

Assertiveness

It is perhaps best understood by comparing it with two other response styles (passivity and aggression). Assertive pharmacist who is takes active role in patient care. There are three types style of respond:

A. Passive behavior:

This respond is designed to avoid conflict at all cost. Passive or non-assertive person will not say what they really think out of fear that others may not agree. Passive individuals "hide" from people and wait for others to initiate conversation.

B. Aggressive behavior:

Aggressive people seek to "win" in conflict situations by domination or intimidating others. Aggressive person promote their own interests or points of view but are indifferent or hostile to the feeling, thoughts, or needs of other. Often aggressive seems to work as other back down in order to avoid prolonging or escalating the conflict. Because behavior may have beneficial effects in the short term, individual may be reluctant to give up aggressive strategies. Often people who turn to aggression to reach their goals have a distorted view such that they constantly perceive themselves to be in threatening situation, to be under personal attack, or plagued by others trying to thwart their efforts. Such individuals are easily angered and have a low tolerance for frustration.

Note: many aspects of our culture (media, TV, movies, politicians) reinforce the notion that the way you get your way is to use aggressive behavior.

C. Assertive behavior:

It is the direct expression of ideas, opinions, and desires. The intent of assertive behavior is to communicate in an atmosphere of trust. Conflicts that arise are faced and solutions of mutual accord are sought. A critical factor in being assertive is the ability to act in ways that are consistent with the standards we have for our own behavior. Our goals in communication are defined in terms of what we want others to do rather than what we will do. For example, we might say that we want physician to appreciate the role of the pharmacist in patient care. Redefining this goal would have us focus on what specific things we can do to improve our working relationship with physicians.

A number of skills are needed for assertive communication:

1. Initiating and maintaining conversations.
2. Encouraging assertive in others
3. Responding appropriately to criticism.
4. Giving negative feedback acceptably.
5. Expressing appreciation or pleasure.
6. Making requests.
7. Setting limits or refusing requests.
8. Conveying confidence both verbally and non-verbally.
9. Expressing opinions and feeling appropriately.

How can you distinguish assertive pharmacists from passive ones?

Some pharmacists seem to hide behind the counter, give prescriptions to clerks to hand to patients, and generally avoid interaction with patients unless asked specific question. In this way, passive pharmacists are able

to avoid the potential conflicts inherent in dealing with people and are able to hide their own feelings of insecurity and fears about being incompetent. While a passive approach may arise out of a feeling of time pressure, passive pharmacists make no attempt to find alternative ways of providing better patient care, such as giving patients well-developed medication leaflets and calling them during slower hours to discuss key points and assess problems. Instead, passive pharmacists deal with things as they come and take the path of least resistance in providing minimal levels of pharmacy service. Assertive pharmacists come out from behind counters, introduce themselves to patients, provide information on medication, and assess the patient's use of medications and problems with therapy.

Theoretical foundations:

Cognitive theories hold that people respond passively or aggressively because they have irrational beliefs that interfere with assertiveness. These beliefs involve:

1. Fear of rejection or anger from others and need for approval.
2. Over-concern for needs and rights of others.
3. Belief that problems with assertiveness are due to unalterable personality characteristics and are, therefore, unchangeable.
4. Perfectionist standards.

Assertiveness techniques:

1. Providing feedback: when you choose to convey negative feedback to others, use techniques to make the communication less threatening. Criteria for useful feedback include:

- A. Feedback focuses on a person's behavior rather than personality. By focusing on behavior, you are directing the feedback to something the individual can change.
- B. Feedback is descriptive rather than evaluative. Describing what was said or done is less threatening than judging why you assume it was done.
- C. Feedback focuses on your own reactions rather than the other persons intentions. Assigning "blame" or assuming malevolent intent behind the behavior is not part of constructive feedback.
- D. Feedback uses "I" statement that take the form "when you [do or say], I feel."
- E. Feedback is specific rather than general.
- F. Feedback focuses on problem solving.
- G. Feedback is provided in a private setting.

At same time, you need to invite feedback from others in order to improve our interpersonal communication skills.

2. Setting limits:

Being assertive in setting limits means that you take responsibility for the decisions you make on how to spend personal resources without feeling resentful toward other for making requests. Being assertive in setting limits does not mean that you stop saying "yes" to requests. You will no doubt continue to help others even though doing so may be an inconvenience, because of the value system you hold and your desire to help others when they need help.

3. Making requests:

Asking for what you want from others in direct manner is also necessary in healthy relationships.

4. Being persistent:

When you have set limits or said "No" people will try to coax you into changing your mind. If you continue to repeat your decision calmly, you can be assertive without becoming aggressive and without giving in.

5. Reframing:

Frames are cognitive shortcuts that people use to help make sense of complex information. Reframing techniques include:

- A. Focus on developing effective communication around a set of limited objectives.
- B. Examine the potential validity of other person's perspectives.
- C. Establish a common ground. Search for areas of agreement and focus on desired outcomes with a long-term perspective
- D. Identify opportunities to explore solutions not yet pursued and opportunities for "trade-offs" or compromises.
- E. Finally, identify difference that cannot be bridged and at the same time explore conflict reduction actions that can still be taken.

6. Ignoring provocation:

Interpersonal conflict may elicit several of trying to "win" by attempting humiliate or intimidate others.

7. Respond to criticism :

It is particularly devastating because we typically hold two common irrational beliefs:

- a. We must be loved or approved of virtually everyone we know.
- b. We must be completely competent in everything we do and never make mistakes.

Fogging:

It involves acknowledging the truth or possible truths in what people tell you about yourself while ignoring completely any judgments they might have implied by what they said. Fogging as a basic assertive response to criticism.

Suggested questions:

- 1- Define Fogging.**
- 2- Enumerate Assertiveness techniques.**
- 3- Enumerate Reframing techniques.**
- 4- What are Criteria for useful feedback?**
- 5- Enumerate the skills needed for assertive communication.**