



ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

This book is one of seven constituting
“On My Own Two Feet”
Educational Resource Materials
for use in Substance Abuse Education

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ISBN No. 086387 044 9

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ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Assertiveness training is really about:

- *Taking responsibility for direct, honest communication,*
- *Appropriate expression of feelings,*
- *Making choices and decisions that respect your needs and rights and those of others.*

BECOMING ASSERTIVE INVOLVES developing an awareness of what you need and want and believing that you have the right to ask for what you want. You treat yourself and your needs with the same respect and dignity as you're expected to give to others. Acting assertively is a way of developing self respect and self worth. There is a two-way interaction between self esteem and assertiveness. You may be surprised that assertive behaviour brings you a greater response and increased respect from others and this experience in turn enhances your self worth.

Assertiveness training is essentially training in communication and social skills. It teaches a way of behaving that aims to achieve a win-win situation in interpersonal relationships.

ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOUR STYLES

In order to be clear about what assertive communication involves, it is helpful to describe the alternatives.

Passive or submissive behaviour involves yielding to someone else's preference while discounting your own rights and needs. You don't express your feelings or let others know what you need. The result is that they remain ignorant of your feelings or wants (and thus can't be blamed for not responding to them). Submissive behaviour also includes feeling guilty – or as if you are imposing – when you do attempt to ask for what you want. If you give others the message that you're not sure you have the right to express your needs or wants, they will tend to discount them. Some people are

submissive because they are overly invested in being “nice” or “pleasing” to everybody. They may be afraid that the open expression of their needs will alienate someone on whom they feel dependent. **Aggressive behaviour**, on the other hand, may involve communicating in a demanding, abrasive, or even hostile way with others. Aggressive people, typically, are insensitive to others’ rights and feelings and will attempt to obtain what they want through coercion or intimidation. Aggressiveness succeeds by sheer force, creating enemies and conflict along the way. It often puts others on the defensive, leading them to withdraw or fight back rather than co-operate.

As an alternative to being openly aggressive, many people are **passive-aggressive**. Instead of openly confronting an issue, angry aggressive feelings are expressed in a covert fashion through passive resistance. You’re angry with your boss, so you’re perpetually late for work. Instead of asking for, or doing something about what you really want, you perpetually complain or moan about what is lacking. Passive-aggressive people seldom get what they want because they never get their message across. Their behaviour tends to leave other people angry, confused and resentful.

A final non-assertive behaviour style is being **manipulative**. Manipulative people attempt to get what they want by making others feel sorry for or guilty towards them. Instead of taking responsibility for meeting their own needs, they play the role of victim or martyr in an effort to get others to take care of them. When this doesn’t work, they may become openly angry or feign indifference. Manipulation only works as long as those at whom it is targeted fail to recognise what is happening. The person being manipulated may feel confused up to this point; afterwards they become angry and resentful towards the manipulator.

Assertive behaviour, in contrast to the above described styles, involves asking for what you want (or saying “No”) in a simple, direct fashion that does not negate, attack, or manipulate anyone else. You communicate your feelings and needs honestly and directly while maintaining respect and consideration for others. You stand up for yourself and your rights without apologising or feeling guilty. In essence, assertiveness involves taking responsibility for getting your own needs met in a way that preserves the dignity of other people. Others feel comfortable when you’re assertive because they know where you stand. They respect you for your honesty and forthrightness. Instead of demanding or commanding, an assertive statement makes a simple, direct request, such as, “I would really like to teach that Leaving Cert. Class”.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE USING THE ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION MATERIAL

Most people do not fall clearly into one category or another. We all use a variety of behaviour styles and much depends on the situation and particular people involved. It is important to become aware of our style and how we can communicate most effectively in a given situation.

While five styles are outlined here, only three major categories of Passive, Assertive and Aggressive are used in the materials. With more able students, teachers may wish to look at passive-aggressive and manipulative behaviour. They can draw on the descriptions above for this purpose. It is important to remember that the label should always refer to the behaviour and not to the person. Criticism, which is generalised to the person, is destructive and childhood experience of such labelling is one reason why we are so sensitive to criticism.

In order to 'unlearn' unhelpful communication styles and habits and substitute more effective ones, a great deal of work is needed. In a class setting it is important that every student practices the skills, receives feedback and support and tries again until they 'get it right'. Doing three or four sessions on assertive communication is unlikely to result in long-term behaviour change. So quite a large number of lessons are regarded as 'core' material and should be done if at all possible.

Small groups and role play are constantly used for this reason. Once the class establishes a good level of cohesion and trust and if the situations used are close to the students' experience, this method can remain effective even if repetitive. Role play, feedback and practice are the central techniques used in the section. Students need to learn the discipline of working in small groups, sharing time equally, taking responsibility for handling feedback in a constructive fashion and taking care of each other. In the early sessions, therefore, demonstration of role plays in front of the class with lots of feedback on verbal and non-verbal assertiveness is important. After this stage, use of role play within the small group maximises opportunity for student participation.

Transfer of training to situations outside the classroom is difficult to achieve. Research has shown that use of homework assignments, goal-setting and self-rating of one's own performance helps to achieve this. It is important therefore to help students set goals, to implement skills learned and to give time at the beginning of the next session for review. Unsuccessful attempts during the week can be discussed, feedback and suggestions shared and a fresh opportunity to role play the 'difficult'

situations may be offered. Two sample goal sheets are provided to help students record successes. More can be devised by the teacher as required.

In assertiveness training, one starts with the easiest skills and as students develop confidence they progress to more difficult areas.

SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR

There is a strong emphasis in these materials on respect and care for others. This is mainly seen in ‘Responsible and Caring Assertiveness’ (AC 3), ‘Accepting a “No” ‘ (AC 13) and ‘Resolving Conflict’ (AC 16). Nevertheless, assertiveness is often perceived as aggression and many people have doubts about it. “Students are assertive enough as they are” is a comment made by some.

While teachers are, in principle, in favour of developing self-confidence, self esteem and communication skills in their students, some may find it difficult to accommodate the increasing forthrightness of young people. It can be a challenge to us, as adults, to really see students as equal human beings, to treat them with respect when they do not always treat us with respect. The key here is to have a school behaviour policy, which is based on positive expectations about how all members of the school organisation should treat each other, whether we are considering relationships between parents, staff, management and students, individually or collectively. It would be self-defeating to teach assertive communication to students and then discourage them from speaking out for themselves in certain situations. Rather, the demand should be that whatever needs to be said can be said firmly, politely and clearly and that aggression will not be tolerated. Needless to say, this is a demand we should also put on ourselves as adults. One benefit of assertive communication is that it aids classroom management. Calm handling of difficulties can help avoid escalation of conflict.

OVERVIEW OF THE MATERIAL

There is a logical sequence of stages in assertiveness training, which is followed in these materials.

The section starts with basic definitions of assertive, passive and aggressive behaviour in Lesson 1 followed by the examination of personal rights and responsibilities in Lesson 2 and 3.

A number of lessons are then used to reinforce awareness of the different behaviour types and to help students identify areas needing work and set personal goals.

The next stage, from Lesson 7 to 11, involves the easier skills of:

- *Giving and receiving compliments*
- *Assertiveness in social situations*
- *Making requests*

The important skills of saying 'No' and handling pressure are dealt with in Lessons 11 to 13 and some attention is given to self support in Lesson 14. This can be linked to work on positive thinking and relaxation exercises in other sections, as all one's resources are needed to cope with difficult situations.

Lesson 15 and 16 deal with criticism and conflict and the final lesson provides an opportunity for consolidation and review, based on specific drug situations.

LAYOUT OF THE MATERIALS

The Grid

A grid outlining the materials in this book is provided overleaf. The lessons identified, as *core* material should be given priority in planning a programme. Lessons identified as *optional* or as *reinforcer* may be adapted to meet the needs of particular groups for a different approach or to revisit a topic.

The lesson plans are a guide. Individual teachers are encouraged to adapt them to take account of the particular needs of their class and their own teaching style.

In most lesson plans additional material is provided. Pages labelled 'Handout' are to be copied for distribution to students. It is useful for each student to have a folder for social, personal and health education in which materials can be kept. Other material is for teacher reference. References for additional materials on the area addressed in this book can be found in the School Handbook.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION – AT A GLANCE!

| STAGE | TITLE | TOPIC | METHODOLOGY | LINKS WITH | CORE OR REINFORCER | SUITABLE FOR | DRUG CONTENT |
|--|--|--|---|---|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Definitions | 1 The Mouse, Monster and me | Definition of assertive, passive and aggressive behaviour. | Teacher input. Brainstorming. Role play. Discussion. | All AC Section | Core | AG | |
| Rights and responsibilities | 2 My Personal Rights | Identifying personal rights and situations where they can be violated. | Teacher input. Art work. Group discussion. | All AC Section DM 11 'What's Stopping You?' DM 12 'Being Offered a Lift' | Optional | JSV | |
| | 3 Responsible and caring assertiveness | The needs, feelings and rights of others are central aspects of assertion. | Teacher input. Brainstorming. Trigger situations. Discussion. | AC 13 'Accepting a "No" ' DM 16 'Making Decisions About Other People's Drug Taking Habits' | Core | AG | |
| Definitions Self-Assessment Goal Setting | 4 Getting clear | Re-inforcing/clarifying definitions. | Teacher input. Discrimination exercise using trigger situations. Discussion. | AC 1 'The Mouse, the Monster and Me' All other AC lessons | Reinforcer | AG | |
| | 5 How Assertive am I? | Student's self-assessment. | Small groups. Individual self-assessment/hierarchy. Collate results. | All other AC lessons Especially AC 6 | Core | AG | |
| | 6 Where will we start? (2 parts) | Appropriate assertive behaviour. Individual goal setting. | Feedback collated. Small groups role play. Discussion. Individual contract for change in group sessions. | AC 2 'My Personal Rights' AC 3 'Responsible and Caring Assertiveness' AC 5 'How Assertive Am I?' | Core | AG | |
| Social Skills 'Soft' Assertion | 7 Joining in | Social skills – introducing oneself and joining in. | Teacher input. Modelling. Role play. Feedback. | ID 2 'Learning to Listen' | Optional | JSLV | |
| | 8 Giving and receiving compliments | Giving and receiving compliments. | Brainstorming. Role play. Discussion. | ID 12 (A) 'Feedback Circle' ID 12 (B) 'Positive Posters' | Optional | AG | |

J = Junior Cycle, **S** = Senior Cycle, **V** = Verbal, **LV** = Less Verbal, **AG** = All Groups

In General exercises for JLV will work with older, brighter groups, but those marked S or V will not work with younger or less verbal groups

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION – AT A GLANCE!

| STAGE | TITLE | TOPIC | METHODOLOGY | LINKS WITH | CORE OR REINFORCER | SUITABLE FOR | DRUG CONTENT |
|---|------------------------------|--|--|---|--------------------|--------------|---|
| Social Skills 'Soft Assertion' (Contd.) | 9 Making requests (2 parts) | Assertive ways of asking for what you want. Effects of passive smoking. | Drawing. Small groups. Role play. Feedback. Trigger situation on passive smoking. Discussion. | AC 2 'My Personal Rights' AC 10 'Asking for Help' AC 16 'What Should I do?' | Core | AG | Passive smoking |
| | 10 Asking for Help (3 parts) | Identifying, Helping Agencies/ Skills to contact them. Skills. | Teacher input. Trigger situations. Small groups. Make posters. Brainstorm problems. Role play. Class discussion. | AC 2 'My Personal Rights'; AC 9 'Making a Request' FE 13 'Consequences' FE 14 'Children and Alcohol' FE 16 'What Should I Do?' | Core | AG | |
| Pressure situations | 11 Saying 'No' | Exploring and practising ways of saying 'No'. | Individual writing. Teacher input. Role play. Class discussion. | AC 2 'My Personal Rights' AC 12 'Dealing with Persistence' DM 9 'Being Offered a Lift' DM 10 'At the Party' DM 13 'Deciding about Alcohol' INF 5 'Peer Pressure' | Optional | AG | Students' situations Cigarettes Cannabis Alcohol |
| | 12 Dealing with Persistence | Practise in dealing with persistence. | Teacher input. Role play. Trigger situations. | AC 2 'My Personal Rights' AC 11 'Saying "No" ' AC 13 'Accepting a "No" ' INF 5 'Peer Pressure' INF 6 'With Friends' | Core | AG | Alcohol Cannabis |
| | 13 Accepting a 'No' | Showing respect for the rights and decisions of others. | Teacher input. Trigger situations. Role play. Class discussion. | AC 2 'Personal Rights' AC 3 'Responsible and Caring Assertiveness' AC 11 'Saying "No" ' AC 12 'Dealing with Persistence' | Core | JSV | Alcohol |

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| STAGE | TITLE | TOPIC | METHODOLOGY | LINKS WITH | CORE OR REINFORCER | SUITABLE FOR | DRUG CONTENT |
|------------------------|------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Self Support | 14 Positive Self Talk | The power of positive self talk | Brainstorming. Trigger situations. Role play. Discussion. | AC 15 'Criticism' Later lesson in ID Section | Optional | JSV | |
| Criticism and Conflict | 15 Criticism (3 parts) | Dealing with criticism – (3 sessions) 1 Valid & invalid 2 Putdowns 3 'Crumple buttons' | Individual work. Role play. Trigger situations. Worksheet. | Many lessons but mainly those in ID and FE Sections | Core (Part 1) Optional (Parts 2 and 3) | AG | Alcohol |
| | 16 Resolving Conflict | Skills for resolving conflict | Brainstorm causes of parent/teenager conflict. Small group work. Teacher input. Role play. | AC 3 'Responsible and Caring Assertiveness' ID 2 'Learning to Listen' FE 9 'Expressing your Feelings' FE 10 'Dealing with Anger' | Reinforcer | JV SAG | |
| Consolidation | 17 Assertion Cards | Consolidation of skills learned in previous exercises | Role play. Feedback. Class discussion. | All other AC Lessons | Core | AG | Cigarettes Solvents Alcohol |

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CORE CONCEPT: *Clarity about the hallmarks of assertive behaviour is essential in Assertiveness training.*

THE MOUSE, THE MONSTER AND ME!

PURPOSE

To help students identify and distinguish between aggressive, assertive and passive behaviour.
To help students to practise assertive behaviour.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise takes two sessions.

Links with: Everything in 'Assertive Communication' and many other lessons.

Materials

OHP and transparencies of illustrated definition sheets

Sample Situation Cards

Copies of all Handouts

Guidelines for Helpful Feedback (See Back-up Material p.121)

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Outline

Session I

1. Introduction
2. Brainstorm definitions and discuss
3. Role plays prepared and presented by small groups
4. Discussion

Session 2

1. Recap definition and input on body language
2. Role play on assertiveness
3. Discussion.

Detailed Procedure

Session I

1. Introduction

People usually behave in one of three ways when they try to get what they want or say what they think or feel. We are going to look at ways of saying what you think or feel and getting what you want in a manner, which does not hurt other people and does not hurt you. This is called being *Assertive*. The other two ways are called being *Passive* (or like a mouse) and being *Aggressive* (or like a monster).

2. Brainstorm definitions and discuss

Put illustration of the mouse (without text) on an OHT and show it to the class. Get them to brainstorm the hallmarks of how a mouse behaves.

Take feedback on blackboard and then show the full illustrated definition and discuss.

Do the same for 'The Monster' and 'The Assertive Person'.

