



Texas Woman's University

Counseling
Center

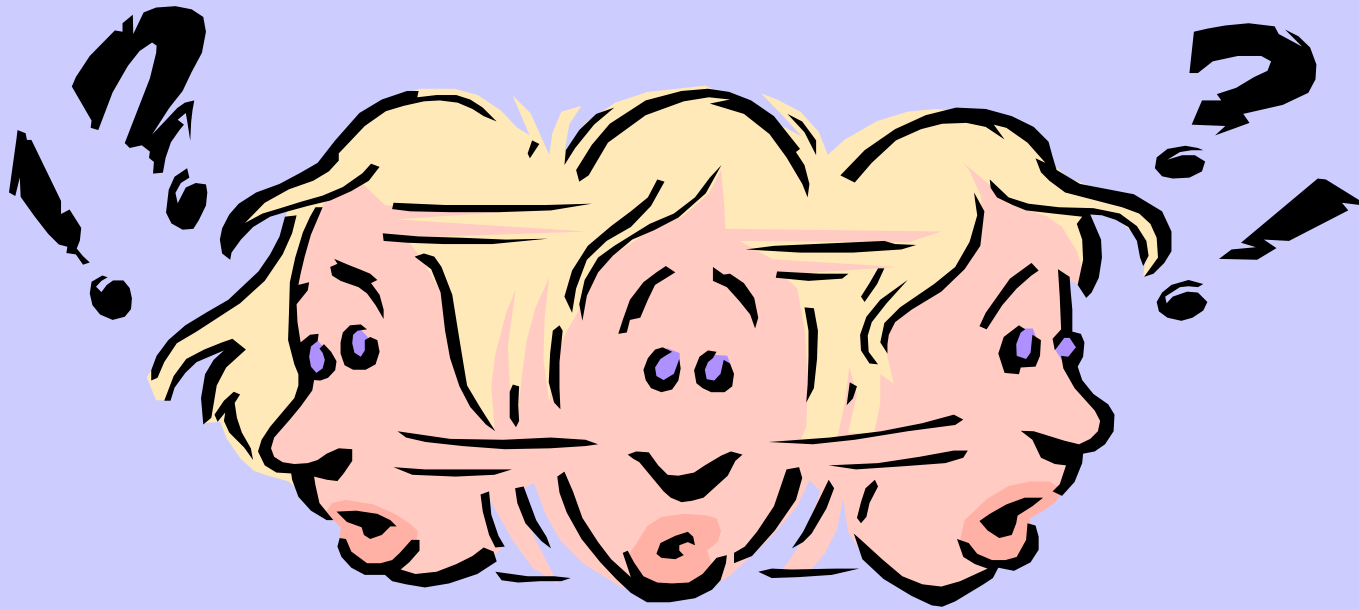
Presents

Learning to Be Assertive!



But First,

What is Assertiveness?



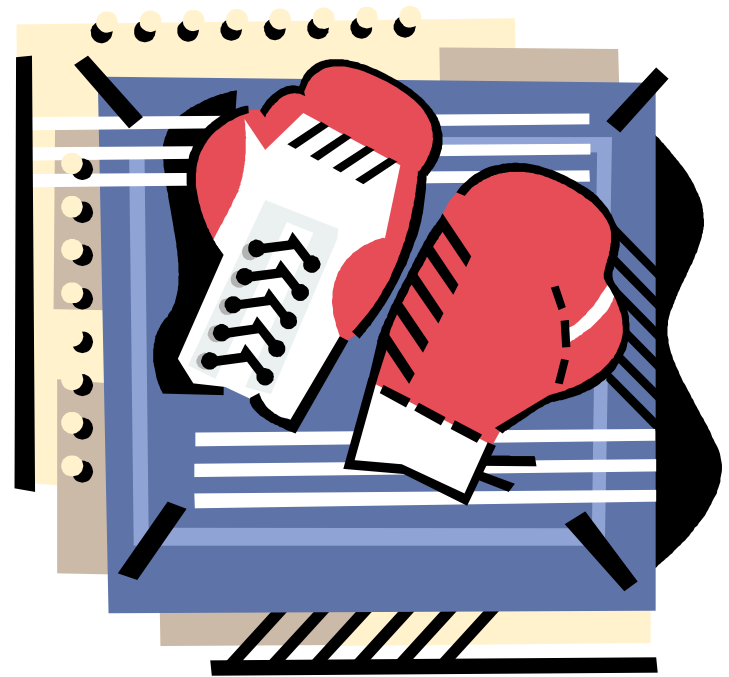
Assertiveness is...

