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Express Yourself (Without Turning Others Off)

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

Capacity–Building Skills for Public Officials

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EXPRESS YOURSELF

(Without turning
others off!)

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Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State
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Dedication

This series of bulletins is dedicated to Professor Christopher Sower, who started me on my way by making so much sense about organizations. Without his tutelage I would have neither the knowledge nor the position by which to develop these publications.



**CAPACITY-BUILDING SKILLS
FOR
PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

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Objectives of this bulletin:

1. To present information to aid in understanding confidence and means to develop this characteristic.
2. To develop knowledge of basic personality styles, their characteristics and uses.
3. To present the Assertive style as a model of useful behavior.
4. To reinforce the confidence of participants through increased understanding of their personality strengths.

While the focus of these bulletins is the public official, the material covered is appropriate for all Extension audiences.

Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. Understanding and Developing Confidence	1
III. The "A-B-C Theory" of Behavior	5
IV. Analyzing Behavior Styles	6
V. The Assertive Style Delineated	12
VI. Messages and Their Meanings	13
VII. Necessary Behavior Skills	15
VIII. How Do We Change?	17
IX. Summary	21
For Further Reading In This Area	22
 APPENDICES	
A-1 Who Am I? Strengths and Weaknesses	23
A-2 Self-Image Notes	24
B Effects of Behavior Styles	26
C The Dominating Secretary	27
D Behavior Styles Practice	28

I. Introduction

“I just sat there and let the others take over! I was too afraid that I would sound like I was trying to dominate the board, and so I didn’t add anything.”

Does this sound familiar? Too often public officials don’t try to express themselves because they don’t quite know how. This happens particularly when a controversial subject is under discussion. Public officials often are not confident about how to tread that fine line between disagreeing and appearing disagreeable. As a result, they sit in frustrated silence, which is beneficial neither to them, to their fellow officials nor to their constituents. Public officials recognize a primary obligation to their communities to do their best to make a difference in the quality of local government. Being comfortable in expressing themselves so that others understand them is a part of that primary obligation.

II. Understanding and Developing Confidence

To develop an appropriate competence in easy self-expression, you need to understand the concept of confidence. Confidence is an expression of self-evaluation. Whether that evaluation is positive or negative will be manifested through the extent of confidence experienced by the individual. Confidence, then, is a matter of self-perceptions that you may or may not be aware you hold. Confidence, or the lack of it, is shown externally by the way you carry yourself, by your posture and by your ease of eye contact with others. If you feel confident, you can interact with others with reasonable comfort, face new people and new situations, and engage in some risk-taking behavior from time to time, such as confronting difficult people, expressing opinions contrary to those of the majority, etc. It could be

said that confidence is the ability to “look the world in the eye.”

Obviously the local policy maker needs to have a well developed personal sense of confidence to be effective in the community. With some objective self-analysis, you may discover that certain negative self-concepts may have been limiting your sense of self-worth. Such negative self-perceptions often do not stand the test of rational self-analysis and honest comparison with others around us. Such perceptions may well be emotional “excess baggage” carried, unnecessarily, from earlier experiences and not valid now. A realistic appraisal of who you are NOW can reorient possibly outmoded ideas of self and give a fresh view of your ability to meet life with a real sense of your capabilities. Only then can you as a local official truly take a valued and respected place in serving the local community.

In attempting to develop confidence, it is helpful to focus on personality strengths rather than on weaknesses and/or past failures. Too often people continually recall past experiences in which they were not as capable as they wished to be. From these they make comparisons with others they observe, invariably to their own detriment. In this instance, it is important to recognize that each person knows only what “shows” in another person. Some people are able to cover their inadequacies better than others. To seem to be confident does not reveal what a person may be struggling with internally. Thus, each person must ascertain his/her own desire to succeed in developing confidence and the possible rewards for success, and then proceed with a conscious awareness of the strengths he/she possesses that can be used in the attempt. Being willing to take the risk of trying new behaviors

or eliminating old patterns of reaction can be the beginning of healthy changes toward increased confidence. Though you may not be willing to risk arguing a point with the chairperson of the board, you may risk volunteering to serve on a new committee. Often it is easier to begin to take risks toward making change in the security of our home environment, rather than in the public setting. As confidence develops, it is easier to take behavioral risks in public. This is the beginning of developing confidence.

Reaching out in small steps to try new experiences is helpful. Success builds on success. If you fail from time to time, it is easy to start over from a small attempt. Momentary failure or frustration is often a part of the learning process. To fail at a particular attempt to reach out in new or different ways doesn't mean you're "a failure"—failing now and then means you're human! Everyone needs to reserve the right to fail sometimes and then to try again. As an elected official, you cannot expect never to make mistakes, always to be ready for every human situation that comes along. With diligent work, with continued self-analysis and with the courage to keep trying, however, you can develop self-confidence to a comfortable level and utilize your inherent capabilities.

Another scenario, quite different from the one referred to in the introduction to this bulletin, can sometimes be observed in the local governmental setting. A typical instance was voiced recently by a city official in reference to council meetings. "Our meetings go pretty well until our planner gets crossways of someone—which happens too often! Then he acts like he's the mayor, only worse. He tells everybody what they should think and why they are stupid to think what they do. He is so overbearing it's disgusting!"

Clearly, that city planner doesn't lack confidence—or does he? On the surface he certainly has more than enough, and that may actually be true. Some people have confidence to the point of selfish egotism. They tend to be people who are insensitive to the feelings and needs of others. Often, they fail to realize how others react to them. Such people may honestly feel they are correct in their views and are simply expressing them, unaware of others' negative reactions. Unfortunately, it is not unusual for a group such as a local governmental board or council to reinforce such behavior by allowing such people to dominate and bully others. Once such a reputation for devastating behavior is established, others who are less than assertive may make no attempts to show that this is unacceptable behavior. Thus the perpetrator has no reason to try to behave more considerately or reasonably.