3. Role plays prepared and presented by small groups

Divide class into groups of three or four. Give each group a copy of Handout 1, 'Mice can be nice, but ...' or Handout 2, 'Monsters can be nice too, but ...' and tell them they are going to demonstrate that kind of behaviour to the rest of the group. Give each group the chance to read the descriptions and then hand out a card describing a sample situation. Allow a short time in the small groups for students to assign roles and to practise the role play briefly.

They then take turns to present their role plays to the class.

The rest of the class should be instructed to observe the main actor carefully. Each group will have to decide whether that person is showing aggressive or passive behaviour. They will be required to pick out specific verbal and nonverbal behaviours to back up their decision.

Add any new characteristics of passive or aggressive behaviour suggested by the groups to those already on the board.

4. Discussion

Discuss each role play using the following questions:

- *How did the main character behave?*
- *How did the other character(s) behave?*
- *Was there a winner? Was there a loser?*
- *Were anyone's rights interfered with?*
- *What rights?*
- *How did this happen?*

Summarise the main points which have emerged. Explain that in the next class you will be looking at how to behave assertively so that no one gets hurt and there are no losers – only winners!

Session 2

1. Recap definition and input on body language

Recap on the definition of assertive behaviour. Give an input also at this point on some of the points about body language. It is important to reinforce the importance of body language in communication. Use Handout 4 – ‘Body Language’ for input.

Simplify for weaker/younger students and demonstrate the various points, using the comparison with a mouse and a monster.

2. Role play on assertiveness

Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each a copy of Handout 3 – ‘The Assertive Person’. They then pick a card from the sample situations and demonstrate as before – this time being assertive.

During each role play, the rest of the class should observe and afterwards give feedback about the behaviour of the person, both verbal and non-verbal, focusing on whether it was assertive or non-assertive.

This would be a good point at which to introduce the *Guidelines for Helpful Feedback*. (See Back-up material p. 121).

3. Discussion

Emphasise the point that when one is assertive there should be no losers and that everyone’s rights are respected in the situation.



MICE CAN BE NICE, BUT...

.... Sometimes mice are SO nice that they allow themselves to be walked on by other people and so sometimes mice get squashed. They want to be liked very badly and so they often let other people get their own way (even if it hurts) and they usually do not show their feelings.

Some of the mouse's BODY LANGUAGE is

- s/he does not look people straight in the eye
- s/he speaks in a soft voice and stumbles over what s/he is saying or sometimes s/he whines or his/her voice wobbles
- his/her body slumps and slouches
- s/he fidgets

In fact, the 'mousy' person sometimes looks as if you could push him/her over quite easily.

So, some words people use to describe this mouse are:

A PUSHOVER
UNASSERTIVE
AFRAID

SPINELESS
SHY
APOLOGETIC

PASSIVE
TIMID
A LOSER



(Secretly, the mouse does not think much of him/herself).



MONSTERS CAN BE NICE TOO, BUT...



.... Usually they are not
thoughtful or friendly or nice.

They go around stepping on nice mice, or mice who are afraid to stand up for themselves. They want their own way even at the expense of other people. The monster intends to WIN at any cost, even if s/he hurts other people's feelings.

Some of the monster's BODY LANGUAGE is

- s/he stares people in the eye
- s/he speaks in a very loud voice, sometimes sounding sarcastic or angry
- s/he speaks very fast
- s/he towers over you or looks ready to fight.

Some words people use to describe monsters are –

A BULLY

MEAN

PUSHY

AGGRESSIVE

THOUGHTLESS

RUDE

(Secretly, the monster does not think much of him/herself, either.)



THE ASSERTIVE PERSON

People who are ASSERTIVE are usually nice – but not so nice that people can walk on them.

They stand up for themselves and their rights; say what they think or want honestly and directly; and recognise other people's rights and feelings.

They respect other people and do not force their views on those weaker than themselves. .

Assertive BODY LANGUAGE:

- s/he looks you straight in the eye
- s/he stands up straight and relaxed
- s/he speaks clearly and firmly – neither too loud nor too soft

So, some words people use to describe this mouse are:

CONFIDENT

HONEST

CARING

FIRM

FRIENDLY

RESPECTFUL

FAIR

SENSITIVE TO OTHERS



The assertive person likes him/herself but does not need to hide it or show it off.

S/he is just happy to be him/herself!



BODY LANGUAGE

Speaking out firmly and clearly is only half the message. It has to be backed up by the right BODY LANGUAGE. You may get the words right but

CANCEL, CONTRADICT OR CONFUSE

the message because your facial expression, tone of voice or body posture show uncertainty, self-doubt or hostility.

The key is to FEEL ASSERTIVE, to be convinced of your rights, your opinion, etc. and then your body expression is more likely to come right. If we begin to notice body language and get feedback from other group members about the non-verbal messages we send, we can begin to use our body language to support what we wish to convey.

POSTURE

Hold yourself tall and straight.
Relax
Walk confidently – head held high.
Balance yourself – sitting squarely can communicate confidence.
Show you are listening by facing someone when they are talking.
Don't slouch, shuffle or turn away.

EYE CONTACT

Eyes convey more than anything else.
Don't avoid eye contact but don't stare either. A direct yet relaxed gaze conveys self assurance. If you want to show someone you are listening, you show this by looking at them as they are talking.

MOUTH AND JAW

Relax your mouth – a clenched jaw or chin jutting up slightly can communicate aggression – so can a tight-lipped face.
Don't smile apologetically to 'soften the blow'.
Remember to take a deep breath.

VOICE

Sometimes when you are very anxious your voice sounds high. This can happen when you first begin to be assertive. Breathing and relaxation help to get the tone of voice right. It is important to speak slowly and in a firm, moderately loud voice. Don't whine or use sarcasm.



SAMPLE SITUATIONS

You are in a bus queue. When the bus comes someone behind you starts pushing and elbows you out of the way ...

(Making a request)

You are with a group of friends. Someone takes out a packet of cigarettes and offers them around. You say you don't want one and the others start to make fun of you ...

(Dealing with being teased)

You have been working hard at your maths, but you did very badly on a test. Your Dad is disappointed with you and has cut off this week's pocket money ...

(Dealing with criticism)

You want to go on a school tour and you are fairly sure your mother is going to say "no". You go into the kitchen while she is making dinner to ask her ...

(Making a request)

You are going to a film and your friend arrives late – this is not the first time this has happened and you will probably miss the beginning ...

(Expressing feelings – annoyance)

You bought a new pair of shoes and the stitching has ripped in one of them. You take them back to the shop. The manager says 'We don't give refunds' ...

(Making a complaint)

You have got a cup of coffee in a restaurant and it is lukewarm ...

(Making a complaint)

A friend borrowed some CDs from you. It was clearly agreed that they were to be returned in one week. It is now a month later and you still haven't got them back. You meet your friend on the street....

(Expressing feelings – annoyance)

An aunt of yours is always roping you into helping with her good deeds. She has just asked you again to do the shopping for an elderly neighbour. You don't want to do it ...

(Refusing a request)

You are working hard on a test when a teacher comes past and finds a note on the floor near your desk. S/he yells at you that you are cheating, but you know you are not...

(Dealing with criticism)

You and your friends are going to a film. One person is insisting on going to a film you definitely do not want to see...

(Expressing your opinion)

You changed your plans for the evening in order to help a friend with preparation for an exam. In the end s/he never turned up. Now you are sitting next to each other just before the test...

(Expressing annoyance/giving criticism) – N.B. timing

A teacher makes a derogatory remark about travellers in general. You disagree and feel you ought to say something...

(Expressing an opinion/disagreement)

You are sent to the Principal for leading the trouble in class. Though you were involved in trouble-making in the past, you have been trying hard lately and you were not involved in any way in this incident...

(Dealing with criticism)

You are at a party and someone is trying to persuade you to have an alcoholic drink. You have said “no” already but they are being persistent...

(Dealing with persistence)

You want a tape but have no time to get into town. Your Mum’s friend has just dropped in to ask your mother if she needs anything...

(Making a request)



CORE CONCEPT: *Assertion training is based on respect for personal and human rights – both our own and those of others.*

MY PERSONAL RIGHTS

PURPOSE

To stimulate students to identify and accept their personal rights.

To recognise how personal rights can be violated by others and by ourselves when we deny them.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise is more suited to brighter, more verbal students. However, simpler instructions are given in Variation 3 for younger/less verbal students. Point out that in this session we are looking at our rights. In the next we will look at the other side – our responsibilities.

Links with: AC 9 ‘Making Requests’, AC 10 ‘Asking for Help’, AC 11 ‘Saying “No”’, AC 12 ‘Dealing with Persistence’, DM 11 ‘What’s Stopping you?’, DM 12 ‘Being Offered a Lift’.

Materials

Copies of Handout 1 – ‘Some Personal Rights’

Situation Cards – Personal Rights

Blank index cards and pens

Outline

1. Teacher input
2. Draw a situation and feedback
3. Teacher input – personal rights
4. Teacher demonstrates situation
5. Role Play

Detailed Procedure

1. Teacher input

Sometimes other people put us down, or take no notice of our opinions, needs and feelings. Some people bully us – they want us to give in to them, let them have their way or never disagree with what they think. They may call us stupid or old-fashioned or even get quite aggressive. This is sometimes shown more in the way they say something, e.g., by getting very loud, using sarcasm or sneering, rather than in the words they use.

2. Draw a situation and feedback

Divide class into groups of four.

Can you think of some examples of people treating you like this? Think of one or two examples. Draw a situation in which this happened to you. Then share and discuss.

Take feedback listing examples on a flip chart.

3. Teacher input – personal rights

We have a right to be treated with respect by others but sometimes we allow ourselves to forget this. We need to learn to stand up for ourselves firmly but politely. Of course, we must also treat others with respect and listen to their opinions or wishes. The most important right we have is the right to express our beliefs, opinions, needs and feelings, but always remembering that we must not interfere with the rights of others.

In groups of four:

Distribute Handout 1 – ‘Some Personal Rights’ and discuss it briefly to make sure students understand it.

Tell students to individually rank the ‘rights’ in order of importance. The group should then reach agreement on the five most important ones.

4. Teacher demonstrates situation

Now we are going to look at some examples of situations where a person will speak to you in such a way that it will interfere with your personal rights.

Using two or three Situation cards from the pack, tell the class a little about the situation and act out the statement, emphasising the non-verbal behaviour (tone of voice, body language, and so on). If you wish, pick a class member at whom to direct your statement.

Tell the class:

After you hear the statement discuss, in your small group,

Which rights were being interfered with?

Remember that often the manner in which something is said is as important as the words.

Take feedback from the small groups and discuss.

5. Role play

Get students to role play situations on cards or their own situations in such a way that personal rights are abused. Ask recipient how it felt? What right was being interfered with?

VARIATION

1. Get students to draw up a ‘*Charter of Rights*’.
2. For Younger/Less Verbal Students:

At Step 3 omit Handout 1 – ‘Some Personal Rights’. Go on to Step 4. Use the same method, but limit the number of situations and ask, “What was wrong with the way the person treated you?” Introduce the idea of having the right to be treated with respect and a few other central rights (e.g. the right to say ‘No’) and list them on the board.

After doing several situations, ask students to discuss, in groups,

‘Why should you stand up for your rights?’

Teacher’s notes for this discussion:

- **By standing up for ourselves we gain self respect and respect from other people.** When we stand up for ourselves and express our honest feeling and thoughts in direct and appropriate ways, everyone benefits in the long run. Very often, if we do not say something we want to say, we end up getting at the person in some way, backbiting or gossiping, feeling resentful or avoiding them.
- **By sacrificing our integrity and denying our personal feelings, relationships are usually damaged or prevented from developing.** If we think we should never hurt anyone under any circumstances, we end up hurting ourselves and other people.

For example, people who do not want to go out with a girlfriend or boyfriend any more sometimes just start avoiding the person, or just don’t ring them anymore. Other ways in which people finish relationships include telling lies, making excuses about being busy until the other person cops on, getting others to say they are not in, etc. Because we do not want others to feel hurt or rejected, people sometimes don’t speak honestly, don’t try to clear up hurts and problems, and both people may be feeling very bad and confused about what was wrong. Personal relationships become more authentic and satisfying when we share our honest reactions with other people and do not try to block others from sharing their reactions with us.

- **When we frequently sacrifice our rights, we teach other people to take advantage of us.**



PERSONAL RIGHTS

1. A friend who borrowed CDs or tapes and did not return them on the day agreed says:

Sorry about being so long returning these – I'm sure you didn't miss them anyway! I have a few more at home I wanted to listen to this week – I'll drop them in on Wednesday. See you later!

(The right to express feelings of annoyance, if you are annoyed; the right to have agreements kept; the right to say 'No' to the indirectly expressed request to keep them till Wednesday).

2. An aunt who frequently drags you into helping with her shopping/helping other people when you would rather be doing something else says:

I can't understand what's got into you! You were always so generous with your time in the past. Kids today don't know how lucky they are – it's all 'take' and no 'give'.

(Right to refuse a request without being made to feel mean or guilty).

3. You said you would go to a disco with a friend you felt sorry for but you really don't want to and you've just told him/her. S/he says:

Just come this last time – I don't have anyone else to go with and after all, you did say you would.

(Right to change one's mind).

4. A group of you are going camping. One of your friends who is the leader of the gang wants to pool money to buy cannabis. You don't want to get into drugs and you say so. S/he says:

Nobody in their right mind would want to go camping with you. How come you always have such stupid ideas?

(Right to be treated with respect, right to express your opinions and ideas without being put down for them).

5. You have really done your best with your homework, but the teacher says:

How dare you hand up this homework like this! And don't try to excuse yourself – you can do better than this rubbish!

(Right to be treated with respect; the right to make mistakes).

6. You do not understand something a teacher has just explained twice and you ask for more help. S/he says:

What do you mean you don't understand! Haven't I already explained it twice?

(The right to be treated with respect regardless of your status, age, intelligence).

7. One of your gang has just decided to go drinking cider. You do not want to, and have suggested going to the Youth Club. S/he says:

If you don't agree with the group decision, then you can clear off, Mammy's girl/boy!

(Right to express a difference of opinion without being punished or ridiculed for it).

8. You have just spilled a carton of milk on the kitchen floor. Your mother/father shouts

You stupid child! What did you go and do that for?

(Right to be treated with respect; right to make mistakes).

9. A friend has asked you to come in next door and help to move some furniture. You are in the middle of something and you say you'll help later. S/he says:

I know you're busy right now, but this won't take a minute. Come on.

(The right to have your wishes listened to and heeded).

10. You have just asked for some extra pocket money, a thing you never do, to go to the pictures. Your mother/father says:

Who on earth do you think you are! Do you think we're made of money? When I was you I didn't get any pocket money!

(The right to ask for what you want).

11. You are with some people who have just bought a flagon of cider. When you are offered some you say you don't drink. One person says:

My Da says that a man who doesn't take a drink isn't a man at all. I agree with him. I can't stand people who won't take a drink like everyone else – then they sit there looking so serious.

(The right to say 'No'; the right to do what I believe is right for me).