- Being direct and appropriately expressive
- Stating your opinions, feelings, and thoughts without blaming the other person
- Valuing and respecting others' opinions, feelings, and thoughts



Assertiveness is not...

- A guaranteed way to win every argument
- A guaranteed way to get what you want
- A way to get others to feel like you feel or think what you think

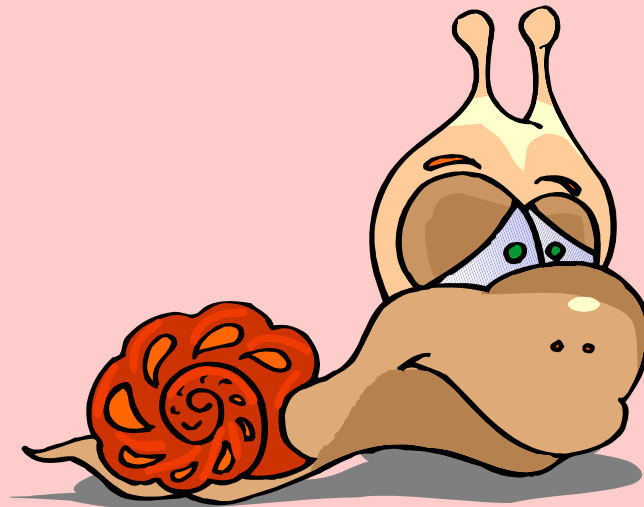
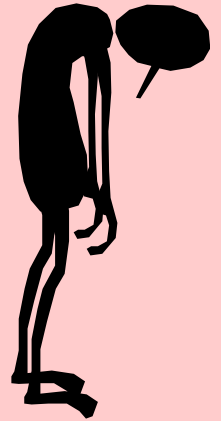


Definitions #1

- Assertiveness is:
 - Standing up for oneself in such a way that one does not violate the basic rights of another person.
 - A direct, honest, and appropriate expression of one's feelings and opinions.
 - Showing respect for another person by letting them know how their behavior is being received.

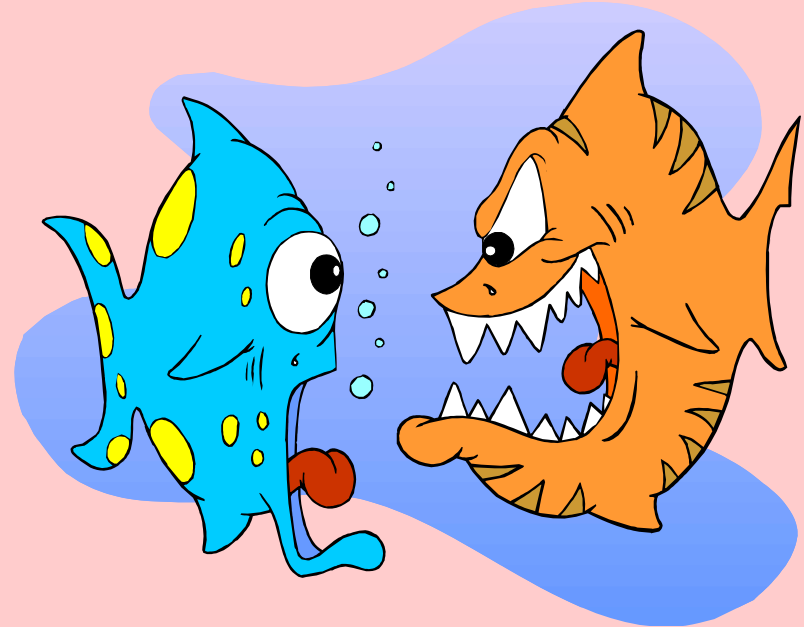
Definitions #2

- Non-Assertiveness/Passivity is:
 - Failing to stand up for oneself
 - Standing up for oneself in an ineffectual manner so that one's rights are easily violated



Definitions #3

- Aggression is:
 - Standing up for oneself in such a way that the rights of the other person are violated in the process.
 - Attempting to humiliate or discredit the other person.
 - Attempting to get what you want by force.
 - Conveying disrespect for the feelings of others.



