Assertive Behaviour

Assertive Behaviour

Participant Workbook

# Course Introduction

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| What are your objectives for the course? |

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| How will you measure the success of the course on your return to work? |

# What is Assertiveness?

## **Identifying Behaviours**

For each situation described below, a response has been given which illustrates one of three different types of behaviour – assertiveness, aggression or submissiveness.

As a team read and discuss the responses given and assess which type of behaviour you think is being illustrated.

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|  | Situation | Response | Assertive? Aggressive? Submissive? |
| 1 | A group of friends are fixing their next get-together. You are keen to join in, but the date accepted by everyone else is impossible for you. One of the group says to you – “Is that OK for everyone then?” | Your response – “Well all right, as it seems to suit everyone else.” |  |
| 2 | A colleague interrupts you when you are making an important phone call. | You say, “I’d like to finish this call, then I’ll be happy to have a word with you.” |  |
| 3 | Your partner asks you sarcastically what went wrong with the dinner preparations. | You reply, “If you expect me to be at your beck and call, you’d better think again. Try getting your own dinner.” |  |

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|  | Situation | Response | Assertive? Aggressive? Submissive? |
| 4 | Your boss praises the way you handled an awkward customer. | You reply, “It was nothing really. Sue did all the hard work. I only came in at the end.” |  |
| 5 | A friend asks you for a lift. It’s inconvenient for you as you are late already, and the drive will take you out of your way. | You reply, “I’m already late so I can’t take you all the way. If it helps, I’ll drop you off at the bus stop.” |  |
| 6 | You want a new washing machine, and the salesperson has been pushing hard for you to buy a model that is more expensive than you intended. You had thought of looking around at several models before purchasing. | You reply, “Well it’s more or less what I was looking for. I suppose they’re all the same really. There isn’t much point in shopping around.” |  |
| 7 | Your teenage daughter has just come in nearly an hour later than was agreed. | Your response is “You’re late! That’s the last time you’ll be allowed out on a mid-week night.” |  |

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|  | Situation | Response | Assertive? Aggressive? Submissive? |
| 8 | Your boss has just sent a memo saying that all staff must smile at customers in future. You are unhappy with this. | You reply, “I’m not happy with this new ruling. I feel it should be left to me to judge each situation on its merits. Can I discuss it with you please?” |  |
| 9 | A customer at your restaurant demands a table in the window, even though you have explained that all those tables have been booked. | You reply, “You should have asked for a specific table when you booked, if you wanted one.” |  |
| 10 | A neighbour agreed to babysit for you and then failed to turn up. | You telephone her and say, “Jill, I understood you were to babysit for us tonight. Has something happened?” |  |

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| Notes: |

## Characteristic Behaviours

In your teams, use the examples from the last exercise to try and describe the main characteristics of assertive, aggressive and submissive behaviours.

To help you, for each type of behaviour think about:

* What tone of voice they would use?
* What expression they might have on their face.
* What gestures they might use.
* What words they would use to say what they want or need.
* How they would achieve what they want or need.

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| Assertive | Aggressive | Submissive |
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| Notes: | | |

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| Food for Thought Assertiveness is a balance between submissiveness and aggressiveness. We can be assertive in different ways:  We can state our needs, wants, beliefs, opinions or feelings to the other person.  We can ask the other person what he/she needs, wants, believes or feels.  We can empathise with the other person to demonstrate that whilst stating our own needs we understand that they have needs too.  We can level with the other person to openly explain the adverse effects his/her behaviour is having on us. This is the strongest form of assertion – to be used when all else fails. |

# The Importance of Assertiveness

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| To Me: | To Others: |

# How Assertive Are You?

This questionnaire is for your own personal use. It would be very helpful if you would share some of the results with the rest of the group but if you do not wish to disclose anything you will not be pushed to do so.

### How assertive are you?

Indicate how comfortable you feel in each of the following situations:

1 = you feel uncomfortable.