SOME PERSONAL RIGHTS

- The right to be treated with respect (regardless of my level of intelligence, appearance, abilities, race, social status).
- The right to express my feelings (with due regard to the feelings of others).
- The right to express my thoughts, opinions and beliefs (even if others do not agree with them).
- The right to ask for what I want (but not to demand it).
- The right to say 'No' or 'Yes' to suggestions, offers or pressures, without feeling guilty (in other words, to live according to my beliefs).
- The right to make mistakes (without feeling terrible and without having to justify or excuse my mistakes. We learn through our mistakes).
- The right to change my mind.
- The right to ask for more information or to say 'I don't understand'.
- The right to decline help to another person. (I am not bad or selfish if I say 'No' to a request)
- The right to look after my own needs (and to regard them as just as important as everyone else's needs).
- The right to 'be myself' and not be put down by others for it.
- The right to do what I believe is right. (The approval of other people is desirable but not essential).



CORE CONCEPT: *Responsibility and sensitivity towards the needs, feelings and rights of others are central aspects of assertiveness.*

RESPONSIBLE AND CARING ASSERTIVENESS

In this work we are only interested in espousing forms of assertiveness which include real respect for the rights of others, aid communication and mutuality between people with opposing desires, and value negotiation and constructive compromise. Assertion does not mean aggression but is a direct, honest and appropriate expression of opinions, beliefs, needs or feelings.

Assertiveness is often mistaken for aggression and for a ruthless and selfish approach to getting your own way. It is important to understand that this view of assertiveness is mistaken. The goal of assertion is to get and give respect, to ask for fair play and to leave room for compromise when the needs and rights of two people conflict. It should result in mutual understanding and help to build honest, caring relationships.

PURPOSE

To highlight the fact that responsible assertive behaviour involves sensitivity and concern for the needs and rights of others.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

After discussing Situation A you may prefer to get brighter or senior students to devise their own situations.

Links with: AC 13 'Accepting a No', DM 16 'Making Decisions About Other People's Drug Taking Habits'.

Materials

Situation cards

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Small groups - brainstorming
3. Feedback and discussion
4. Small group decision-making and feedback
5. Repeat Steps 2-4
6. Homework.

Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction

Explain that this session is about our responsibilities to others. Express the following ideas in your own words and in language suited to your group.

Assertion is *not simply about getting what you want*. This implies concentrating only on the asserter's wants and rights and not on the wants and rights of both parties. Concentrating on your own rights and needs may lead to irresponsible behaviour in which assertiveness is used to take advantage of less assertive or weaker people. On the contrary, one should use one's greater assertive power to help others to become able to stand up for themselves. You may also sometimes *choose* to put others before yourself, to sacrifice your own needs or wishes in the interests of someone or something else.

You do not *have* to express your feelings in *every* situation. You can wait and deal with them later if it is more appropriate.

While it is important to be clear about your rights you also have a responsibility to *ensure that the rights of others are upheld* and protected. While it is vital to be clear about your rights, it is important not to become too 'rights conscious' and react aggressively to every violation of your rights.

The important point is that you feel confident enough and have the skills to be assertive when you choose to and not put yourself down or deny your own importance by putting others first *all the time*. Neither is it a good idea to be unassertive just in order to please people or to avoid conflict.

2. Small groups – brainstorming

Divide the class into small groups and distribute a copy of Situation A to each group. Ask them to read it and to list as many alternative courses of action as they can think of. They should not discuss them at this stage.

3. Feedback and discussion

Take feedback and list the alternatives on the blackboard. For each one discuss:

Whose needs, rights or feelings is this option most concerned with?

If you follow this option

- *What might each person think?*
- *How might each person feel?*

Discuss also whether all the options have been thought of – some possibilities are:

- *Just don't go to see your friend*
- *Go in before Wednesday*
- *Send her a 'Get Well' card and say something important has come up and you will be in on Thursday*
- *Tell Mike/Sheila you can't go*
- *Tell Mike/Sheila you can't go and why*
- *Tell Mike/Sheila you can't go and that you'd love to go on Thursday.*

Point out during the discussion that explaining your reason for doing or not doing something often helps the other person to understand and accept your decision. This is called sensitive (or empathic) assertion and is often very helpful.

4. Small group decision-making and feedback

When the options have been discussed, ask each group to decide on a course of action which takes account, as far as possible, of the needs and rights of all concerned. Feedback to main group.

5. Repeat Steps 2-4

The other situations can be used in small groups in the same way.

6. Homework

During the week, look out for situations where you can practise 'sensitive' assertion.



SITUATION A

You have a friend in hospital and you promised to go to see her on Wednesday night. Now a girl/fellow you have been out with once – and really like – has suggested you go to the pictures.

What will you do?



SITUATION B

In your house both your Mum and Dad work and you have all agreed to split up the housework between everyone (except your little brother who is only five). Now your Mum has asked you to do the fire every day for the next week. It is one of her jobs but she wants to do some overtime so she can go to a dinner dance on Saturday night.

What will you do?



SITUATION C

In your house both your Mum and Dad work and you have all agreed to split up the housework between everyone (except your little brother who is only five). Now your sister has asked you to do the fire every day for the next week. It is one of her jobs but she wants to do some work after school for this week so she can go to a disco on Saturday night.

What will you do?



SITUATION D

You are in a supermarket and you are in a hurry for a bus. You see a small boy/girl at one of the checkouts and you say to him/her, “do you mind if I go ahead of you – I’m going for a bus”. S/he says nothing ...

What will you do?



SITUATION E

You are in a restaurant and you have been waiting fifteen minutes for a cup of coffee. You can see that the waitress is new and she is not coping very well. You are not in a hurry but you do wish she’d bring it!

What will you do?



SITUATION F

Your Auntie Mary is a very obliging and caring person. She is always doing things for other people and never asks for anything for herself. You know she is not very good at saying ‘No’ either. You want her to make an outfit for you for a party. When you ask her (nicely) she hesitates – looks as if she’s going to say something – then says, “OK love, go ahead and get the material”.

What will you do?



CORE CONCEPT: *Clarity about the hallmarks of assertive behaviour is essential in assertiveness training.*

GETTING CLEAR

PURPOSE

To help students to discriminate between assertive, aggressive and passive behaviour.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some pilot teachers found this exercise unnecessary and repetitive, while others thought reinforcement was crucial. The homework personalises the learning. It is important for this reason and will be useful as a lead-in to AC 6 'Where Will I Start?'

Rehearse your demonstration of the sample situations supplied in the Teacher Material and get feedback if you haven't used them before.

Links with: AC 1 'The Mouse, the Monster and Me!' and all other AC lessons.

Materials

Prepare a chart or OHT (suitable for your class) comparing the three behaviour types.

Copies of Handout 1 – Record Sheet for homework.

Outline

1. Check homework (**AC 3**)
2. Introduction and recap definitions
3. Teacher demonstrates and students define behaviour
4. Small group discussion and feedback
5. Recap.
6. Homework.

Detailed Procedure

1. Check homework (**AC 3**)

Check their experience of practising assertive communication during the week.

2. Introduction and recap definitions

Tell the class that you are going to look at a number of different situations and the class has to decide whether they think the response given is an example of:

- *Assertive (strong but fair)*
- *Aggressive (like a monster)*
- *Passive (like a mouse)*

Recap briefly on definitions of assertive, aggressive and passive behaviour and post a brief description of each on the board or walls. Ideally, this should be illustrated with a mouse, a monster, etc.

3. Teacher demonstrates and students define behaviour

Ask the class to get into groups of three. Read out a situation and then act out the response, being particularly attuned to the tone of voice, loudness, and other body language. (See Teacher Material)

The students listen to the situation and the response and then discuss whether the response is assertive, aggressive or passive. Then ask one group for their answer and the reason why they think that. Ask the other students to comment, state agreements or disagreements and back up their opinions. Clarify what the correct answer was and why and then move on to the next situation.

4. Small group discussion and feedback

Discuss in small groups,

- *What is the advantage of being assertive? For you? For the other person?*

Brief feedback to class.

- *What happens when aggression rather than assertion is used?*
- *How do you feel when someone behaves aggressively towards you?*
- *How do you feel when you have been aggressive towards someone else?*

Brief feedback to class.

- *What happens when you behave passively? How do you usually feel? At the time?*

Later?

Brief feedback to class.

5. Recap

Recap with a chart/overhead, comparing the three behaviour types.

6. Homework

Between now and the next session, give students Handout 1 – Record Sheet or get them to copy the headings in their journals. Each night they should make a note of any situations they met that day which they found difficult to handle, and note down whether their response was assertive, aggressive or passive.



RECORD SHEET

For homework fill this sheet in. At the end of each day write down any situation you found difficult to handle, what you did and whether you were assertive, aggressive or passive.

Situation

What I Did

Was my behaviour

Ass/Agg/Pass?



AC Lesson 4
Sample Situations
Teacher Material

| | SITUATION | RESPONSE | TYPE |
|----|--|---|-------------|
| 1. | A friend gets silent and sulky. You say - | I think something's bothering you. We could probably work it out if you told me what's wrong. | Assertive |
| 2. | A friend has asked you for the second day this week if s/he can copy the maths homework. You say - | I'm really sick of your laziness. Do your own work for a change. | Aggressive |
| 3. | Someone jumps the queue in the supermarket saying, "I hope you don't mind, I'm rushing for a bus". You say - | No, it's all right (even though you are in a hurry too). | Passive |
| 4. | You've been on the phone to a friend for quite a while and you'd like to end the conversation. You say - | I'm terribly sorry, but my mother's waiting to use the phone. | Passive |
| 5. | At a Youth Club committee meeting, one person often interrupts you. You say - | Excuse me; I'd like to finish what I'm saying. | Assertive |
| 6. | You are going out with some friends. As you are leaving, your mother says - | Be sure to get home in time or you'll be in trouble. | Aggressive |

| SITUATION | RESPONSE | TYPE |
|--|---|------------|
| 7. You are having trouble with a maths problem. You say - | I must be stupid, but I don't know how to do this problem. | Passive |
| 8. A friend promised to call for you and bring you along to the local sports club and introduce you to some people there. S/he went without you. You phone and say – | I'm disappointed and hurt that you went without me. What happened? | Assertive |
| 9. You have got a cup of lukewarm coffee in a café. You call the waitress and say - | I ordered coffee, not lukewarm dishwater. Please bring me a some <i>real</i> coffee | Aggressive |



CORE CONCEPT: *Awareness of present skills and deficiencies facilitates goal setting.
Success is more likely if you start with the least difficult situations.*

HOW ASSERTIVE AM I?

PURPOSE

To get students to assess their present behaviour.

To get information about the kinds of situations your class finds most difficult to handle.

To introduce the idea that success is more likely if you start with easier situations.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Assigning 'homework' and reviewing success or failure is important in assertiveness training since practice in 'real life' situations is the key to transferring skills.

The self-assessment sheets used in this exercise can be collected and aggregated by the teacher to identify the situations with which the majority of the class have difficulty. This will also increase involvement. Questions may be completed again at the end of the section as a check on progress.

Links with: All other AC lessons, especially AC 6 'Where will we start?'

Materials

Copies of either Handout 1 or 2 – 'How Assertive Am I Now?' to suit your group

Copies of Handout 3 – 'Ladder'

Sample OHT of Hierarchy

Outline

1. Check homework (**AC 4**) in small groups
2. Individually complete self-assessment and share in small groups
3. Feedback to large group and discussion
4. Ladder completed individually
5. Homework.

Detailed Procedure

1. Check homework (**AC 4**) in small groups

Ask students to get out their homework exercise from the previous session, and to get into groups and share some of the situations which happened to them during the week. Tell them that reporting on homework will be a regular part of the programme, since practice in ‘real life’ situations is essential if they are to learn responsible assertive behaviour. However, they will also be practising in the group.

Share, in small groups, the kinds of situations with which they had difficulty and what they found difficult about them.

Feedback briefly and use as a lead-in for the next step.

2. Individually complete self-assessment and share in small groups

Distribute Handout 1 or 2 (to suit your class) – ‘How Assertive Am I Now?’ and point out that one of the best ways to improve your image of yourself is to set a goal and achieve it. But before setting a goal, we need to ‘assess’ our present performance. This sheet will help them to do this.

Ask students to get into groups of three and to complete the sheet individually. When they have done this, ask them to share in their small groups,

- *Which ones did you feel most uncomfortable about?*
- *Which ones did you feel most comfortable about?*

3. Feedback to large group and discussion

When this is finished, ask for feedback from the small groups.

- *What were the similarities between the people in your group?*
- *What were the differences?*
- *Did some of your responses depend on who was involved?*

Use every opportunity to point out individual differences.

4. Ladder completed individually

Distribute Handout 3 'Ladder' or ask each student to draw a ladder in their journals and to place the situation they would find the easiest to deal with on the bottom step and so on up to the most difficult. Make an OHT from sample hierarchy supplied or one of your own to demonstrate. Some students may need help. A ladder helps to identify the situations with which you should start – gradually moving up the ladder to the hardest situation as you build up your confidence.

Collating self-assessments

Ask them if they are willing to let you have the forms (Handout 1 or 2) so that you can collate the information and see which problem situations would be most useful for the whole class to work on. Explain that this will help them to see what kind of situations others find difficult too.

REASSURE them that no one but you will see the forms and that you will return them to each student at the next session.

5. Homework

During the week notice how you feel and act in some of the kinds of situations we have discussed today. Each night write these in your journal under the headings,

- *Situation*
- *How I acted*
- *How I felt*
- *Who else was involved?*

Step 4 could also be assigned as homework if preferred.



HOW ASSERTIVE AM I?

Extremely Comfortable Extremely Uncomfortable

How do I feel -

10...9.....8.....7.....6..... 5.....4.....3.....2....1

Telling someone that I like them?

Starting a conversation with someone I don't know very well?

Ending a conversation?

Going into a room full of strangers?

When people criticise me?

Giving someone a compliment?

Telling someone that I feel hurt?

Giving myself praise?

Standing up for my beliefs even if I'm under pressure?

Telling someone I'm annoyed?

Saying 'No'/turning down a request?

Making a complaint?



HOW ASSERTIVE AM I NOW?

Extremely Comfortable **Extremely Uncomfortable**

How do I feel -

10.....9.....8.....7.....6..... 5.....4.....3.....2.....1

Asking for a favour?

Starting a conversation?

Ending a conversation?

Going into a room full of strangers?

Dealing with criticism?

Telling someone that I like them?

Dealing with people in authority?

Expressing an opinion in a group?

Expressing praise/giving compliments?

Showing if I feel hurt?

Talking about myself in a positive way?

Being the centre of attention in a group?

Standing up for my point of view even under pressure?

Showing annoyance?

Saying 'No'/turning down a request?

Refusing to be put down?

Standing up for yourself/ making a complaint



ONE PERSON'S SAMPLE HIERARCHY - LADDER



LADDER



CORE CONCEPT: *'Appropriateness is an important issue in assertiveness, especially for young people whose assertiveness may be misinterpreted.'*

WHERE WILL WE START?

Home and school often reinforce unassertive behaviour. It is important to make students aware that it is sometimes inappropriate to be assertive, even though, ideally it should always be possible.

In this session, you should look at some of the reasons why it is good for young people to be prudent about using their assertiveness, without encouraging them to sacrifice their integrity. Some ideas on why assertiveness may not always be easy or advisable:

- a) People like things to remain the same and often do not like to be challenged. While everyone agrees, in principle, that children should be self-confident, in practice it is harder to 'manage' confident children because they may question the reason for things, state what they want too readily, disagree with their elders. This is especially true of older people who would see it as forward or cheeky of young people to be asserting themselves too strongly. In our society, young people are expected to listen and obey without question.
- b) Sometimes assertion is seen by other people as aggression.
- c) People may try to make you feel guilty for refusing a request or expressing a hurt or angry feeling. They may think it goes against the idea of putting others first and self-sacrifice. The idea that it is a good thing to sometimes look after yourself is not easily accepted.
- d) People like to exercise their power over those less powerful than themselves. Bigger children sometimes bully those smaller than themselves, sometimes adults hit children and some adults hit their partners. They do not want to share power and do not want their power to be

challenged. By increasing your personal power(fullness) you may upset the applecart. You have to assess the consequences for yourself when deciding.