Assertiveness Doesn't Always Fit

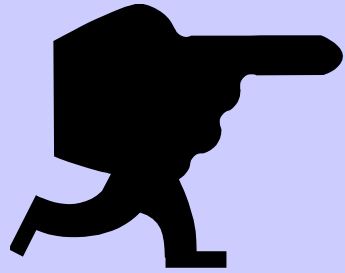
- If your child is running across the street in front of a car, it is preferable to be aggressive: “Stop, right now!!!”
- If you are confronted by someone who is physically threatening you, it may be wiser to be calm and unassertive.
- There are times and places where aggressiveness and unassertiveness are appropriate.



Basic Rights #1

You have the right to:

1. Have feelings and to express these feelings in ways that do not violate the dignity of others.
2. Change your mind.
3. Make mistakes – and be responsible for them.
4. Express positive feelings toward others.



Basic Rights #2

You have the right to:

5. Be non-assertive in chosen situations and feel good about yourself.
6. Say “no” without feeling guilty.
7. Be angry when you are mistreated.
8. Get what you pay for and not be cheated.
9. Make your own decisions and to live your life as you choose (as long as you don’t hurt others or violate their rights).

Basic Rights #3

You have the right to:

10. Receive prompt and courteous service.
11. Ask for what you want.
12. Set your own priorities.
13. Be listened to and to be taken seriously.
14. Be treated with respect.
15. Set appropriate boundaries for yourself.



Why am I not assertive?

- Many of us come from homes that taught us (among other things):
 - “Don’t speak unless you’re spoken to.”
 - “If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.”
 - “He who has the power wins – and you don’t have the power.”



Here's Some Good News!

- You learned to be non-assertive or aggressive and you can learn to be assertive.
- You can choose how you'd like to respond in every situation so that it's best for you and, in most cases, the other person.

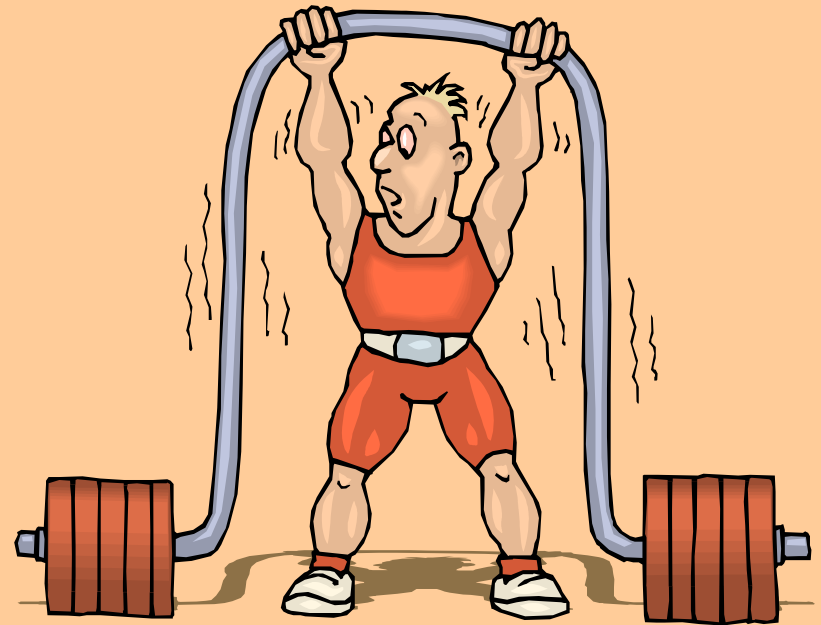


Getting Ready to Be Assertive #1

- Using assertive behavior requires you to adopt certain attitudes and beliefs in order to be successful
 - The list of Basic Rights is the framework
 - Other attitudes and beliefs are also important...

Getting Ready to Be Assertive #2

- Right or wrong?
 - Many people confuse being assertive with winning more arguments but assertiveness is only a process to let others respectfully know how you think and feel



Getting Ready to Be Assertive #3

- Thoughts and feelings are neither right nor wrong
 - This is hard for some of us to believe since we've been trained otherwise
 - But, a fact is the only thing that is correct or incorrect, thoughts are just thoughts.
 - Feelings are not logical, therefore they cannot be right or wrong.



Getting Ready to Be Assertive #4

- Who's in control here?
 - Assertiveness assumes that only we are in control of ourselves (in normal circumstances).
 - And, others are in control of themselves.
 - We may try to influence others by what we do and they may try to influence us.
 - But, ultimately, we choose how we will feel, think and act.