2 = you feel reasonably comfortable.

3 = you feel very comfortable.

Add up your total score when you have finished.

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| 1 | Speaking up and asking questions at a meeting. |  |
| 2 | Commenting about being interrupted at the time it happens. |  |
| 3 | Stating your views to an authority figure. |  |
| 4 | Entering and leaving a room full of people. |  |
| 5 | Speaking in front of a group. |  |
| 6 | Maintaining eye contact when in conversation. |  |
| 7 | Being competent and using your authority without labelling yourself impolite, bossy, aggressive etc. |  |
| 8 | Asking for the service you expect when you haven’t received it (e.g. in a shop or restaurant). |  |
| 9 | Being expected to apologise for something and not doing so since you feel you are right. |  |
|  | Sub total: |  |

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| 10 | Requesting the return of borrowed items without apology. |  |
| 11 | Receiving a compliment and saying something to acknowledge that you agree with it. |  |
| 12 | Receiving a refusal to a request. |  |
| 13 | Not getting approval from a significant (to you) other person. |  |
| 14 | Discussing another person’s criticism of you openly with them. |  |
| 15 | Telling someone they are doing something that is bothering you. |  |
| 16 | Refusing to do a favour when you don’t want to do it. |  |
| 17 | Turning down a request for a meeting. |  |
| 18 | Telling a person when you think they are trying to manipulate you. |  |
| 19 | Expressing anger when you are angry. |  |
| 20 | Arguing with another person. |  |
| 21 | Responding with humour when someone tries to put you down. |  |
| 22 | Talking with humour about the mistakes you have made. |  |
|  | Total score: |  |

Scoring

Add up the points you gave yourself.

Over 55 points You are very assertive.

46-55 points You are reasonably assertive.

36-45 points You show an average level of assertiveness.

26-35 points You need to develop your assertiveness.

below 26 points Your lack of assertion may be causing you stress.

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| Did you learn anything new about yourself from the quiz? |

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| When do you find it uncomfortable to be assertive?  (These are the areas to work on). |

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| What would help you in these uncomfortable situations? |

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| Notes: |

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| Food for Thought The point at which we adopt aggressive or submissive behaviours is sometimes called “the crumple button.” We try hard to behave assertively but something (words; tone; attitude; situation; person) presses our crumple button and we slip into another mode. Knowing what presses our crumple button can help us to change our behaviour for the better. |

# Dealing with Aggressive Behaviour

## Fogging Technique

When someone is behaving aggressively, they tend to expect disagreement and charge ahead, not listening to you. Fogging is a technique used to slow them down by giving an unexpected response. It is a way of sidestepping their issue whilst retaining your viewpoint and integrity, by agreeing with some part of what they say.

*For example, if someone said to you:*

“That was a pretty stupid way to behave in a meeting.”

*And you wanted to fog them, you might reply:*

“Yes, I can see that you think it was a pretty stupid way to behave”.

The word “yes” takes them by surprise, slows them down, and can reduce the tension in a potentially explosive situation. You are not agreeing that you had behaved stupidly - only that you can see that they think so.

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### How Would You Handle It?

Consider the following scenarios. How would you respond?

1. You have just completed a report for your manager at short notice, who has spotted a spelling mistake on the first page, where you’ve missed the ‘h’ off hand. You had done a spell check on the document before passing it to the manager but, of course, the spell-check didn’t identify this particular error. Your manager says in an angry tone, “I can’t believe there’s a spelling mistake on the first page – how many more am I going to find?”

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1. You’ve been given a project at work, but you’re struggling to meet the agreed deadline, and have asked for another week. The project manager calls you over and says, “I gave you this project as an opportunity to prove yourself, and you’ve clearly failed.”

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| Notes: |

1. A colleague brushes past your desk and in doing so knocks a cup of water over, which splashes their trousers. To your surprise they turn to you and say, “What a stupid place to put your cup! Why can’t you be more careful?”