- e) We earn people's approval by doing what they want us to do. So often we deny our own needs in order to avoid being deprived of that approval.

PURPOSE

To alert students to the fact that assertive behaviour on their part may be seen as unacceptable by adults or authority figures.

To give them an opportunity to practise assertiveness skills.

To strengthen students' internal focus of control by getting them to goal-set in the group.

Links with: AC 2 'My Personal Rights', AC 3 'Responsible and Caring Assertiveness', AC 5 'How Assertive Am I?'

Materials

Chart showing the collated class results of the self-assessments done in AC 5

Copies of Sample Situations

PROCEDURE

Outline

Part 1

1. Check homework
2. Feedback results from Lesson 5
3. Sample situations – small groups

4. Role play
5. Rank 'most acceptable' behaviour
6. Rank 'least acceptable' behaviour
7. Summarise.

Part 2

1. List possible goals
2. Discuss in pairs
3. Individuals commit to goals.

Detailed Procedure

Part 1

1. Check homework
2. Feedback results from Lesson 5

Feedback the results of collating the information from the self-assessment sheet to the class and discuss.

Point out that some of these behaviours are most acceptable than others, and their acceptability sometimes depends on the people involved.

3. Sample situations – small groups

Put students into groups of four and give one of the sample situations to each group. Ask them to discuss what to do.

4. Role play

Each situation in turn is role played by a small group.

Discuss,

- *What differences were there in how you would behave in the four situations?*
- *What reasons can you think of to explain the differences?*

5. Rank 'most acceptable' behaviour

Ask the groups of four to look at the chart of collated class results based on 'How assertive am I now?' (completed in Lesson 5) and pick out the behaviours which they think are most acceptable. (Expressing positive feelings; standing up for consumer rights; being able to start conversations and being socially confident are some).

Take feedback from the small groups.

Discuss,

- *Why should this be?*

6. Rank 'least acceptable' behaviour

Then ask them to pick the three which are least acceptable. (Expressing negative feelings; standing up for your rights and opinions, etc.)

Take feedback and discuss,

- *Why are they not acceptable?*

7. Summarise

So for a number of reasons it is probably best for us to work on the positive or less threatening ones. For a start, they are easier; they also build up your confidence and they are unlikely to get you into trouble with older or more powerful people. In addition, it makes a pleasant change for people to hear nice things about themselves and expressions of appreciation, rather than complaints or criticism. When we are comfortable with some of these, then we will move on to the harder ones.

Part 2

Optional but recommended. It can be a short (15 min.) addition to this session.

CONTRACT FOR IN-GROUP BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

1. List possible goals

Make a list of possible behaviours for group members to work on, e.g. speaking louder, speaking softer, speaking more often, speaking less often, making longer contributions, making shorter contributions (more to the point), making more eye contact with others,

expressing genuine disagreements of opinion, speaking more firmly. The group can add more.

2. Discuss in pairs

Ask students to list possible goals in pairs, and choose one behaviour they'd like to work on.

It is generally more effective to have participants state their goal in positive terms of what they want to do e.g., "I want to speak more clearly", rather than "I want to stop mumbling". The behaviours should be as clear and specific as possible so the person knows when the changes are attained.

3. Individuals commit to goals

Have each member state their goal and whether they are willing to have others give relevant feedback to them on their progress, e.g., to point out when they are successful, i.e., speaking clearly and not mumbling. Point out to the class that positive feedback about achievement of the goal is more likely to help people change so they should focus on successes rather than failures.

Brief reminders at the beginning of each session may help participants to be more systematic about the changes and find new behaviours to change.

They should also write their goals in their journal.



- a) You are in the bus queue and a smaller kid jumps the queue.
What would you do?



- b) You are in the bus queue and someone your own age jumps the queue.
What would you do?



- c) You are in the bus queue and a teacher from school jumps the queue.
What would you do?



- d) You are in the bus queue and a rather aggressive older woman jumps the queue.
There are a lot of other old people in the queue.
What would you do?





CORE CONCEPT: *Basic social skills are important in developing self-confidence.*

JOINING IN

Many people – and especially non-assertive people – have great difficulty in entering into social situations. They avoid certain situations because they do not know how to start a conversation, what to say if there is a silence or they are afraid of being dull. This is a common concern of young people. For example, at a disco they do not know what to say to their partner between dances. Alcohol is often used as a prop to bolster up low self-confidence in these social situations.

There are a number of components to the skill of joining in,

- *Introducing yourself*
- *Starting a conversation*
- *Continuing a conversation.*

Joining in is even more difficult in a situation where a group of people is already engaged in conversation or an activity and you arrive later. Any work done on listening and relationships should help in this area.

PURPOSE

To give students practice in the skills of introducing oneself and of joining in.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Don't underestimate the difficulty people have. The value of this exercise is in its simplicity. For weaker students the modelling by the teacher is very important.

Links with: ID 2 'Learning to Listen'.

Materials

Charts showing the steps in being assertive (See Back-up Material p.119).

Chart showing the steps in each skill.

PROCEDURE

Outline

Two skills are dealt with here – 'Introducing Yourself' and 'Joining In'. The procedure is the same for both skills.

1. The steps are outlined and posted on a chart
2. The steps are modelled by the teacher
3. The steps are role played by the students
4. Homework

Detailed Procedure

1. The steps are outlined and posted on a chart

Display a chart with the steps involved in introducing yourself.

Outline the steps involved and discuss each step with the class. Students should be reminded of the steps in being assertive. (See Back-up Material p.119).

2. The steps are modelled by the teacher

Demonstrate the sequence of steps for the class, using students as other players in the role play. With weaker students, it may help if one student is given the task of pointing to each step on the chart as you proceed. Think out loud to demonstrate positive self-talk, e.g.,

“That girl looks pleasant and friendly. I’d like to meet her, I’ll introduce myself”.

Take feedback and discuss.

3. The steps are role played by the students

Ask students to volunteer to role play other situations. After the role plays, feedback should be given following the guidelines for helpful feedback. (See Back-up Material p.118).

INTRODUCING YOURSELF –

Steps

- (i) Decide if you want to meet the person
- (ii) Decide if it is a good time
- (iii) Walk up to the person
- (iv) Introduce yourself
- (v) Wait for the person to tell you his/her name. If s/he doesn’t tell you, ask

Notes for Discussion

- Discuss why students might want to meet a person
- Discuss how to choose a good time – when the person is not busy with someone or something else
- Watch for appropriate distance
e.g., “”Hello! My name is...”
or
“I haven’t seen you here before.
Hello! You’re new, aren’t you?”
Followed by “My name is...”
- Discuss appropriate ways to ask a person’s name

Suggested situations:

- School: There is a new person in your class
- Home: You walk into your kitchen and find a woman sitting at the table with a cup of tea. She is obviously a friend of your mother’s
- Peer Group: A new boy or girl moves into your street

JOINING IN –

Steps

- (i) Decide if you want to join in
- (ii) Decide what to say
- (iii) Choose a good time
- (iv) Say it in a friendly, assertive way

Notes for Discussion

Students should decide whether they really want to participate

Suggest possible things to say:
“*Can one more person play?*”
“*Would it be OK with you if I joined in?*”
“*Hello, my name is ... May I join in?*”

Discuss how to choose a good time: during a break in the conversation or activity or before it has begun

Review the hallmarks of assertive behaviour

Suggested situations:

School:

Ask to join in a game of cards at lunch break

Peer Group:

Join a group engaged in conversation at a party.

Go into the youth club and ask to join in an activity.

Join a group at the street corner that you know is about to go down the town.

4. Homework

Get students to practise these skills during the coming week. They should find situations in which to practise even if nothing comes up naturally. Remember to review how they did, even if briefly, at the beginning of the next session.



CORE CONCEPT: *Being able to give and receive positive feedback enhances our own confidence and self esteem and our relationships.*

GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

Children with low self esteem are very quick to discount compliments and become embarrassed easily. They either do not believe what the person is saying or tell themselves something like – “It’s not true. If they really knew me ...” So it is important to help children to acknowledge valid praise, and to try to accept it.

In a study of assertiveness training with high school students it was found that, though females decreased in most areas of assertiveness as they progressed through school and males increased in assertiveness, when it came to dealing with positive feelings, females experienced less difficulty. Since giving support is consistent with the female sex role stereotype and sex role compliance increases during adolescence, this finding is predictable. However, the ‘taboo on tenderness’ in boys’ schools must be challenged. Men and women have exactly the same needs for validation and affirmation and men frequently have great difficulty in expressing feelings, and are afraid of being thought ‘soft’ or ‘sappy’. So this exercise on compliments may prove to be somewhat more difficult for boys than girls.

PURPOSE

To give students practice in giving and receiving compliments.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise will be easier if **ID 12A** ‘Feedback Circle’ or **ID 12B** ‘Hand of Friendship’ has been done. It is harder to say something positive directly to another than to write it down. This is precisely the point of the exercise. After initial reluctance pilot teachers found it worked well.

Links with: **ID 12A** ‘Feedback Circle’, **ID 12B** ‘Positive Posters’.

Materials

Copies of Handout 1 – ‘My Goal’

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Review homework
2. Introduction
3. Brainstorming – how we respond to compliments
4. Elicit examples from class
5. Circle – compliments given and received
6. Discussion
7. Role play
8. Homework.

Detailed Procedure

1. Review homework
2. Introduction

We often feel inept or embarrassed when someone gives us a compliment, and frequently blush, dismiss it or make little of ourselves in response. Some people also have difficulty

giving compliments. We do not quite know how to put it so that it will not sound condescending, patronising or awkward.

3. Brainstorming – how we respond to compliments

Ask students in small groups to list quickly what people do when they are paid a compliment. Ask them to include the non-verbal behaviours, which accompany the response, e.g. blushing, avoidance of eye contact, hand wringing, or fiddling with jewellery, etc...

Look out for examples of –

denial

“Oh, it was nothing!”

returning the focus

“Oh, yours is absolutely gorgeous!”

rejection

“I couldn’t be looking great. You’re just saying that to make me feel good!”

Take feedback and discuss.

4. Elicit examples from class

Today we are going to practise both giving and receiving compliments. Ask the group to look around the room and to think of things they like about their classmates. Ask for some general examples and list them on the board:

- Appearance
- An achievement
- The way they did something
- Something about their behaviour, the way they stand up for you, the way they smile.

5. Circle – compliments given and received

Ask the group to get into a large circle to practise giving and receiving compliments. Discuss the best way of saying it. Especially emphasise the value of using ‘I’ statements, e.g. “I like the way you smile”, “I think you work very hard”, “I like your sense of humour”, “I appreciate the way you let me join in your games”.

Ask everyone to -

- a) Think briefly of something they honestly like or appreciate about the person on their right. Emphasise the importance of sincerity – it need only be something small but it must be specific and sincere.

- b) Then take turns expressing this sincere compliment to the person on their right, remembering to make sure their body language matches the message they are giving.

Suggest that if anyone is feeling nervous they should deepen their breathing.

The person receiving the compliment should try to maintain eye contact with the giver, and:

- decide whether a sincere compliment has been given
- say, “Thank you” and take a moment to notice how they feel and to let the compliment sink in
- say something else if they want to.

They should then turn to the next person and continue the round.

6. Discussion

When the round is finished, participants should be encouraged to discuss their reactions during the exercise, both as givers and receivers. If anyone is particularly uncomfortable as either giver or receiver, they should be encouraged to work on it in future role plays and notice what they are saying to themselves, “*She’ll think I’m trying to butter her up*” or “*He’s just saying that to make me feel good*”.

7. Role play

Role play the following situations for practice, or have students devise their own. Continue as in general instructions for practice and feedback (see p.121). The first role plays may be done in front of the whole group for coaching purposes. After that, practise in groups of four.

Suggested situations:

Giving a compliment –

- School:*
- A classmate has done a good project or piece of work
 - A teacher has taken some extra time to explain something to you
- Home:*
- Your parents have allowed you to do something you

really wanted to do

- Your Mum or Dad has cooked a nice meal
- Your brother or sister has helped you with some homework

Friends:

- You like what someone is wearing
- A friend asks you to join in on something

Receiving a compliment –

School:

- A teacher compliments you on work well done
- A classmate compliments you on how you played in a match

Home:

- Your parents compliment you on a meal you cooked.
- Your sister or brother compliments you on the way you look.
- A relation compliments you on some achievement.

Friends:

- A friend compliments you on your generosity in lending things.
- A friend compliments you on the way you look.

8. Homework

Ask students to get into groups of four and identify one person outside the class to whom they would like to express a compliment. It could be friends, parents, relations – anybody at all to whom they honestly want to express a compliment.

Get them to fill in Handout 1 – ‘My Goal’.

If there is time, have students take turns rehearsing the situation in their groups of four and giving each other feedback.



MY GOAL

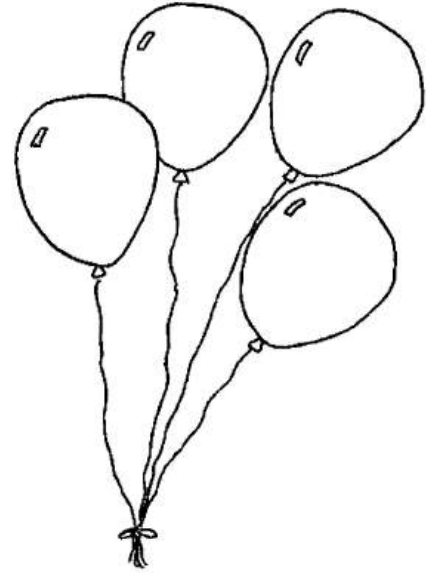
My goal is to practise

Name of person to whom I want to say it

What I want to say

When I want to say it

How did I do?



Colour in a balloon each time you use the skill of giving a compliment assertively.



CORE CONCEPT: It is important to know how to look after ourselves.

MAKING REQUESTS

PURPOSE

To explore ways of asking for what you want.
To raise awareness of the effects of passive smoking.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise is in two parts. The first involves the skill of making requests in general and should precede Part 2, which applies to passive smoking situations. It may take two classes.

Links with: AC 2 'My Personal Rights', AC 10 'Asking for Help', FE 16 'What Should I Do?'

Materials

Newsprint and drawing materials
Blackboard or flipchart
Copies of Handout 1 – 'It's Getting Up My Nose!'

PROCEDURE

Outline

Part 1

1. Drawing/sharing
2. Small group discussion on making requests
3. Role play situations using passive/aggressive behaviour
4. Repeat role plays - assertively
5. Feedback and discussion
6. Homework

Part 2

4. Information on the effects of passive smoking
5. Role play
6. Feedback and discussion.

Detailed Procedure

Part 1

1. Drawing/sharing

Ask students to draw a situation in which they found it difficult to ask for something.

Share your drawing with a partner. Tell them about the situation.

Get responses and highlight some of the situations which students find difficult. It may emerge that it depends on who you are asking.