Getting Ready to Be Assertive #5

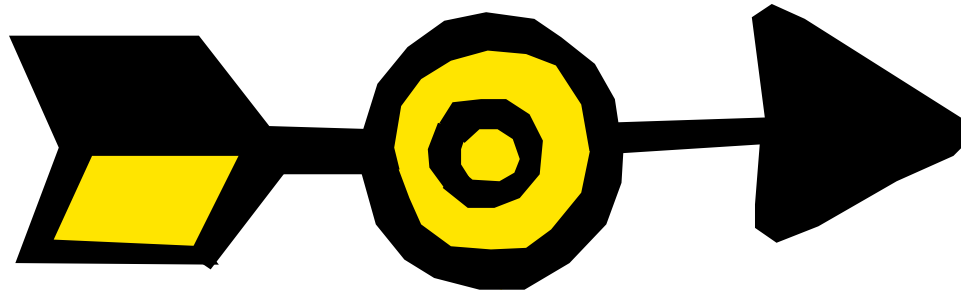
- When influence is deliberately applied, this is, by definition, aggressive behavior. This includes things like:
 - Generalizing – “You’re just mean.”
 - Presenting something as fact – “This is just the way it’s done” or “You’re wrong to feel that.”
 - Attempting to coerce – “If you don’t do it my way...”

Getting Ready to Be Assertive #6

- “I told someone how I felt and it didn’t do any good.”
 - Assertiveness is not a guarantee that someone else will choose to change because they know how you feel.
 - Assertiveness does help you know that you stated your thoughts and feelings accurately and respectfully and allowed the other person to choose what they would do.

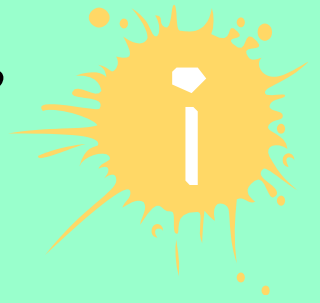
What does it take to be assertive?

There are several things you can learn to do to make your communication more assertive, open, and direct.



Using “I” Statements #1

- Use “I” statements:
 - Being assertive means taking responsibility for your own feelings
 - “I feel sad”, “I feel angry”, “I feel happy”
- Do not say, “You make me feel...”
 - This gives others control over your feelings and blames others for what’s going on inside you



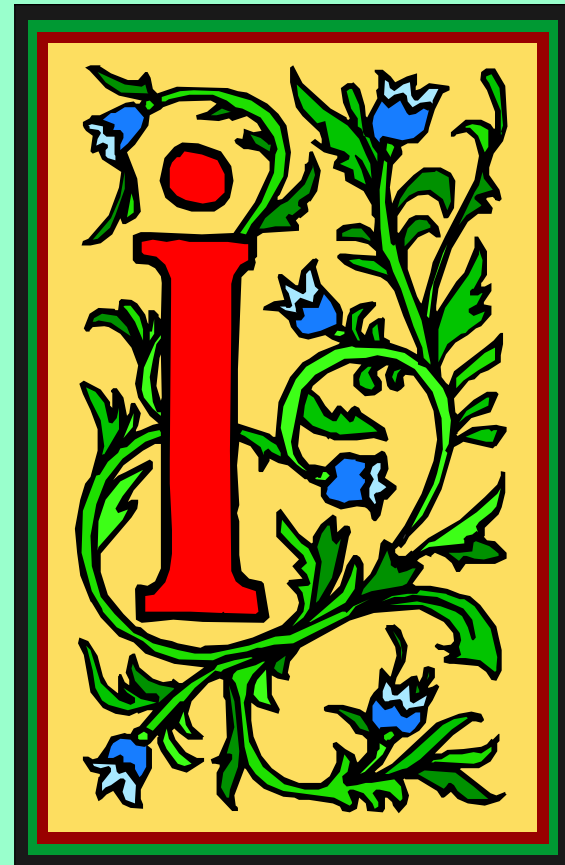
Using “I” Statements #2

- You are responsible for your own feelings
 - No one can “make” you feel
 - You have learned to feel certain ways about certain situations
- You can choose how you would like to feel



Using “I” Statements #3

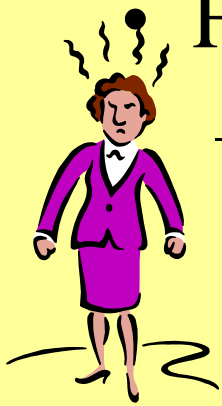
- Beyond using “I” statements for feelings, also use them for thoughts and opinions
 - “I think...”
 - “In my opinion...”
 - “I would like...”
 - “I want...”
 - “I need...”