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| Notes: |

## Learning Points

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# Making and Refusing Requests

## Jim and Mary’s Tale

The following are suggested answers only. They are not the only way in which the request and refusal could have been made assertively.

### Jim’s Request:

*“I’m really interested in the work plan you’ve developed and I would like to try to adapt it for my department.”* (States his ‘want’ clearly – using ‘I’.)

*“Will you be able to spare me some time to show me the main points?”* (Clear, direct request.)

*“I’m sure you are very busy.”* (Acknowledges Mary’s viewpoint.)

*“So would 30 minutes over lunch on Tuesday next week be convenient?”*

(Clarifies what he wants and suggests a specific option.)

Jim should also pick his moment carefully when Mary is not preoccupied and make his request in person.

### Mary’s Refusal:

*“Jim, I’m very busy at the moment and I can’t spare the time.”* (She states her position clearly.)

*“How long would you want?”* (Clarifies. Waits for an answer to see if she wants to change her mind.)

*“I could let you have a copy of my notes for you to look through and develop your own ideas.”* (Offers an alternative.)

*“I realise this may not seem helpful to you.”* (Acknowledges Jim’s feelings.)

*“But I don’t want to agree to your request when I have so much else to deal with.” (*Makes it clear that it is the request not the person she is rejecting.)

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## Learning Points

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# Introduction to Transactional Analysis

Read the situations below and write down in the space provided what your own reaction might be to the situation. Please be as honest as you can.

### Situation 1

As you arrive home from work exhausted, you are told that your child has injured another child playing football at school.

What is your most likely reaction towards your child?

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| Notes: |

### Situation 2

Your spouse/partner has accidentally broken an antique vase that was given to you by your grandmother.

How would you be inclined to react?

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| Notes: |

### Situation 3

Someone overtakes you on the inside lane of the motorway in a dangerous way.

What is your instant reaction?

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| Notes: |

### Situation 4

A colleague bluntly points out a simple spelling mistake in your report.

How do you feel? How do you behave?

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| Notes: |

## The Three States

The theory of transactional analysis was developed by Eric Berne in the 1950’s. He suggested that when we communicate with others we do so in one of three states. We communicate as a parent would communicate, as a child would communicate, or as an adult communicates.

The state that we fall into will be based on our past experiences.

When we are in the parent state, we can adopt one of two approaches. We can be:

* Nurturing Parent – In this state we are very caring and maternal.
* Controlling Parent – In this state we can be controlling and judgemental.

In the child state we can also do one of two things. We can be:

* Free Child – In this state we are carefree, playful, uninhibited (and undisciplined) and creative.
* Adapted Child – In this state we can be obedient or, on the other hand, resentful or manipulative.

In the adult state we behave much more logically, basing what we say and do on facts and an objective analysis of the situation.

All of us have access to all three states, and we all use different ones at different times. They all have their uses, have their strengths and weaknesses and are appropriate in different circumstances. For example, free child state is particularly useful if we want to generate lots of new ideas in a brainstorm session.

We are, however, likely to have preferred states or a tendency to adopt some more than others, and it is the balance between the three which are said to make up our personality.

To understand how we can achieve smoother more effective communication with people we need to understand how we are communicating now.

### The Parent State

The parent state has two sides:

Controlling, disciplining, restricting parent, using words like:

* Right/wrong.
* Good/bad.
* Never/always.

Nurturing, helpful, caring, loving parent, using words like:

* What a shame.
* Take care.
* Remember to…
* I’ll help you…
* It won’t take me long to…

This state comes from our experiences of life with our parents and teachers, particularly in early life:

* “Sit up straight at the table” (controlling)
* “Use your knife and fork properly” (controlling)
* “Bring it here and Mummy will help you” (nurturing)

When we feel, think, talk and behave in the way we remember our parents doing then we are adopting a parent state:

* “In our line of business…” (controlling)
* “Leave it to me…” (nurturing)

Often it is the attitude rather than the actual words that reveal themselves in later life.

