

Assertiveness Technique

Adapted from Marsha Linehan, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy

This technique is useful when planning how to be assertive in difficult situations. The acronym is

D E A R

- 1) **Describe the situation** – briefly and specifically describe the situation you are reacting to or the exact behaviour that is uncomfortable for you, stick to the facts, be objective and not judgmental

Example-- “I have been working here for two years and have not gotten a raise, even though my performance reviews have been positive”

- 2) **Express feelings or opinions about the situation clearly** – describe how you feel about the situation, use ‘I’ statements rather than “you” statements. No one makes you feel anything. Don’t expect others to read your mind

Example—“ I feel undervalued and taken advantage of”
“I believe I deserve a raise”

- 3) **Assert your wishes** – ask for what you want, say it clearly, don’t beat around the bush, be direct, clear, concise, and assertive, with good eye contact, i.e. “I would like a raise”

- 4) **Reinforce** – give the positive consequences if they give you what you want or need i.e. “I will be a lot happier and probably more productive if I get a salary that reflects my value to the company” → try to make it a win/win situation

- Have everyone practice on the same situation, or each person can practice a situation from her own life; role play the situation
- Taking the part of the other person can be very important to give clients the idea of what it feels like when someone else is being assertive with them

A FEW OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND....

Stay Mindful – keep your focus on your objectives in the situation, maintain your position and don’t get distracted onto another topic

- **Broken record**: keep asking or saying no or expressing your opinion over and over
- The key here is to keep a ‘mellow’ tone and voice, not to get angry or have a temper tantrum
- The strength is in the persistence of maintaining your position
- **Ignore**: If another person attacks, threatens or tries to change the subject, ignore the threats, comments, or threats to divert you, just keep making your point
- This skill combined with a broken record makes for a very effective strategy in maintaining a refusal or putting pressure on someone to comply with a request, need to keep hostility out of one’s voice and keep on track

Appear confident – use a confident tone of voice and display a confident physical manner with appropriate eye contact, no stammering, whispering, staring at the floor, or retreating

Negotiate – be willing to give to get, offer and ask for alternative solutions to the problem

- **Turn the table** over to the other person and ask for alternative solutions, “What do you think we should do?”