. The comment becomes "person" focused, rather than behavior focused. Their response is usually:

- *I am not rude. I don't care. No you're crazy.*

A better way to express this is:


- *I feel upset. I feel angry. I don't understand.*



## “I” Language Assertiveness

### “I” Language Assertiveness

1. Express your feelings
2. Describe the behavior
3. Describe the effect on you
4. Give a statement of the desired change
5. State the consequences if the behavior does not change

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Sometimes it is appropriate to end at the 3rd step, when the other person is made aware of how the behavior affected you. As a supervisor or parent, however, you may need and want to conclude with step 5 to ensure the desired change occurs.

### Exercise #2:

Please complete the following paradigm:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_  
*(feeling word)* *(behavior)*

because \_\_\_\_\_  
*(effect on speaker)*

I want you to \_\_\_\_\_  
*(statement of change)*

If you do/don't: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(statement of change)*

I will \_\_\_\_\_  
*(statement of consequence)*



## Active Listening

Active listening allows the listener to be involved with the speaker, better understand what is being said and gives the speaker a feeling of being counted, respected and heard. Active listening requires focus, energy and involvement.

### To listen actively and ensure mutual understanding

- **Suspend judgment.** If we can suspend our judgment and values, it will be easier to hear what the other person is trying to communicate.
- **Reflect feelings.** There is an element of emotion present in every interaction. Acknowledging these emotions can add depth and make the interactions meaningful.
- **Paraphrase main ideas.** Re-phrase in your own words your understanding of what the person just said. “What I understand you to say is.... Is that what you meant?”
- **Clarify with questions.** You may need to interrupt to ask questions or clarify what you are hearing. Done appropriately, the interruption should not be viewed as disrespectful, but ensuring your understanding of what is being said.
- **Make summarizing statements.** When a decision is reached or action items decided, confirmation of the decision or next step is critical. This will prevent misunderstandings or confusion.

### Barriers to Effective Listening

- **Thinking of how you will respond.** As soon as we have some idea of what the speaker means, we often stop listening and start thinking how we will respond.
- **Judging.** This is perhaps the number one barrier to communication and occurs when we pass judgment on the speaker, whether we express it or not. Some judgmental responses include labeling, ridiculing, shaming, warning, or threatening. For example, we think or say: *Don't be stupid, or You better not try that with me!* If we feel we are being judged by others, we often become defensive or vindictive.
- **Loaded words.** These are emotionally charged words that make us see “red.” They are often “trigger” words that evoke certain emotions when we hear them. Some examples might be: Sport, Bucko, Honey, Sweetie, Doll, Babe, or other words that have a demeaning or culturally negative connotation. We can avoid being blocked by these words if we know what they are and the strong feelings we may have when we hear them.
- **Advice giving.** This occurs when the listener feels compelled to give unsolicited advice about what the other person should think or do. Advice giving has the underlying intent of changing the other person in the direction we think best and assuming we know what is best for that person.
- **Quizzing.** Here the listener tries to improve understanding by asking questions. Quizzing can be intrusive and hostile for the speaker and interrupts the flow of conversation. Quizzing is different from clarifying.
- **Reassuring.** When we listen to someone with problem or concern, we often want to be helpful. But our helpfulness frequently gets in the way and sets up another barrier. We may say things like, *Oh, that's not so bad, or I had the same problem and I survived.* Giving reassurance is a way of saying we can't accept the speaker's feelings or how they see the situation.



## Components of Non-Verbal Communication



All people use nonverbal behavior, but not all cultures use it to communicate the same thing. Being culturally sensitive is critical because nonverbal behavior in one culture may signify concern and in another culture, may represent confrontation or disrespect.

For example:

- Is a smile a gesture of friendly agreement, a sign of embarrassment, or an attempt to preserve harmony?
- Is a stare a challenge or a demonstration of passionate involvement with the subject at hand?
- Do lowered eyes demonstrate subservience or respect?



## Components of Non-Verbal Communication

**Eye contact:** Can communicate interest and establish a connection, but not all cultures share the same rules and expectations around eye contact.

**Posture:** Our posture can be used to communicate a variety of message about our mood, the relationship, and our status in each relationship.

**Gestures:** Gestures are head nods and movements we make with our arms, hands, fingers, legs, and feet. Gestures should flow naturally as part of our speech.

**Facial Expression:** If nonverbal communication is the primary conduit of our emotions, facial expression is probably the greatest indicator. If you're confused by a person's facial expression, let them know what you are seeing and ask them to help you understand.

**Paralanguage:** Paralanguage is essentially the sounds we make that aren't words. It's how we vocalize our feelings using volume, pitch, rhythm, tone, rate and timbre as well as laughing, crying whining, etc.

**Proximity:** Proximity refers to distance. How close is too close? How far is too far? It depends on the individual, the relationship and the culture.

**Touch:** Touch is influenced by mood, our relationship, past history and culture. Some people will not want you to touch them at all, while others may feel natural having a hand on their shoulder.

## Communication Barriers

When communication is effective, the message sent and received is the same. Frequently that is not the case. These barriers result from life experiences, cultural influences, and values. To reduce these barriers and be more effective at sending messages, we need to:

- send clear and concise messages
- ensure congruency between verbal and nonverbal messages
- listen actively
- seek clarification

Asking questions, seeking clarification, and offering feedback all help to ensure that the message sent is the same message received.



## Sender/Receiver Disconnect


### Sender/Receiver Disconnect

Two leading causes of communication breakdowns and misunderstandings

- Listening Barriers
- Contradictory messages

#### Solutions

- Discard bad listening habits
- Build effective listening skills
- Learn to read body language



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- Identify your poor listening habits
- Be present and mindful when listening to others
- What is the speaker's body language telling you?

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## Clarification Skills

### Clarification Skills

- A. Hearing
- B. Clarifying and Confirming
- C. Responding



- Listen carefully to what is being said
- Check to make sure that what is coming across is what was intended
- Formulate an appropriate response, considering the speaker's needs and style

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## When to Consider Calling Your EAP

### When to Consider Calling Your EAP

- Emotional mood swings
- Increased drug/alcohol use
- Reckless behavior
- Decreased work performance
- Fractured relationships
- Disrupted sleep and appetite
- Suicidal thoughts



Communication problems can impact our families, friendships, intimate relationships, professional relationships and our day to day life. Poor communication can contribute to work problems, divorce, substance abuse, and emotional turmoil. If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, please consider speaking with a professional counselor through Concern: EAP.





## Questions

### Questions



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## Seminar Evaluation Form: CONCERN: Employee Assistance Program

*Please fill out and return to presenter or HR Representative. Your feedback is very important to us. Thank you!*

Seminar Title: **Effective, Assertive Communication** Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Regarding the Seminar</b>	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. How well were the seminar objectives met?					
2. Usefulness of seminar information?					
3. Length of seminar?					
4. Effectiveness of exercises?					
5. How would you rate this seminar overall?					

<b>Regarding the Presenter</b>	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Presentation skills?					
2. Ability to answer questions?					
3. Knowledge of subject?					
4. Use of time?					
5. Overall assessment of presenter?					

### Additional Comments

1. What would you recommend to make this seminar more effective?

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2. What part of the seminar did you find most helpful?

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3. Additional comments/suggestions for speaker's improvement?

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Thank You for Your Feedback!