Some examples:

- *Asking a teacher to explain something*
- *Asking parents to allow you to go somewhere*
- *Asking a friend to do something with you*
- *Asking a shopkeeper to change a tape that you found was faulty when you first played it at home.*

2. Small group discussion on making requests

In groups of four, discuss,

- *What makes it difficult to ask for what you want?*

- *What are the advantages of asking for what you want?*

Take feedback.

If the following points don't emerge, feed them into the discussion.

- *Asking for what you want is more likely to get what you want*
- *It is OK to ask for what you want. You have a right to ask. If you do not make your wants known you might miss out on something that is important to you.*
- *The person being asked has a right to refuse.*

However, there are good and bad ways of asking for what you want. Some people demand in a shouting manner or fight (behaving like a monster/aggressive). Others hint at what they want, or say nothing and hope it will happen (behaving like a mouse/passive) and others ask straight out (being assertive).

3. Role play situations using passive/aggressive behaviour

Get groups to role play aggressive and passive ways of:

- Asking a teacher to explain something in class
- Asking to go to a disco which ends later than your parents normally allow you to stay out
- Asking for help with your geography homework from a classmate who lives next door.

Highlight the differences between the behaviours and recap on some elements of assertive behaviour.

- *Be clear in your mind about what you want to say*
- *Say directly what you want*
- *Give a reason if you think it will help, but make sure it is genuine*
- *Do not apologise excessively*
- *Speak with a confident, natural tone of voice*
- *Make eye contact*
- *Respect the other person's right to say 'No'.*

4. Repeat role plays – assertively

Now repeat the role plays, using assertive behaviour. When roles have been selected, ask the person who is going to make the request to imagine himself/herself in the situation and about to make the specific request. What is s/he thinking and feeling in the situation? Check for any negative thoughts and change them to more positive thoughts.

5. Feedback and discussion

Following role play, **ask the person making the request**

- *What s/he did that was effective?*
- *What it feels like being assertive?*
- *If there is anything that s/he would do differently, given the same situation.*

Ask the other person in role play

- *What it was like when the person was being assertive instead of passive or aggressive?*

Ask the class

- *If the behaviour they saw was assertive?*
- *What worked well?*
- *What else the person could have done/said?*

6. Homework

Practise 'Making a Request' assertively during the week and record on a goal sheet (e.g. p.124).

Part 2

1. Information on the effects of passive smoking

Form groups of four. Distribute copies of Handout 1 – 'It's Getting Up My Nose!' and Handout 2 – 'The Effects of Passive Smoking'.

2. Role play

Three people role play the situation on the sheet. The fourth person acts as an observer.

3. Feedback and discussion.



IT'S GETTING UP MY NOSE

You are in town one Saturday afternoon and accidentally bump into a friend who you have not seen for a long time. You decide to spend the afternoon together and go to a nearby restaurant for a cup of coffee and a chat to catch up on all that's happened since you last met.

Consciously you choose a seat in the non-smoking area of the restaurant as neither of you smoke, and find smoking quite objectionable. You notice a pregnant woman with a small child at the next table.

Shortly after you sit down a person seated nearby lights up a cigarette (also in the non-smoking area).

What action can you take? Consider the following before you start your role play,

- Would you ask the smoker to stop smoking?
- If so, how would you make the request?
- What would you do if s/he refused to stop smoking?
- As a non-smoker you have rights
- The smoker may become aggressive if challenged
- Smoking is not a private habit.

Look at Handout 2 – 'The Effects of Passive Smoking' and then write down a few sentences you might use in your conversation with the smoker.



THE EFFECTS OF PASSIVE SMOKING

It is now accepted that people who do not smoke, but who spend time in the company of others who do, suffer the effects of smoking. This is known as *passive smoking* and the smoke inhaled by the non-smoker is known as side-stream smoke. It contains more damaging chemicals than mainstream smoke e.g. up to 100 times more cancer-causing chemicals.

Since 1986, a number of major reports have examined all the existing evidence on the health effects of passive smoking. All reach the conclusion that passive smoking is a cause of lung cancer. The risk of lung cancer due to passive smoking is particularly noted in persons living with one or several heavy smokers or who share a small office with smokers.

Children whose parents smoke get more chronic chest infections, glue ear (the commonest cause of deafness in children) and childhood asthma.

Coughing, phlegm, wheezing and throat discomfort are experienced by both adults and children exposed to passive smoking.

Discomfort in the eyes, nose and throat is frequently experienced. The stale smell of tobacco smoke lingers on hair and clothes.

If you are being forced to become a passive smoker, insist on your right to fresh air. A healthy atmosphere is your right. Be prepared to assert that right. Object to people smoking in the non-smoking area of a restaurant, bus or train if you wish. If we don't, how are the offenders to know that we find their fumes objectionable?

PASSIVE SMOKING AND PREGNANCY

The effects of passive smoking are particularly marked in children born to mothers who smoke, especially in the last six months of pregnancy. They weigh, on average, 200 gms. Less than those born to non-smoking mothers and continue to suffer from slower physical, intellectual and emotional development. Still births and death in newborn infants is increased by one-third in babies born to mothers who smoke during pregnancy.



CORE CONCEPT: *Everyone has the right to ask for help without feeling guilty and without feeling disloyal.*

ASKING FOR HELP

PURPOSE

To provide students with a knowledge of the helping agencies available and with the skills necessary to enable them to make contact with such agencies.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two or three classes will be needed to complete this topic. The Art Department may be interested in co-operating on the poster work.

Links with: AC 2 'My Personal Rights', AC 9 'Making a Request', FE 13 'Consequences', FE 14 'Children and Alcohol', FE 16 'What Should I Do?'

Materials

Copies of Situation Slips

Copies of Handout 1 – 'I Just Don't Know What To Do'

Copies of Handout 2 – 'Helping Agencies'

Poster paper and markers

PROCEDURE

Outline

Part 1

1. Introduction
2. Handout 1 – present and discuss situation in small groups
3. List helping agencies

4. Homework – worksheet on local agencies.

Part 2

1. Homework reports
2. Poster making

Part 3

1. Brainstorm problems
2. Role play – making contact with an agency
3. Discussion.

Detailed Procedure

Part 1

1. Introduction

Young people have a **right to feel safe and secure**. If they are experiencing a problem they have the **right to ask for help and to keep on doing so** until they get the response they need. Today we are going to look at some of the problems with which young people may need help and some of the people to whom they can go for that help.

2. Handout 1 – present and discuss situation in small groups

Divide class into groups of four or five. Present Handout 1 – ‘I Just Don’t Know What To Do’.

In their groups students discuss the questions on the handout.

Groups then give feedback to the large group, based on the questions.

3. List helping agencies

In small groups list services/people/agencies of whom you’re aware who help people with problems. It may help if you think of anyone you know who ever got help with a problem from any person or service.

Groups report back to class and teacher lists all suggestions on flip chart or poster.

Present Handouts 2a and 2b – ‘Helping Agencies’.

4. Homework – worksheet on local agencies

For homework ask students to complete Handout 2c, filling in their local voluntary and statutory agencies.

Part 2 (Next Lesson)

1. Homework reports

Add the information collected by the students to the list started in the previous lesson

2. Poster making

Students make posters displaying this information in an attractive and eye-catching way.

This may be done in groups or pairs. Posters may be displayed throughout the school.

NOTE: If there is not enough time for this exercise, posters may be completed at home.

Part 3

1. Brainstorm problems

Get students to brainstorm problems about which young people might contact a professional helping agency. If they have difficulty, use those provided on the situations sheet.

2. Role play – making contact with an agency

Divide students into small groups and give each group a problem situation. Get each group to prepare a script for role playing the initial contact with the agency, and what follows.

Group presents role plays.

3. Discussion

After each group has presented the role play, put the following questions for discussion:

- *Why are people sometimes slow to ask for help?*
- *How did the person with the problem feel making the initial contact?*
- *Could the person have made it easier for her/himself? If so, how?*
- *Do you think this is a realistic role play with regard to how an agency would respond to a person with a problem?*

Mention the supportive approach used by helping agencies when dealing with people, e.g., they would welcome you, listen carefully and offer support and advice.

Raise the question

- *If you're not happy with the first response you get what would you do then?*

Emphasise the need to try someone else, not to give up.

Additional suggestion: Guest speakers from various agencies e.g., Al Anon., The Samaritans could address the group.



My mum has a drinking problem – this results in violence in our home.

Possible helpers: Al Anon, School Counsellor, Tutor, Chaplain



My pregnancy test is positive. I am terribly worried. My parents will kill me. What will I do?

Possible helpers: Cura, Well Woman Centre, School Counsellor, Doctor, Tutor.



A gang of boys is waiting for me every day after school. If I don't give them whatever money I have they say they will beat me up. They also slag me and make me feel a fool in public. No one wants to know me.

Possible helpers: Tutor, School Counsellor, Parent.



I had sex with a partner who had slept around. Could I have AIDS? I am afraid to go to my local doctor in case s/he tells my parents. What should I do?

Possible helpers: AIDS related agencies, another doctor.



I feel so overweight. I diet and diet but I still feel fat and ugly. Food makes me sick now. People are always hassling me to eat – they won't leave me alone. I feel totally depressed.

Possible helpers: Doctor, School Counsellor, St. Francis' Medical Centre, Cork, Dublin, Mullingar,



Galway.

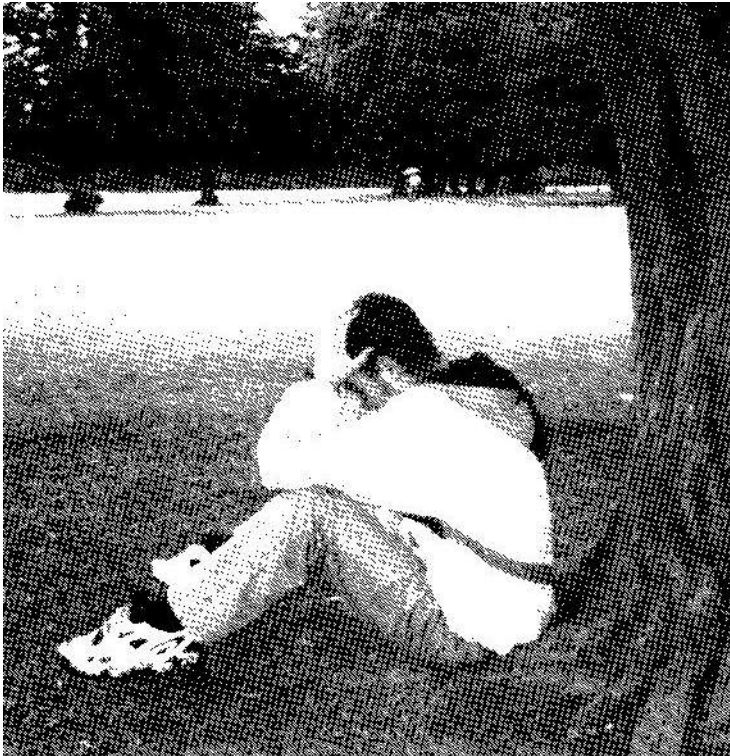
Recently I was suspended from school. Ever since that I haven't got on with my parents. It has got to the point that I don't talk to them at all. I ignore them totally. A few days ago it was my birthday and my mother didn't even give me a card or present. Since then I have felt like a failure. I have asked myself what is the use of being on earth. I could never commit suicide. It has not got to that but I feel like a failure. I don't know what to do. This morning my mother said that I should find somewhere else to live. I have confided in a friend but told him not to tell anyone.

Possible helpers: The Samaritans, Childline, School Counsellor, Tutor.

NOTE: The teacher should point out that the class might know of other possible helpers.



"I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO"



Imagine you are talking with this person and he has to make an important decision.

1. What might the problem be? Describe the kind of situations in which you might find your friends have difficulty in deciding what to do.
2. How would you help this boy choose what to do?
3. How might he react to a friend's suggestions?
4. What would you do to make it easy for him to decide on what is best?
5. Some problems cannot be solved. Can you think of examples?
6. Do you know of any agencies who help people with problems?



HELPING AGENCIES

ALCOHOL/DRUGS

Alcoholics Anonymous

109 South Circular Road, Dublin 8
(01) 453 8998

Alateen

5 Capel Street, Dublin 1
(01) 873 2699
Fax (01) 679 7818

Community Awareness of Drugs

30/31A Central Hotel Chambers
Dame Court, Dublin 2
(01) 679 2681

Garda Drug Squad

Harcourt Square, Harcourt Street
Dublin 2
(01) 475 5555/4781822

Nar Anon

(01) 874 8431

Al Anon

5 Capel Street, Dublin 1
(01) 873 2699

Adult Children of Alcoholics/Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families

Hanly Centre, The Mews
Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin
(01) 280 7269/280 9795

Drug Treatment Centre Board

Trinity Court, 30-31 Pearse Street
Dublin 2
(01) 677 1122

Narcotics Anonymous

P O Box 1368, Unit 107
Sheriff Street, Dublin 1
(01) 830 0944

Mater Dei Counselling Centre

Mater Dei Institute of Education
Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3
(01) 837 1892

AIDS HELP/INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL TELEPHONE SERVICES

Dublin (01) 872 4277

Cork (021) 966 844
(021) 276 676

Galway (091) 525 200

Limerick (061) 316 661

Donegal (074) 25500

Sligo (071) 70473

Waterford (051) 54149

(More detailed information on where you can get help is available in "AIDS The Facts", a leaflet published by the Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health)



HELPING AGENCIES

CRISIS LINES

Childline

20 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2
1800 – 66 6666 or (01) 679 4944

The Samaritans

112 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
(01) 872 7700

EATING DISORDERS

St. Camillus Unit

St. Vincent's Hospital, Elm Park
Merrion Road, Dublin 4
(01) 269 4533 Ext. 4577

St. Francis Medical Centre

10 Montpelier Terrace
The Crescent, Galway
(091) 65728

Overeaters Anonymous

Phone (01) 451 5138

St. Francis Medical Centre

Ballinderry, Mullingar
Co. Westmeath
(044) 41500

St. Francis Therapy Centre

42 Crumlin Road
Dublin 12
(01) 454 0559

St. Francis Medical Centre

1 Shankiel Park, Sundaywell
Cork
(021) 302 050

St. Francis Therapy Centre

42 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12
(01) 454 0559

PREGNANCY

Cura, Pregnancy Counselling

30 Sth Anne Street
Dublin 2
(01) 671 0598

Irish Family Planning Association

16-17 O'Connell Street
Dublin 1
(01) 878 0366

Some of the addresses above are National Headquarters. Local addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the telephone directory.



HELPING AGENCIES

Fill in the address and telephone number of your local helping agencies (statutory or voluntary)

Agency

Address

**Telephone
Number**

Alcohol/Drugs

AIDS

Crisis Lines

Eating Disorders

Pregnancy

Local Health Centre



CORE CONCEPT: *We have the right to refuse requests.*

SAYING "NO"

PURPOSE

To explore and practise ways of saying "No" when it is appropriate to do so.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

If students are poor at writing get them to work in pairs and help each other. Situations created by students in Step 1 should be kept as they may be useful for the next lesson 'Dealing with Persistence'.

Links with: Many situations in this section but especially **AC 2** 'My Personal Rights', **AC 12** 'Dealing with Persistence', **DM 9** 'Being offered a Lift', **DM 10** 'At the Party', **DM 13** 'Deciding about Alcohol', **INF 5** 'Peer Pressure'.

Materials

Blackboard or flipchart.