Using “I” Statements #4

- Starting a statement with “You” often means you are blaming someone else
 - Blame often leads to arguing about who’s feelings or thoughts are right
 - Your feelings are neither right nor wrong
 - Other’s feelings are neither right nor wrong
- Using “I” statements removes right and wrong from the conversation.

Using Specific Behaviors #1



Focus on specific behavior, not generalities

– Specific = “I felt angry when you called me a twit because I do not like being insulted.”

– General = “You make me mad because you are a rotten person.”



Using Specific Behaviors #2

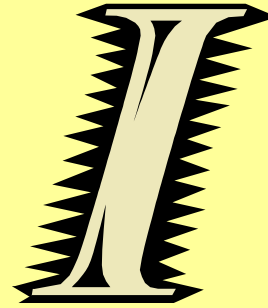
- Describe what you would like to be different
 - “I felt angry when you called me a twit because I felt insulted. I would like for you not to call me names.”
 - “I feel unimportant to you when you start every conversation we have with, ‘How are your grades?’ I would like to talk about other things in my life with you.”

Using Specific Behaviors #3

- Focusing on specifics helps everyone understand what needs to be worked on.
 - If you label someone, the label doesn't tell the other person what exactly needs to change
 - If you describe specific behavior, the other person can know what you are reacting to and what could be changed.

What We've Learned #1

- So, to recap:
 1. Start with an I statement –
 - “I feel...”, “I think...”, “I want/need...”
 2. Talk about specific behavior
 3. Ask politely for specific behavior changes you might want
 4. Allow the other person to respond based on their own needs, feelings, and thought.



What We've Learned #2

- Being “assertive” in an attempt to get someone else to do it your way is not assertiveness, it’s aggressive (coercive).
- Not telling someone how you think or feel, but expecting them to “know” is unassertive.
- Sharing your thoughts and feelings honestly to communicate effectively is being assertive.



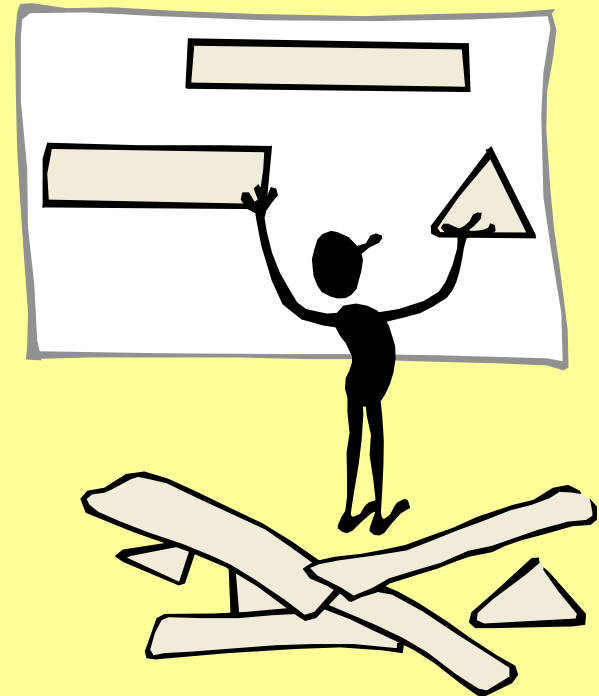
What We've Learned #3

- Winning or losing an argument is not the gold standard for being assertive.
- Sharing your thoughts and feelings in an open, caring, non-aggressive way is.



What We've Learned #4

- You can learn to take responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings and actions.
- You can learn to allow others to be responsible for their thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- You can change the way you think, feel, and act to become more assertive.



TWU Counseling Center Resources

- Visit any of the TWU Counseling Center waiting areas to pick up handouts about being a good student and other topics of interest.
- Denton: West Jones Hall
- Dallas: Parkland, Room 120
Presbyterian, Room 16
- Houston: 6700 Fannin, Suite 2250
- Some handouts are also available on our web site at: <http://www.twu.edu/self-help-library.asp>.
- Other materials are available on-line at the Counseling Center web site: <http://www.twu.edu/counseling>.

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This presentation was created by Donald Rosen, Ph.D., Former Director, Texas Woman's University Counseling Center.

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