

## EXTRACTS FROM MODULES 1 & 5

### are you assertive?

#### Have you ever wanted to:

- say 'no'
- say 'I don't know'
- speak out about something
- put your point of view across
- stick up for somebody
- voice your opinion
- express your feelings
- make your own decisions
- change your mind
- choose how to spend your time
- make mistakes



#### and not been able to?

**It's because you're having difficulty in asserting yourself.**

### what is assertiveness?

Assertiveness means standing up for your personal rights, and expressing your thoughts, feelings and beliefs in honest, direct and appropriate ways, while always respecting the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of other people.

Assertiveness is a way of behaving, based on the idea that your feelings, needs and wants matter, but they are neither more important nor less important than the feelings, needs and wants of other people.

Being assertive means stating your feelings, needs, opinions and requests openly, all in a calm, honest, direct and reasonable manner, accepting that you have every right to have those feelings, needs and opinions.

You do this with the utmost respect for yourself and for other people and you make sure that you don't violate the rights of those other people. You are working towards a win-win outcome for everybody involved.

Being assertive is just a different pattern of behaviour, and it can be learnt. And the more you do it, the easier it gets, until eventually it becomes a part of who you are.

It does not mean that you will always achieve the outcome you are hoping for, but learning some assertiveness skills will help you to start negotiating for the outcome you want, and ensure that you do not come away from situations feeling bad about yourself, or leaving others feeling bad. Nor will you feel angry or resentful because you had to squash your true feelings or needs.

If you can be assertive in the correct way, it can have a tremendously positive effect on you and on your life.

### what assertiveness is not about

Do you associate being assertive with aggression, confrontation, raised voices, arguments, arrogance or ambition? Assertiveness is none of these things.

Being assertive is **not** about

- getting one over on somebody else
- winning
- domineering
- confrontation
- being aggressive
- raised voices
- arguments
- ambition
- being demanding
- being difficult.....

### asking for what you want

When you have decided what you want, be assertive in asking for it. Ignore the other person's bad behaviour, bad mood or sarcasm, or even sulking. Don't apologise for what you are asking, just because the other person is in a bad mood.

Don't throw an instruction into the room, otherwise it won't be acted on. Direct it at one specific person. Example: 'Can someone please close the door.' No-one will take responsibility to do it. 'Paul, please could you close the door.' Paul will do it.

Check your body language. Stand or sit up straight, relax your arms, have the appropriate expression and speak clearly and slowly. If appropriate, thank the person for listening to you, or acting on your instruction.

If you are asking for something for yourself, such as a pay rise, or opportunity, remember to value yourself, know your subject, prepare well and practise - then go for it, and be assertive.

### saying no

It's not easy to say No when asked to do something. This is often because we are scared of the response, of hurting the other person's feelings, or of appearing to be selfish, rude or disrespectful.

You have the right to refuse a request, although at work you may not have the right to turn down a job that is part of your contract. However, you always have the right to state the problems that the request will cause you and try to negotiate for what will be acceptable to you.

If you are going to say no, then make your refusal short, direct and firm, but kind. You can start by saying 'I am sorry, but...' If the other person pressurises you, repeat, more slowly and more directly. 'I am unable to.....'

## HOW TO SAY NO

Saying No to people is not easy, because you want to be liked and don't want to offend or annoy the other person. Yet, people will like you better and respect you more if you can stand up for yourself... ..