### The Adult State

All facts, logic and common sense contribute to the adult state. It is the mature and deliberating part of personality. When we are in this state our actions and words are sensible and well considered - as opposed to the almost automatic reactions of the parent or child states. In the adult state we collect information, evaluate it, work out possibilities and resolve problems in a logical, calm way. We concentrate on facts - not feelings and prejudices.

### The Child State

The child state represents the child we once were. It comes from all our emotions and early experiences as well as our initial view of ourselves and others. It has two facets:

* The natural or free child – impulsive, instinctive, creative, undisciplined and demanding.
* The adapted child – carrying the influences of our upbringing, “doing as we are told” giving rise to guilt, rebellion, obedience and compromise.

In the child state we’ll use words like:

* I won’t.
* I must.
* I like.
* You always try to…
* Help me…
* If only…
* It’s not fair.

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| Notes: |

## Identifying the States

With your partner read through the situations below and try to identify which state the responses are being given in.

1. Put a P against the answer representing the parent state.
2. Put an A against the answer representing the adult state.
3. Put a C against the answer representing the child state.

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| 1. Two colleagues are chatting in the lift. One asks the other: “When does the development meeting start?”   She replies: | |
| 1. Tomorrow at 2pm. |  |
| 1. Tomorrow, Wednesday, normal time – when *will* you remember? |  |
| 1. Don’t ask me – they never let me know. |  |

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| 1. Team Leader A says to Team Leader B: “I must stay late tonight to finish this report.”   Team Leader B replies: | |
| 1. Do you have to leave everything to the last minute? |  |
| 1. That’s a pity – the rest of us are off to a party. |  |
| 1. OK. |  |

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| 1. Two staff members are chatting during their coffee break. One says: “I hear Mary Brown is being transferred again.”   The other replies: | |
| 1. Yes, so I’ve heard. |  |
| 1. What else can she expect? |  |
| 1. I’ll be getting her old desk now. |  |

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| 1. Two team leaders talking during a break in a meeting. One says: “It would seem that Jane wants your job now.”   The other replies: | |
| 1. I’ll take care of *her*! |  |
| 1. You shouldn’t talk about people like that. |  |
| 1. What makes you think that? |  |

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| 1. A secretary says to her friend: “So you left without asking?”   Her friend replies: | |
| 1. I’m ashamed to say I did. |  |
| 1. Don’t interfere. |  |
| 1. Yes. |  |

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| 1. A manager preaches to his colleague: “You know laziness breeds mediocrity.”   His colleague replies: | |
| 1. You know you shouldn’t make judgements about other people. |  |
| 1. Where did you hear that? |  |
| 1. Whatever. |  |

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| Notes: |

### My States

Now go back to your responses to the situations you looked at, at the beginning of this module. Can you identify which of these is Parent, Adult or Child? Do you have a dominant state?

States I used in the exercise:

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| Situation 1: |

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| Situation 2: |

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| Situation 3: |

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| Situation 4: |

## Dominant States

It is important to determine which is your dominant state and decide for yourself when this is an advantage and when a disadvantage.

If you have a dominant “controlling parent” state, then you almost certainly have a strong personality and probably find it relatively easy to get people to do what you want of them. Take care of making enemies or giving people the impression that you do not respect them. Watch too that you don’t put a block on others developing ideas or skills.

A dominant “caring parent” state can create a strong positive impression. You can be seen as good and helpful. However, an exaggerated concern for others can inhibit them and take away their influence. It can also result in you taking on too much yourself in a desire to help.

A dominant “adult” state has advantages in many circumstances. In difficult, stressful or quarrelsome situations the best you can do is to relax and stick to the facts. If you are respected as a person who keeps a cool head, then people will turn to you for advice. If your adult state is too dominant there is a risk that you won’t spend enough time having fun.