OHT – 'Saying No'

Situation cards – 'Saying No'.

Index cards.

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Students write situation cards

2. Teacher input
3. Role play
4. Teacher input
5. Role play
6. Demonstrate and feedback
7. Discussion

Detailed Procedure

1. Students write situation cards

Distribute index cards and ask students to write a brief description of a situation in which they wanted to say “No”. Collect the cards so that no one will see what has been written except you. Read out a number of the cards and ask students to identify some reasons why it is difficult to say “No” and discuss these. Use some of the concrete situations already highlighted to make it real for students.

2. Teacher input

There are times when we want to, or when we need to, say “No”. Refusing to do something you do not want to do helps you feel better about yourself and makes it easier for you in a similar situation again.

You have a right to say “No” when people ask you to do something illegal, dishonest, against your beliefs or when you simply do not want to do what is requested unless it is a responsibility or something you have already agreed to.

Many people find it difficult to say “No” for fear of hurting the other person or in case the person asking would think less of them. Saying “No” can be very difficult because you want people to like you and you want to be part of the group. Remember you do not have to do everything your friend does in order to say friends!

How you say “No” makes a difference.

3. Role play

Divide the class in two and pick a representative from each. Give *Person A* €1 and ask *Person B* to try to borrow the €1. *Person A* must be assertive and not lend the money – s/he must say “No” but follow the rules of assertiveness. Instruct *Person B* to use any method s/he can think of to try to get the money. Both may be prompted by their backing group.

Allow a number to try it and then reverse the roles.

Ask participants to describe how they felt

- When asking for the money.
- When refusing to lend the money.

Discuss,

- *What examples of assertive behaviour did you see?*
- *Would you go along to ask 'x' for a loan?*
- *Is it likely that the two would still be friends?*
- *What would have happened if Person A was aggressive or insulting?*
- *Did you discover any new ways of saying 'No'?*
- *What are some ways of saying 'No'?*

4. Teacher input

Outline some point to remember. Make an OHT of these. Points to remember when dealing with requests:

1. Learn to notice your immediate feeling when the request is made. This 'gut reaction' is a guide to what you really want to do.
2. If you are unsure, ask for more information and take time to think about it, or talk to others about it.
3. Refuse clearly and directly without apologising too much or without justifying yourself. You may wish to explain and, if this is so, you should do so, but don't let it deteriorate into apologising or excusing yourself excessively.
4. Remember you are simply refusing a request, not saying you don't like the person. They have a right to ask and you have a right to refuse.

5. Role play

Break the class into sub-groups and distribute sample situation cards or ask the group to devise an appropriate situation where a person wants to refuse the request. Role play the situation, focusing on doing it assertively.

In each group there should be actors and observers who will give feedback.

When they have role played the situation, allow time for feedback among members of the group before reassembling the class group.

6. Demonstrate and feedback

Ask for volunteers to role play their situation for the class. (If you have spotted a sub-group doing particularly well, encourage them to do it for the class. This is a chance for peer-modelling to work in your favour).

Following the role play, ask

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| the person being assertive | - How did you feel? |
| | - Were you effective? |
| | - What did you learn? |
| the other person(s) | - How did you feel? |
| | - What did the assertive person do well? |
| the class | - What was your reaction to what you saw? |
| | - Was the person assertive? |
| | - What did you notice that worked well? |

7. Discussion

- *Do you think you could refuse a request you do not want to go along with?*
- *If another person refuses a request, can you accept that?*
- *What is it like when another person does not accept your refusal or does not take it seriously?*

Discuss the implications of giving in to pressure. Include drug-related examples, e.g., using solvents just once is enough to kill you. Use Handout 3 from INF 8 on solvent abuse for further information.



AC Lesson 11
Saying "No"
Situation Cards

Your friend asks to borrow a new tape of yours and you do not want to lend it.

You are on your way to a shop at lunchtime to get crisps and your friend suggests that you both nick some bars of chocolate.

Your friends want to play a trick on a classmate. You do not want to be part of it.

You have moved into a new area and are at a soccer match with two new friends. One of them offers you a cigarette. The other friend takes one. When you hesitate, they start insisting that you take one.

You are babysitting with a friend and s/he suggests helping yourselves to some alcohol. You do not want to.

You are at a party and someone you fancy offers you some cannabis. You want to be 'cool' but you do not really want to start smoking dope.

You are with a group of friends. One has some gas and suggests trying it. The others are game but you know it can kill you. You do not want to try it even once.

Your friends want to copy your homework. You really don't want to lose their friendship but you think they should do their own homework.

You are in a boyfriend's house. His parents are away. He starts pressurising you to have sex. You don't want to, even though you really fancy him.



SAYING "NO"

- **NOTICE YOUR IMMEDIATE REACTION**
- **IF UNSURE, ASK FOR MORE**
 - **INFORMATION**
 - **TIME TO THINK**
- **REFUSE CLEARLY AND DIRECTLY**
- **EXPLAIN BRIEFLY IF YOU WISH**
- **REMEMBER**

YOU ARE REFUSING A REQUEST

NOT REJECTING THE PERSON

THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO ASK

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO SAY "NO"



CORE CONCEPT: *We have the right to refuse requests.*

DEALING WITH PERSISTENCE

PURPOSE

To prepare students for situations where people persist in putting pressure on them.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The steps in this are difficult for weaker students, but important nevertheless. Active direction of the role play with emphasis on assertive body language will help. Senior Cycle students will get more value out of their own situations.

Links with: AC 2 'My Personal Rights', AC 11 'Saying "No"', AC 13 'Accepting a "No"', INF 5 'Peer pressure', INF 6 'With Friends'.

Materials

OHT of 4 steps

Copies of sample situations

Copies of Handout 1, 'Gears'

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Role playing of sample situations

Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction

Sometimes people will not accept our refusal to do something and put pressure on us to get us to change our mind. We need to be able to deal with this as sometimes we give in and do something we do not want to do. This can make us feel bad about ourselves or resentful of the other person.

There are usually three things we do which complicate the situation:

- We accept their arguments and keep trying to think of better excuses for not wanting to do it – we begin to believe that our explanation really is not good enough
- We worry that the person we are refusing will stop liking us, think we are mean, and so on
- We worry that continuing to refuse will cause an ‘unpleasant scene’ – which would be ‘awful’.

Rather than get into arguments or long explanations (or giving in when you really do not want to do something), we suggest the following steps. As each one fails, you should move on to the next step, or ‘move up a gear’.

STEP 1 Just say “No”; giving your reason if you think it is appropriate.

STEP 2 Use an ‘understanding assertion’, e.g., ‘*I know you would really like me to... However...*’ Let it be seen, politely but firmly, that you mean what you say.

STEP 3 Drop the understanding and make a direct request that the person stop what they are doing – “*Will you please stop persisting?*” Add how you’re feeling if you wish.

STEP 4 State what you are going to do if they won’t give up.

2. Role playing of sample situations

Some coaching will be needed to help students get it right.

Example: being pressurised to drink.

To highlight the sequence of steps get students to role play situations that they have been in where increasing amounts of pressure were applied to force someone to change his/her mind. Sample situations are provided but situations drawn from their own experience can also be used. Active coaching by the teacher or other students should help students 'get it right'.

VARIATION

For weaker/younger groups, you may wish to use the idea of 'gears' in a car. You move up a gear as the situation develops. An OHP can be made from Handout 1 'Gears'.



'GEARS'

1ST GEAR

Pleasant and Polite



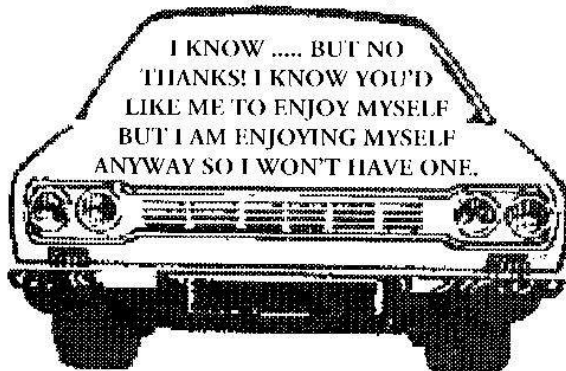
3RD GEAR

Use Your 'Teeth'



2ND GEAR

Still pleasant but getting firmer



4TH GEAR

State your bottom line





SAMPLE SITUATIONS

Situation 1

You've all been to a match. Your team won and you're in the pub. You don't drink and have said "No" but your friends are determined to persuade you. It's getting really boring and annoying.



Situation 2

You've been going out with John for a good while. One night you're in his house. His parents are away and you get into a heavy petting session. He wants you to go 'the whole way'. You've said "No" but he's really pressuring you – if you don't it's over. You're made about him but don't want to have sex.



Situation 3

You were going out with Paula/Mike but decided you didn't want a serious relationship and broke it off. You'd like to stay friends but s/he won't accept your decision. S/he just keeps phoning and giving you presents. You feel really guilty but you're quite clear about your decision.



Situation 4

You've recently been caught smoking cannabis and your parents killed you. You're at a concert and your friends offer you some. You don't want to look 'chicken' but you don't want to break your promise to your Mum and Dad.



CORE CONCEPT: *Assertiveness involves showing respect for the decisions and rights of others.*

ACCEPTING A "NO"

PURPOSE

To reinforce appreciation of a person's right to say "No".

To raise awareness of how we can manipulate or push others.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Links with: AC 2 'My Personal Rights', AC 3 'Responsible and Caring Assertiveness', AC 11 'Saying "No"', AC 12 'Dealing With Persistence'.

Materials

Situation cards.

Copies of Handout – 'My Goal', (see p.124) AC 8 for homework.

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction on need to respect others
2. Role play sample situations and discuss
3. Homework

Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction (adapt the following to suit your class)

If you really believe in human rights and in the responsibilities which go with being assertive, then you will listen to and respect the choices of others. You can use your personal power to help other people and not take advantage of them.

In particular, it is important to be able to accept a “No” from someone else. It is important to be able to make a request, since no one is a mind reader. Wanting is OK, and asking is more likely to get you what you want than just wishing for it. So let people know what you want, but do not always expect to get what you want. You can even repeat your request, ask for reasons why the answer is “No” and explain in more detail why you want it. In other words, you can try persuasion. But you must also respect the other person’s right and opinions even if you do not agree with them. If you do not, then you have no basis for expecting others to respect yours.

2. Role play sample situations and discuss

In each of the following situations the person saying “No” is under real or perceived pressure to give in. Hand out a situation card to each group of four and ask them to role play the situation for the group, twice –

- (a) in such a way that the “No” is not readily accepted
- (b) showing the “No” being accepted fairly readily.

Where there are only two or three characters, the others act as observers/coaches.

NOTE: In the situations where the “No” is not being accepted, you could ask another class member to shadow the persister, i.e., stand behind him/her and feed him/her lines which make the non-acceptance quite explicit. For example, “*I don’t care how you feel. I want things my way. I won’t listen to you!*”.

Then discuss questions under the following headings,

- *Has the person the ‘right’ to say “No”?*
- *Is he or she doing any harm to another person by saying “No”?*

- *What happens when the “No” is not accepted and the other character(s) persist?*
- *What happens when the “No” is readily accepted?*
- *How does the person under pressure feel if s/he sticks to his/her decision?*
- *How does the person under pressure feel if s/he does not stick to the decision?*
- *How do the people putting on the pressure feel?*
- *What message are you giving to a person when you do not accept a “No”?*
- *What message are you giving to a person when you do accept it?*

If there are unpleasant outcomes in either case, decide who is responsible for this.

3. Homework

Each time someone says “No” to you, take a moment to decide how you feel about that. Try to accept the “No” if you think the other person has the right to say “No”.

Every time you do this, give yourself a positive mark on your Goal Sheet.

VARIATION

Ask students to put themselves in the position of each persistent character in turn and from that point of view have them answer the questions:

How does it affect me if s/he says “No”?

What will I do about it?



ACCEPTING A "NO"

SITUATION

- Peter:** You are the leader of the gang. The others nearly always do what you suggest. You are out in the park and you suggest pooling your money to buy cider.
- John:** You like belonging to Peter's gang. Everyone looks up to him so you like to be included and you usually go along with everything he says. You would hate him to think you're chicken.
- Eamonn:** You like the gang though you wish they would think of something other than drinking. You have seen the effects of that in your house and you are determined not to go the same way. You would love to play football or go to a youth club instead of just hanging about but there is nowhere to go in this part of town. You do not want to drink.
- Tom:** You like Eamonn but get a kick out of drinking. It feels like a cool, adult thing to do and after you have had a few, you are not half as shy as usual. When Eamonn says he does not want to drink, you do not think he should be forced.



SITUATION

- Mary:** You have asked a friend several times to come over to stay the night but she always says "No". You are disappointed and beginning to wonder if she really likes you.
- Therese:** Mary keeps asking you to stay the night but you are a bit of a home-bird and you feel shy and uncomfortable with her parents. Anyway, you love your own bed so you say "No" yet again. You wish she would stop asking you because you do not want her to feel hurt.



SITUATION

- Patrick:** You want to borrow Paul's bike for a cycling trip on Saturday with the local club. You know he would love to go but he has to keep up his Saturday job to pay off what he owes on the bike. You have a bike you it is not as good as Paul's.
- Paul:** You saved hard for a year to get the bike and you still owe your big brother some money he lent you for it. You love your bike and take great care of it and you've made up your mind you are not lending it to anyone – not even Patrick, who is your best friend.

SITUATION

Sarah: You Mum and Dad have gone away for the night to a wedding and left your big brother in charge. He was supposed to say in but some friends of his called and he has gone out with them. He has made you promise not to tell your parents and he said he would let you try a joint if you promised not to. You phoned two friends and now you are all in the kitchen. You produce the joint and when Orla says “No”, you persist. After all, Jim (big brother) has been smoking dope for years and it hasn’t done him a bit of harm.

Yvonne: When Sarah rang and asked you around, you were delighted. You were feeling bored and your Mum was getting on to you about your hair. You are dying to try dope. All the ‘in-crowd’ at school are into it and you feel a real square – you usually pretend you have smoked it too, but you never did before.

Orla: You are quite friendly with Sarah and Yvonne. They are good fun and often do crazy things. You are not as sure of yourself as they seem to be. But when Sarah produces a joint, you don’t want to try it. You do not want to spoil the fun but you think starting to use drugs is stupid. There are lots of ways of having a good time without them. You wish Sarah would lay off. She is spoiling a nice night and if she does not stop, you are going home.

SITUATION



14 yr. Old You are 14. You have been invited to a party on Saturday night. Your mother says you cannot go. She knows there will be drink at it and she thinks you are just too young to handle the situation. You say you will not touch it but she will not change your mind.

Mother: You are prepared to let him/her go to parties, which are supervised, or where there is not drink served and which are over by midnight. You will let your children start having a shandy or a beer at home when they are 16, but not before.





CORE CONCEPT: Attitudes and feelings influence drug decisions.

POSITIVE SELF TALK

Research demonstrates that what a person says to him/herself (e.g. self-statements, images, self-evaluations, attributions) just before, during and after an incident, is an important determinant of how s/he will act. In one study where high and low assertive college students could say what they would do and could act assertively in a hypothetical 'safe' situation, it was found that when the same situation was changed slightly to increase the threat level, the low assertive students made a poorer performance. A questionnaire revealed that the low assertive students made more negative and fewer positive self-statements than did the high assertive students. It is therefore appropriate to focus on faulty internal dialogues in assertiveness training.

