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COUNSELING

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is a way to express yourself in a direct and effective way. This type of communication ensures that your point of view is heard while also being mindful of the point of view of others.

The cornerstone for assertive communication is mutual respect, which makes it a very diplomatic way to communicate your wants and needs. Assertive communication demonstrates that you respect yourself by showing that you can share your thoughts and feelings. It also demonstrates that you have an awareness of how others may be impacted and communicates that you can compromise and resolve conflict effectively.

In addition to having your point of view heard and resolving conflict, assertive communication can help you feel more confident, recognize and articulate your own feelings, help you improve the way you make decisions, and improve relationships.

For some people assertive communication comes naturally, but for many people they need to practice using an assertive style so that they can be more assertive. Practicing a direct form of communication and speaking up for yourself if you are not used to it can feel intimidating, but doing it over and over is the best way to make it your go-to communication style. Here are some tips to help make your practice a little easier:

Use I statements. This will help to make sure that others don't get defensive. One example would be to say "I disagree with that statement" instead of saying "you're wrong about that"

Practice saying no. You may want to say it nicely so that it is received well, but a simple no will do. You can soften the no by adding a little something like "No, I can't do that right now." If you need a little more explanation that is okay, but keep your explanation brief.

If you are feeling anxious about expressing yourself, rehearse what you will say ahead of time. Saying the words out loud a few times to yourself will help ensure they come out right when you are talking with others. You can also write down what you want to say if that makes it easier.

Even if you aren't feeling confident in your ability to communicate assertively, act as if you are. You can do this by making eye contact, keeping an open body posture, and a neutral facial expression.

Make sure you are breathing slowly and calmly to help control your emotions

Try out assertive communication in smaller settings first and with people that you feel comfortable with. Once you gain some confidence, you can try it out in other settings.

Remember, if you typically communicate in a passive way or an aggressive way this might be really challenging at first. Keep practicing and make sure that you note the results that you get. Celebrate your successes when you are able to effectively use assertive communication in a situation so that your successes stay fresh in your mind!