A dominant “child”state contains great powers such as intuition, spontaneity and inspiration. It is very useful when you want to think creatively and generate ideas. In the child state you can spread happiness, warmth and a love of life. You can inspire and motivate people and get them to accept your proposals for emotional reasons. However, the child state also contains primitive aggression, resentment, and even selfish responses.

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## Parallel and Crossed Transactions

When two people get together, a transaction occurs that can be observed and analysed. These can be parallel transactions, which proceed smoothly because each party is using the expected state. However, we get crossed transactions when one party adopts a state that was not expected. This is when we can get into conflict and difficulties.

### Exercise

With your partner go through the next set of situations and identify whether parallel or crossed transactions are taking place and which states (parent, adult or child) are being used.

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| 1. Two middle aged ladies (X & Y) on a bus:  * X – “Have you seen that long-haired hippie sitting at the front?” * Y – “Yes. That’s my son.” |
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| 1. Man to partner: “What’s for dinner?”   Partner: “Steak, chips and peas.” |
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| 1. Man to partner: “Have you seen my tie?”   Partner: “Do I have to remember everything for you?” |
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| 1. Bill to George: “Can you speak up a bit please?”   George: “Why don’t you start listening instead?” |
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| 1. Elizabeth to Anne (despairingly): “These exercises are terribly difficult.”   Anne (also despairingly) – “Yes, I don’t understand what they’re for.” |
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| 1. Customer to waiter: “Would it be possible to get another drink?”   Waiter: “In a moment sir. Do be patient, there are others waiting. I won’t be long” |
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| 1. Course participant to another participant: “It will be interesting to see what this course is about”   Course participant 2: “I think it’s stupid. As if they could teach me anything about staff management.” |
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## Learning Points

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# Facing up to Challenges

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| **Scenario:** | **Response:** |
| 1. Your manager keeps delegating a boring filing job to you and not to the other members in the team - who have made a fuss in the past about having to do it. It feels as though because you haven’t made a fuss, you are being taken advantage of. Maybe if you behave childishly too, you will be excused? What other way might you deal with this? |  |
| **Learning Points:** | |
| **Scenario:** | **Response:** |
| 2. You are late to work because you stopped to help someone who had fallen off their bike. You aren't usually late to work, but your manager is furious with you and tells you it must not happen again. They are not interested in hearing your “excuses”, as they put it, and storm off to their office, slamming the door behind them. Maybe you should just take off your coat, go to your desk and get on with your work. Then again, maybe not? |  |
| **Learning Points:** | |

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| **Situation:** | **Response:** |
| 3. A friend asks you to go to a party and won't take no for an answer. However, you are really tired and want to stay at home tonight. Generally, you go along with what they want – isn’t that what friends do? But you just feel so tired today. You know they will try to persuade you to change your mind. What will you do? |  |
| **Learning Points:** | |
| **Situation:** | **Response:** |
| 4. The shower in your hotel room does not work properly and you want to take a shower before going on to a meeting. You ring down to reception and they say “Sorry – it’ll be a couple of hours before we can get a plumber to come and look at it.” You cannot wait that long. What will you do? |  |
| **Learning Points:** | |

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| **Situation:** | **Response:** |
| 5. Your manager is very busy but won't delegate any work to you, insisting that it is quicker to do it themselves. When you’ve suggested helping with the month end report in the past, they have been insistent and so you’ve just left it. The department is now struggling because of the delays getting the report out, so you realise you simply must say something. Is it time to stand your ground? |  |
| **Learning Points:** | |
| **Situation:** | **Response:** |
| 6. Your manager is seldom in the office. You want to talk to them about a training course you would like to attend. They have just rushed into the office. You approach and try to address the issue – but they hold up a hand, signaling for you to stop, and say, “I’m just trying to prepare for the Board Meeting – is this important?”  How do you respond? |  |
| **Learning Points:** | |

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