Self-Confidence and Assertiveness Interpersonal Skills

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Everyone has situations in their personal and professional lives that require some degree of self-confidence and assertiveness to achieve desired goals. These attributes are particularly important for leaders, managers, as well as employees that are part of teams so they can effectively share their ideas and have their voice heard.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is a belief in oneself, one's abilities, or one's judgment. It is freedom from doubt. When you believe you can change things -- or make a difference in a situation, you are much more likely to succeed.

As a self-confident person, you walk with a bounce in your step. You can control your thoughts and emotions and influence others. You are more prepared to tackle everyday challenges and recover from setbacks. This all leads to a greater degree of optimism and life satisfaction.

Assertiveness

Leib Lazarow said “Who has the confidence in himself will gain the confidence in others.” An assertive person is confident and direct in dealing with others. Assertive communications promote fairness and equality in human interactions, based on a positive sense of respect for self and others. It is the direct communication of a person’s needs, wants, and opinions without punishing, threatening, or putting down another person.

Assertive behavior includes the ability to stand up for a person’s legitimate rights – without violating the rights of others or being overly fearful in the process. A skill that can be learned, assertive behavior is situationally specific; meaning different types of assertive behavior can be used in different situations.

Assertive behavior involves three categories of skills; self-affirmation, expressing positive feelings, and expressing negative feelings.

The Assertive Person

An assertive individual communicates in a way that clearly states his or her opinions and feelings, and firmly advocates for his or her rights and needs without violating the rights of others. Assertive communication is born of high self-esteem. Assertive people value themselves, their time, and their
emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. They are strong advocates for themselves -- while being very respectful of the rights of others.

Assertive people feel connected to other people. They make statements of needs and feelings clearly, appropriately, and respectfully. Feeling in control of themselves, they speak in calm and clear tones, are good listeners, and maintain good eye contact. They create a respectful environment for others, and do not allow others to abuse or manipulate them.

The assertive person uses statements that imply:

- “I am confident about who I am.”
- “I cannot control others, but I control myself.”
- “I speak clearly, honestly, and to the point.”
- “I know I have choices in my life, and I consider my options. I am fully responsible for my own happiness.”
- “We are equally entitled to express ourselves respectfully to one another.”

**Listening Versus Speaking**

Stephen Covey said that the person who does the listening does more work than the person who is speaking. Hearing is the act of perceiving sound by the ear. Assuming an individual is not hearing-impaired, hearing simply happens. Listening, however, is something that one consciously chooses to do. Listening requires concentration so that the brain processes meaning from words and sentences.

Listening leads to learning, but this is not always an easy task. The normal adult rate of speech is 100-150 words per minute, but the brain can think at a rate of 400-500 words per minute, leaving extra time for daydreaming, or anticipating the speaker’s or the recipient’s next words.

As opposed to hearing, listening skills can be learned and refined. The art of active listening allows you to fully receive a message from another person. Especially in a situation involving anger or a tense interchange, active listening allows you to be sensitive to the multiple dimensions of communication that make up an entire message. Active listeners use questions to elicit more information and gain a more complete understanding of what is being said.

**Body Language**

Body language is a form of non-verbal communication involving the use of stylized gestures, postures, and physiologic signs which act as cues to other people. Humans unconsciously send and receive non-verbal signals through body language all the time.
Non-verbal communication is the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages. It is the single most powerful form of communication. Nonverbal communication cues others about what is in your mind, even more than your voice or words can do.

According to studies at UCLA, as much as 93 percent of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues, and the impact of performance was determined 7 percent by the words used, 38 percent by voice quality, and 55 percent by non-verbal communication. In communication, if a conflict arises between your words and your body language, your body language rules every time.

**Summary**

In the words we choose to say and the way in which we present ourselves, people can have the self-confidence and assertiveness to express their thoughts and ideas in a positive manner. Share your ideas and learn from each person.