There are three steps:

1. Recognise the unhelpful self talk.
2. Substitute coping or self supporting self talk instead.
3. Practise in increasingly difficult situations.

PURPOSE

To help students become aware that what they say to themselves in a situation influences their behaviour in that situation.

To establish 'thinking out loud' as part of the role playing procedure in assertiveness situations.

To help students to substitute constructive self talk for unhelpful self talk.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This is suitable for more verbal students, though steps 1 to 3 and some role play would be very useful for weaker students. Adapt to suit your class.

Links with: AC 15 'Criticism' and later lessons reinforcing the positive in the **ID** section.

Materials

Copies of Handout 1

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Brainstorm
3. Handout 1 – ‘Self Talk’ – Small groups
4. Four uses for positive self talk. Teacher input and brainstorm
5. Role play and conclusion
6. Homework

Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction

Point out that we spend much of our time talking to ourselves, turning things over in our minds, fearing the worst. When we imagine the worst, especially when there is some logical or rational basis for doing this, we will call it –

‘CATASTROPHISING’

Of course if, in the past, something terrible has indeed happened in a similar situation, then it is sensible to plan ahead and try to avoid that happening again. However, we very often exaggerate things, jump to conclusions, forget our own strengths and put ourselves down.

2. Brainstorm

In groups of four ask the class to brainstorm some of the unhelpful things you might be saying to yourself before an exam in a subject you do not like. For example,

- I’m useless at this subject
- I’m definitely going to fail
- My father will kill me
- I’m never going to get the work done in time!

Tell the class that this kind of unhelpful self talk works against us. It makes us anxious, undermines our confidence, wastes our time as the same worrying thoughts go round and round in our heads and we get more and more anxious.

Now think of helpful or constructive things you could say to yourself before an exam. For example,

- I can cope with this. I've passed exams before
- I'll have to plan my study carefully since this is not my best subject
- I'll do my very best. If I fail, I fail. It isn't the end of the world!
- I'll ask the teacher (a friend, my Dad) for some extra help.

Take feedback and list constructive/helpful self talk on the black board. Make sure students understand the meaning of 'constructive' or helpful.

3. Handout 1 – 'Self Talk' – Small groups

Give each group a copy of Handout 1 – 'Self Talk' and ask them to look at the situations on the list. While groups may get through a number of situations, assign each group a different situation to start with to ensure there is feedback on each.

For each situation ask the students to come up with some helpful self talk and write these thoughts in the right-hand column.

Take feedback.

If they have difficulty coming up with positive alternatives, here are some possibilities:

- That was a bit of a let-down. I feel embarrassed and disappointed. Still, I know I have plenty of good points so it's not a disaster if everyone doesn't fancy me. There are plenty of others around. Better luck next time!*
- She's in bad form this evening. She's not really being fair, but she seems to be so tired all the time. I'll take no notice and she'll probably calm down. And she does have a point – I have to admit I don't really do my share most days.*
- I'll wear the thing I feel most comfortable in and I'm not going to worry about being trendy. I know what suits me. I'm sure I'll get asked to dance and if I don't, I'll just get up and dance with the girls.*
- I wish they'd waited for me. I'll ask them why they didn't and ask them if they're mad about anything, like the fags. I don't want to smoke, so I'm sure they'll understand if I explain that I don't think I should – just to suit them. If they don't, I'll just have to make some new friends. There are lots of people I can be friends with!*

- (v) *He's just looking for a fight. He doesn't even know my mother. He'd love me to get really angry but it's not going to work! I'll just ignore it.*

4. Four uses for positive self talk. Teacher input and brainstorm

Explain that there are four ways you can use helpful self talk to manage a stressful experience:

- Before it happens
- While it is happening
- When you are really feeling panicky or that you are not coping with it
- After it has happened.

Class brainstorm on asking someone for a date using the following questions:

'What can you tell yourself beforehand?'

- I've asked people for dates before and been accepted.
- You can't win every time.
- I'm a pleasant person, so s/he'll probably say 'Yes'.
- I'll take a deep breath just before I ask so that I'm relaxed.

'What can you tell yourself while you are asking?'

- Keep calm. S/he isn't a monster!
- I can handle this!

'What can you tell yourself when it does not seem to be going well?'

- Don't give up. Have another go.
- It isn't the end of the world if it doesn't work out.
- Keep breathing easily – getting nervous won't help.

'What can you tell yourself when it is all over?'

If it was successful

- Well done. That was really good!
- That worked! I'll try that way again

If it was unsuccessful

- Well, I did my best. Maybe we wouldn't have hit it off anyway
- I'd rather s/he said 'No' and didn't accept just because s/he was feeling sorry for me
- There's more than one fish in the sea!

Emphasise how important it is to reward yourself when the situation has gone well for you.

5. Role play and conclusion

If there is time, role play the above situation a couple of different ways and ask the person asking for the date to 'think aloud' all through the four stages. Ask the class to be ready to feed the person some helpful self-statements if s/he seems stuck.

To conclude:

It is useful to have a list of statements you can use in a variety of situations. We will try to become more aware of the 'catastrophising' we do in difficult situations and replace it with constructive self talk. You can change the way you feel by what you tell yourself. There is a lot of evidence, which shows that we can reduce stress and improve our performance by positive self talk.

6. Homework

Try to catch yourself out when you are talking to yourself in an unhelpful way during the coming week. Replace the unhelpful self talk with helpful statements. Each time you do this successfully; mark it on a goal sheet.

If you were unsuccessful, note down the occasion in your journal and write down helpful things you could say in similar situations in the future.



SELF TALK

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

- (i) Peter has just asked Julie for a date. She has turned him down. He says to himself, *“I’m so unattractive. My spots must have put her off. No one will ever go out with me as long as I have this acne. I’m never going to ask a girl out again”*.
- (ii) Mary has just done a great tidy-up round the house. She wants to surprise her mother who works very hard and has not been very well lately. Her mother comes in and says, *“Well, well! So our Mary has done her share at last! That’s what you should be doing all the time so I hope you’re going to keep it up.”* Mary says to herself *“That’s all the thanks you get round here when you make an effort. In future I’ll do exactly what I’m asked to do and not a stroke more.”*
- (iii) Joan is going to a disco. She has a lovely face and is a warm and friendly person, but she says to herself *“All the other girls are much more trendy. I hate all my clothes. I’ve nothing that really suits me. What’ll I do if no one asks me to dance?”*
- (iv) Pat’s friends have gone home from school without him. They usually walk home in a gang. He says, *“I wonder are they mad at me. Maybe they don’t like me anymore. It’s probably because I don’t chip in for fags.”*
- (v) Jim calls Michael’s mother a bad name. Michael says to himself *“How dare he call my mother names. I’m going to get him for that. He’ll never do that again.”*

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

- (i)
- (ii)
- (iii)
- (iv)
- (v)



CORE CONCEPT: *We can take charge of our feelings.*

CRITICISM

We have all been on the receiving end of criticism. Sometimes you may have felt that it was helpful; sometimes you may have felt that it was unfair, or that, even if it was justified, it was given in an aggressive or unhelpful way. Sometimes criticism is valid and accurate and given in a helpful way; other times it is factually incorrect, exaggerated or delivered as a put-down or personal attack. Criticism sometimes makes you feel like you are always wrong, always the one who causes the trouble, because people often exaggerate when they criticise. On the other hand, some criticism can be helpful. Useful criticism tells us things about ourselves that cause us not to get on as well as we should. It is easier to learn from it when it is given in a respectful and assertive manner. In the past we may have experienced criticism as a rejection – a parent may have withdrawn their love or approval from us when we did something ‘wrong’. The feeling that criticism equals rejection can stem from these early experiences, so when we hear criticism we imagine the worst – that the person does not like us any more and we can feel devastated or very small.

It would be easier to handle and learn from valid criticism if everyone gave it assertively, but as this is not what usually happens, it is important to be able to deal with it whatever way it is given. Even when given assertively, we can still feel bad if we do not accept that it is OK not to be perfect. Nobody is, and we all have faults. If we know, in our hearts, that there is something we need to change we can look at it and plan what action we need to take.

PURPOSE

To help students deal with criticism so that they learn from constructive criticism and do not feel put down or devastated.

To help students deal with invalid criticism and put-downs. To raise students awareness of areas in which they’re particularly sensitive to criticism.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As this is quite a difficult topic and a very important one, three or four sessions can be usefully devoted to it. All lessons which build self esteem and interpersonal skills will help the student to deal with criticism.

Links with: Many lessons but mainly those in **ID** and **FE** Sections.

Materials

- Session 1:** Copies of Handout 1 – ‘How I Handle Criticism’.
Copies of Handout 2 – ‘Homework Report’.
- Session 2:** Copies of Handout 3 – ‘Putdowns’ sheet for each group.
- Session 3:** Copies of Handout 4 – ‘I Feel Awful’.

PROCEDURE

Outline

Session 1: Valid and Invalid Criticism

1. Students list criticisms received and discuss
2. Students discuss their usual reactions
3. List how to cope
4. Role play
5. Homework

Session 2: Put-downs

1. Introduction
2. Worksheet on ‘Put-downs’
3. Discussion
4. Brainstorm how to handle put downs
5. Role play

Session 3: “Crumple Buttons”

1. Introduction
2. Read story and discuss

3. Small group discussion
4. List of coping strategies

Detailed Procedure

Session 1: Valid and Invalid Criticism

1. Students list criticisms received and discuss

Introduce the topic as in discussion at beginning, using your own words.

Ask students to make a list of five or six criticisms they have received about themselves on Handout 1 – ‘How I Handle Criticism’.

In small groups, have them discuss how they feel and what they do when criticised.

Take feedback and discuss briefly.

2. Students discuss their usual reactions

Then ask them to look at their list again and mark in the right hand side whether the criticism was valid/true, invalid/untrue or partly true. Ask them to fill in the bottom half of the worksheet and discuss in their small group.

How do they feel when they know it is just not true or that it is being greatly exaggerated?

How is it when it is true or partly true – when they know in their heart that there is some justification for it?

Can they think of criticism they found helpful?

- *How did they feel in these situations?*
- *What was it that made the criticism helpful?*
- *How was it given?*

3. List how to cope

Ask the students – ‘What could you do to help you cope when you are criticised?’

Ask the class for suggestions. If the following do not emerge, add them to the class list and put them on the blackboard.

- a) Listen carefully – you do not have to believe every statement made about you. You can choose to accept or reject criticism. Decide what to believe.
- b) Agree with it when it is true (“Yes, I did that”) and say what you are going to do about it. Do not put yourself down. Accept that you were wrong.
- c) Disagree when it is untrue, too general, or involves labelling you as a person (“No, I am not stupid”).
- d) Ask the person to stop if they are dumping their own anger on you or overloading you.
- e) Give yourself a compliment (“No, I’m not stupid. As a matter of fact I’m pretty good at many things”).
- f) Say nothing.
- g) Take time to think about it. (“I want to think about that and I will talk to you later about it”).
- h) Stay relaxed. (Do not rush to answer; breathe deeply).

4. Role play

Return to Handout 1 and ask students to make sure they have included three examples of valid or true criticism and three examples of invalid or untrue criticism.

Then role play handling criticism assertively. Role play examples of valid, invalid and partly valid criticism.

Point out that it is useful to think of criticism as something they can ‘chew over’. They can accept or ‘swallow’ what is useful and reject or ‘spit out’ what doesn’t fit.

Follow the usual procedures for giving feedback and for further practice. Be especially aware of the need to breathe properly and relax, as people find dealing with criticism very difficult.

5. Homework

Ask students to set themselves the goal of handling criticism well during the coming week and write a short homework report on how they managed. Ask them to report back on this at the beginning of the next session using Handout 2 ‘Homework Report’ to record their experience.

1. Introduction

A put-down is a kind of indirect criticism which is made in such a way that you sometimes cannot put your finger on exactly why you feel bad. If you challenged the person they might deny that they were putting you down or suggest that you are touchy or over sensitive. In a way, this is harder to deal with than straight criticism since the message is not out in the open.

2. Worksheet on 'Put-downs' – small groups and feedback

Distribute Handout 3 – 'Put-Downs' to students working in groups of three. Have them identify the kinds of put-downs illustrated. (Sarcasm, name-calling, putting ourselves down, negative comparisons).

Feed back briefly to large group. Note whether anyone mentioned ways in which we put ourselves down by having bad thoughts about ourselves.

In groups again, ask students to think of other examples of ways in which we put others/ourselves down. List on blackboard. (Insults, name-calling, sarcasm, not accepting compliments, ignoring, excluding people from our activities).

3. Discussion

How do you feel when you get put down?

How do you feel after you have put someone down?

Why do people put others down?

Why do we put ourselves down?

4. Brainstorm how to handle put downs

In small groups, brainstorm ways of handling put-downs in a positive way –

- *Walk away*
- *Give yourself a compliment/treat*
- *Do not believe it*
- *Tell the person how you feel*
- *Ask the person to be straight – 'What exactly are you saying?'*

5. Role play

Ask students to think of a time they were put down, how they felt and what they did.

Role play handling one or more of these situations assertively in the large group and follow the usual procedures for giving feedback and for further practice. If students are clear about how to handle it, further role plays can be done in the small groups.

Session 3: “Crumple Buttons”

1. Introduction

There are some areas of criticism which are much more difficult to handle than others and there are some we do not want to look at, at all. Everyone has vulnerable areas. It may be a reference to your appearance, general manner, background, accent or a specific word or phrase, e.g., stupid, bully, mean, fatty, etc., or it may be something about you which was constantly criticised in the past and it still ‘gets to you’.

Whatever it is, you will recognise it because you react so badly to it, so it is useful to make a note of your ‘crumple buttons’ for yourself and find ways to cope.

2. Read story and discuss

Read – or have students silently read Handout 4 – ‘I Feel Awful’.

Discuss:

- *How would you describe Mary?*
- *What caused Mary to feel bad?*
- *Why do you think she was particularly sensitive to this?*

3. Small group discussion

- *Have you ever been in a situation when you felt particularly bad about what someone said, or about being ignored?*
- *Describe what happened.*
- *If the same situation arose now, how would you cope?*

4. List of coping strategies

Taking each situation in turn helps other to list ‘coping’ strategies for such situations. Draw on all the skills you’ve learned.



HOW I HANDLE CRITICISM

Criticism I Have Received

Put in T if true

U if untrue

P if partly true

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What do I usually do and how do I feel when

(a) It's true? _____

(b) It's untrue? _____

(c) When it's given in a helpful manner? _____

What could I do to cope better?



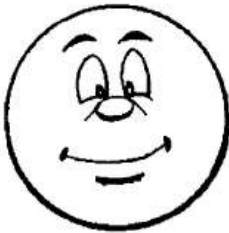
HOMework REPORT

Date:

Some criticism I got this week.

Where did it happen and who was involved.

How did I do in responding? (Circle the one most suitable)



WELL



NOT GREAT



BADLY

Why did I circle this?

Next time, I will ...



PUT-DOWNS



'Coke! You really are a baby!'



'I can't ask for lemonade. They are all drinking beer. What will they think?'



'You call that dressed up!'



'I'm no good at this.'



I FEEL AWFUL



Mary was a pleasant, attractive 14-year-old, so most of her friends thought. She did not see it that way. Her mother had very often told her that she was too fat, that her hair was not as nice as her sister's, that she could not wear green as it looked awful on her.

She was heavier than anyone else in the family, but some of the rest were only skin and bones, really.

The night of her first disco, she and Paula headed off together. She felt anxious and did not talk much as they walked there. They bumped into some other girls from their class who admired Paula's dress. They said nothing to Mary.

She could feel a lump in her throat and felt like crying. A voice inside her head was saying: 'I knew it! This dress is awful on me. I wish I wasn't going.'



CORE CONCEPT: *Conflict can be resolved constructively.*

RESOLVING CONFLICT

PURPOSE

To help students see that many of their problems are common to other members of the class.

To develop some skills for resolving conflict.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Confidentiality and trust are vital for this session. Students should be advised not to raise serious family problems here. If there are serious difficulties they should seek further help from a counsellor.

Links with: AC 3 'Responsible and Caring Assertiveness', ID 2 'Learning to Listen', FE 9 'Expressing your Feelings', FE 10 'Dealing with Anger'.

Materials

Flipchart with main points of 'Fair Fight Guidelines'

Copies of Handout 1 'Fair Fight Guidelines' for resolving conflict

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Brainstorm causes of conflict between parents and teenagers
3. Small group work on a situation
4. Introduce Fair Fight guidelines
5. Role play and feedback
6. Homework.

Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction

Possible input: In family rows, as in most things, there is a right way and a wrong way to proceed.

THE WRONG WAY

Destructive conflict. This is the 'gloves-off' variety, in which the people involved specialise in hurtful criticism, throwing accusations at each other; voices are raised or shouting begins; everything that has been annoying them is brought up and dumped all at once.

THE RIGHT WAY

Constructive conflict. This is where differences and disagreements, hurts and resentments are dealt with openly and fairly. The idea is to get things off your chest but to keep your opponent's character out of the argument. Have a specific issue and argue it through to a settlement without getting side-tracked by past history (of which there is always plenty!).

2. Brainstorm causes of conflict between parents and teenagers

Divide the class into small discussion groups and ask them to brainstorm things that cause conflict between parents and teenagers. Have groups report back and list them on the black board.

3. Small group work on a situation

Choose the conflicts most frequently listed and assign each group a conflict situation to discuss. They are to propose the best way of sorting it out, based on their experience in the past.

Groups report back to the class for further discussion.

4. Introduce Fair Fight guidelines

Then tell the class that you are now going to look at some guidelines which have been found useful in resolving conflict in a variety of situations.

The headings from Handout 1 'Fair Fight Guidelines' can be listed on the black board or flipchart and detailed copies distributed later.

Put a mark on any of the points which were already mentioned by the students.

5. Role play and feedback

Now get groups to role play their situation in front of the class, trying to follow the guidelines.

The rest of the class have to observe carefully whether all the guidelines were used, how successful they were in resolving the conflict, and give constructive feedback to the participants.

6. Homework

If students feel ready, they might attempt to clear up some issue with their parents using these guidelines before the next class. They might show the guidelines to their parents and discuss whether they would find it useful to use them.

NOTE: The story 'LATE DATE' from the Lifestyles video (see reference in School Handbook) would be particularly relevant in discussing teenager/parent conflict.



'FAIR FIGHT' GUIDELINES

1. **TIMING** is very important
 - If something is ongoing it is a good idea to suggest to the other person that you need to talk and agree a good time to do it. It is much easier to sort things out when both people are calm and not when the row starts.
 - Do not do it when people are tired, have drink taken or when others are around to take sides
 - Sort things out as soon as possible after they happen – immediately, if you think it is appropriate. Sometimes, however, it is better to wait, especially if the other person is angry, confused, drunk, upset, defensive and not inclined to listen.

2. **LISTEN** - this is the hardest part!

We frequently take a remark to mean something other than what the other person intended. Listen carefully, trying to be open to the criticism and if you are not sure what the other person is saying, check it out. Take a deep breath and say to yourself – ‘I can handle this. We will sort this one out!’ or something similar. Keep listening and let the other person know you’re listening by looking at them, checking out what they are saying, saying you understand. Try not to be defensive. When you say something, give the other person a chance to respond. Slow down the exchange.

4. **DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIOUR** and how it affects you – **DO NOT LABEL THE PERSON**

Example: Teenager says to mother: “You’re such a nag!” (Suggested alternative – “Mum when you start on about my room, I just switch off and get really annoyed. You do it very often”).

Mum says: “And you are the untidiest person I have ever seen”. (Suggested alternative – “John, when you leave your clothes all over the floor and coffee cups under your bed, I get annoyed. I often feel I’m taken for granted and I resent it. So I’m not prepared to pick your things up after you any longer”).

4. **CHECK THE MOTIVE** – “Is my intention to be helpful? Do I really want to improve things between us and not just get at the other person?” There needs to be some trust and caring between the people involved. It helps to say what you do appreciate or like as well as dealing with the present issue. Say why it is important for you that you sort out this problem between you. Check with the other person on how what you are saying is affecting them.

5. **MAKE A CLEAR REQUEST** – Say clearly what you would like the other person to do or stop doing. Of course, it must be something the person can do something about. There is no point in being annoyed that you are not allowed to go to the pictures if money is very tight and your parents are already worried about it.

6. **CHECK WITH EACH OTHER** at the end on whether you have reached an agreement and agree to discuss it again if either person is not happy.



CORE CONCEPT: *Assertive communication is vital in pressure situations.*

ASSERTION CARDS FOR DRUG-RELATED SITUATIONS

PURPOSE

To give students an opportunity to consolidate skills learned in different parts of the assertion training input, through role playing, modelling, observation and giving and receiving feedback.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

These 'review' cards can be used at any point in an assertiveness course. Make additional cards to suit your group.

Links with: All other AC lessons.

Materials

Situation cards

Index cards

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Role play
2. Feedback.

Detailed Procedure

Situations which the group members may find difficult to handle can be written on index cards. Ideally these should be derived from your experience with your particular students or should be

based on feedback from students in the group or in similar groups. However, you may want to bring up certain types of situations for practice (particularly drug related situations) so some ideas are supplied here. Some of the research suggests that younger students generally like to have ready-made situations supplied, whereas older students like to deal with their own real-life experiences.

1. Role play

A member of the group takes the top card and role plays the situation with the person sitting to his/her right. Both students should take a few moments to decide on their strategy in the situation. Before starting, the main character should decide on his/her goal in the situation and tell the group what that goal is.

Afterwards the group rates whether

- The person played the scene **REALISTICALLY** Yes/No
- Whether the assertion was **APPROPRIATE** for the situation Yes/No
- Whether the assertion helped to achieve your **GOAL** in the situation Yes/No
- Whether the verbal behaviour was **ASSERTIVE** yet natural Yes/No
- Whether the **BODY LANGUAGE** matched the verbal behaviour Yes/No

2. Feedback.

A simple vote provides a quick and handy way of giving feedback. You can also follow the general feedback guidelines used elsewhere.

Members who voted 'No' are asked to demonstrate more assertive ways of handling the situation.

The teacher may intervene with suggestions or a demonstration in the early stages of the training, or if obvious points are being missed by the group.



SMOKING

You are in the non-smoking compartment of a train. Someone comes in, sits down and immediately lights up...

(Making a request/saying 'Thank you')

You are in a crowded restaurant and the person beside you lights a cigarette...

(Making a request/saying 'Thank you')

You are on the way home from school with some friends. They want to buy fags between them but are short 20p. You have 30p but you had planned to buy some chocolate and anyway, you do not smoke, though sometimes you feel you are the odd one out...

(Saying "No")

You are in a café downtown with some friends and a fellow/girl you fancy comes in and joins you. You do not smoke but when s/he offers you a cigarette, you do not want to appear dull...

(Saying "No")

You have already asked some people in a non-smoking compartment of a train to stop smoking, but they just kept on. You chose this compartment because you have contact lenses and smoke irritates your eyes...

(Escalating assertion)

You smoke, even though you know you should not. You are in a group where someone starts making fun of a friend of yours who does not smoke and does not want to start. You decide to stand up for your friend...

(Giving support/listening to a "No")

SOLVENTS

You have been in trouble at home and at school lately and you are really fed up. A friend tells you s/he knows something that will make you forget your troubles. You know s/he is part of a crowd who sniff and while you are a bit afraid of it, you decide to go along anyway. Someone produces plastic bags and glue and you suddenly realise you do not want to, but someone has put the bag in your hand...

(Saying "No")

You used to sniff glue but you came to your senses and you have stopped. Now you see your old friends trying to get another young person to join in. You decide to back her/him when s/he says s/he does not want to...

(Giving support/listening to a “No”)

You have just moved to a new house and hardly know anyone, so when a classmate invites you to his/her house after school, you are delighted. When you get there s/he produces some Tippex thinner and says his/her parents will not be home till 6.30 and you have plenty of time to try it. You do not want to lose their friendship but you have heard of people dying from sniffing solvents and you decide to say “No”. However, s/he keeps on at you and starts calling you ‘chicken’.

(Saying “No”/ dealing with persistence)

ALCOHOL

You are staying the night with a friend who suggests robbing some booze from the drinks cupboard. You have never tried it before and you are curious, but his/her parents were uneasy about going out and you both insisted you could be trusted to be left alone. You do not want to be sneaky so you decide to persuade your friend not to...

(Persuading)

You are at a party where everyone seems to be drinking a lot. You have had a couple of lagers but you want to stop at that. A friend who has had ‘one too many’ gets nasty and aggressive...

(Dealing with an aggressive person)

You are at a family wedding and your father said you could have one drink to toast the happy couple. You agree to just having one but now your uncle is pouring you another without asking you. You say “I’m not allowed to have any more” but he just laughs and keeps on pouring...

(Saying “No” or just not drinking it)

You are on a school camping trip and on the Saturday night all the teachers but one go down to the pub. Some of your friends have clubbed together to buy cider and you chipped in so as not to be a spoilsport. They argue that teachers are hypocrites and are getting drunk themselves so why should they tell students how to behave. You agree with that, but, at the same time, you would rather not drink. They pass you the bottle...

(Saying “No”)

You are on a school camping trip and when a secret drinking session starts, one of the crowd does not want to drink. The others start teasing him/her and you decide to stand up for the person’s right to say “No”. They then start on you...

(Standing up for your point of view/supporting someone/listening to a “No”)



GUIDELINES FOR HELPFUL FEEDBACK

One of the important values of using a group format for assertiveness training and, indeed, for the development of any interpersonal skills is the diversity of views available for providing feedback to participants on the effectiveness of their behaviour. Nevertheless, many group members find it difficult to give good feedback. It is valuable to spend some time training a group in how members can be most helpful to each other. If they master this, it means that you can let them work more frequently in small groups and thus give more people more opportunities to practise.

Feedback is intended to be helpful. It is most helpful if the following guidelines are observed. They should be discussed in the group and displayed on a wallchart during role playing sessions.

Focus on the **BEHAVIOUR** – not on the person; give observations rather than judgements.

BE SPECIFIC. Describe specific verbal and non-verbal behaviour in detail, e.g., ‘You spoke very clearly and firmly’ or ‘Your voice was low and wobbly and gave the impression that you were nervous’.

BE CLEAR about what you want to say. Write down points (both positive and critical) during role plays as it is easy to forget them.

START with the **POSITIVE.** One of the most effective ways to improve behaviour is to reinforce the positive. Most people need encouragement, so it can really boost confidence to hear the positive first.

SELECT PRIORITY AREAS, especially if there is a lot of negative feedback to be given.

OFFER SUGGESTIONS. Avoid telling ‘how I would do it’. If you have any ideas on how the person can be more effective, offer these as *suggestions* and let the person take them or leave them, choosing what fits for them in the situation.

Always start by getting the role players to give feedback to themselves. This emphasises the importance of self-assessment, self-validation and the skill of reviewing one’s own effectiveness in situations. Then ask others for feedback.



STEPS IN BEING ASSERTIVE

1. Be clear about what you want in the situation.
2. Decide whether to say it or not. Is the time and place right? Is it in your interest, e.g., you may feel you are right but if it is going to get you thrown out of school, or if the other person is very angry and may hit you, it may be better to leave it alone.
3. Give yourself a positive message, e.g., tell yourself it is OK to feel this way or remind yourself of your rights in the situation.
4. If you're anxious, tell yourself to relax and take a full, deep breath.
5. Say what you want to say and be honest, clear and direct.
6. State your reason briefly if you think that would help – offer an explanation for your position or say how you're feeling.
7. Take account of the other person's position or feelings – remember the other person is entitled to be treated with respect even if you have to be very firm with them.
8. Remember to match 'body language' to what you're saying verbally, i.e., speak with a strong, confident tone of voice; look at the person directly; relax your body.
9. Review the situation – how did you do? Tell yourself 'Well done' if you handled it well.

An abbreviated version of the above list might be comprised of points 1,2,5 and 8.



BODY LANGUAGE

Speaking out firmly and clearly is only half the message. It has to be backed up by the right BODY LANGUAGE. You may get the words right, but

CANCEL, CONTRADICT OR CONFUSE

the message because your facial expression, tone of voice or body posture show uncertainty, self doubt or hostility. The key is to FEEL ASSERTIVE, to be convinced of your rights, your opinion, etc. and then your body expression is more likely to come right. However, we do have patterns we may have to unlearn, bad habits we have developed. One of the real values of doing assertiveness training in a group setting is that we can get feedback from other group members about how we come across to them. So it is very important that feedback is handled well in the group. With this feedback, we can begin to use our body language to convey what we really wish to convey.

POSTURE

Hold yourself tall and straight.
Relax
Walk confidently – head held high.
Balance yourself – sitting squarely can communicate confidence.
Show you are listening by facing someone when they are talking.
Don't slouch, shuffle or turn away.

EYE CONTACT

Eyes convey more than anything else. Don't avoid eye contact but don't stare either. A direct yet relaxed gaze conveys self assurance. If you want to show someone you are listening, you show this by looking at them as they are talking.

MOUTH AND JAW

Relax your mouth – a clenched jaw or chin jutting up slightly can communicate aggression – so can a tight-lipped face.
Don't smile apologetically to 'soften the blow'.
Remember to take a deep breath.

VOICE

Sometimes when you are very anxious your voice sounds high. This can happen when you first begin to be assertive. Breathing and relaxation help to get the tone of voice right. It is important to speak slowly and in a firm, moderately loud voice. Don't whine or use sarcasm.



Adapt as necessary

GOAL

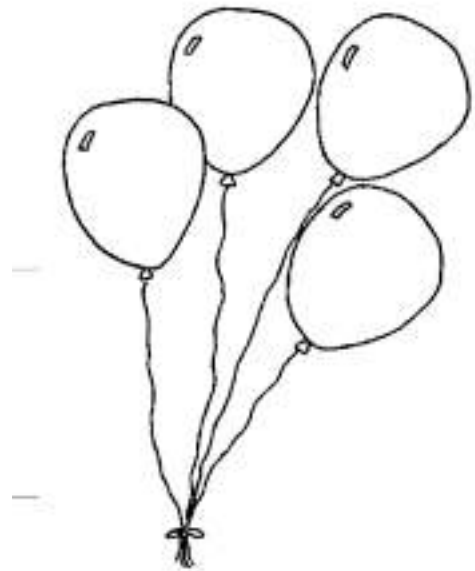
My goal is to practise

Name of person to whom I want to say it

What I want to say

When I want to say it

How did I do?



Colour in a balloon each time you use the skill of giving a compliment assertively.