The group can indicate disapproval of this behavior without totally alienating the aggressive person. The group can refuse to accept the behavior by questioning the source of the information, by assertively standing up to the individual and, if necessary, by clearly stating that the group cannot tolerate domination or disparagement of any of its members. These actions will have to be taken repeatedly to be finally recognized by the generally insensitive, aggressive person. It may be such a severe problem that the leader may need to speak to the disturbing person privately, and straightforwardly tell him/her that such negative behavior is not appropriate in working with peers and limits the effectiveness of the group. If this doesn't cause behavioral change, in extreme cases the group may need to impose certain sanctions in the meetings themselves, such as time limitations on speakers or ejection of the disturbing person from the meeting. Usually it is not necessary to use such an extreme

measure as this, but the leader must put the welfare of the whole group and/or its constituents before the ego needs of any one person.

Often, a seemingly aggressive, “overconfident” person is actually compensating for insufficient confidence. Such people hold negative self-concepts but cover them with aggressive behavior. “If I make enough noise, maybe they won’t notice” Sadly, this tactic often works so well that there is no necessity for facing the inner uncertainties and working to develop a more positive self-image. An effective way to deal with a person who may be covering by blustering is to challenge his/her thinking while also giving him/her such reinforcement of his/her worth as can honestly be given. Insecurity is the problem here, so if the person is helped to see inner strengths while challenged on the reasons for aggressively stated opinions, it may serve to help give him/her a clearer, more positive self-view.

III. The “A-B-C Theory” of Behavior

If lack of confidence is a problem, one way to develop new, positive behavior is through Albert Ellis’ “A-B-C Theory” of behavior. Ellis, an eminent psychotherapist and author, writes that many people fail to develop new, growth-oriented behavior because they constantly tell themselves negative “inner sentences.” At Point “A”: you are asked to do something and you feel you lack the confidence to do it (example: chair a committee, give a report, etc.). At Point “B”: as soon as you are asked, you use a negative inner sentence, such as “I can’t,” “I would fail,” “I would be too nervous,” “I can’t talk well in public.” At Point “C”: your resultant behavior is to decline, or to accept with a surety of failure. It looks this way:

A	B	C
Demand	Inner	Resulting
on	Sentence	Behavior
Self	(+ or -)	

If the inner sentence could be positive, or at least modified from a definite negative, you then have the possibility of daring to try something new. For instance, the immediate inner sentence could be, “I guess I could try,” or “Maybe I could do it.” Then the door is open to change, to growth: to learning that one can grow. When the inner sentence is a flat-out negative, growth or development is impossible. Developing an awareness of the direction of the inner sentence used can be a helpful first step in developing more assurance in interacting with others in the public setting. Continued practice can result in a habit of using positive inner sentences, with the resulting ability to face new situations and to grow from these experiences.¹

IV. Analyzing Behavior Styles

As confidence develops, you as a public official must learn effective ways to communicate with others. Observations of people in group settings frequently show four types of behavioral styles. Some are positive and effective, some are not. Most of us tend to use two or three, to varying extents, in daily interactions. One of these styles, or ways of dealing with others, is more effective in a majority of situations than the others. It is based on quiet confidence, the ability to stand up for your beliefs and respect for others. A common name for this style, which allows the individual to be expressive without being offensive, is the Assertive style.

¹Refer to Appendix A-1, page 23, “Who Am I?” and A-2, page 24, “Self Image Notes.”

Before examining the Assertive style in greater detail, look at the basic characteristics of all four of these most common styles of behavior.

1. Passive Style

You may have times when you are just not interested in what is going on around you, and you don't care to take an active role. At other times, you may know that others are more knowledgeable or skilled in a particular area and so you choose a passive role. In these situations, a passive role is probably a healthy choice. The passive role becomes negative when you choose it habitually, regardless of your potential. Then it reinforces insecurities and negative self-concepts that hinder development. Use of risk-taking behavior is important to overcome negative uses of passive behaviors. Several types of passive people are seen: people who choose to be passive at particular times; people who have few opinions of their own; people who do not believe in their own opinions. Passive people tend to have these characteristics:

- little self-approval.
- need for direction and/or support from others.
- submissive or compliant attitude.
- a need to please those they perceive as having power.
- "agreeable" demeanor so they don't offend anyone.
- indifference to the immediate situation.

2. Aggressive Style

Though aggressive behavior sometimes has a selfish motivation, you may find yourself acting aggressive by the force with which you express your

opinions or proceed toward certain goals. As long as you do not exclude other people or their interests, this is not a negative use of aggression. When a person behaves aggressively without regard for possible value to be gained from others, or respect for associates, aggressive behavior is then limiting and negative. Four types of aggressive people are seen: those who have strong opinions and back them up with their actions; people who knowingly dominate others and enjoy it; those whose selfish single-mindedness results in domination; those who over-compensate for their insecurities by domineering behaviors. Aggressive people:

- are goal-oriented.
- need or enjoy power and control.
- are poor listeners.
- are action-oriented.
- have a hard-driving nature.
- can be ruthless and manipulating.
- are closed to views other than their own.
- are insensitive to another's needs or feelings.
- are self-focused.

3. Martyr Style

Generally, the Martyr style is a negative example of behavior. Martyrs tend to manipulate others, rather than straightforwardly asking for what they want. They often use pessimism or guilt to get others to do as they want. It is important to examine your behavior to see if you are using others in this negative fashion. There are times, however, when you may "martyr" yourself knowingly, by risking your reputation, public image or even your job for a cause you believe in, or a controversial individual you feel you must support. You use such behavior

knowing there is a risk and you are still willing to do it. The negative aspects of the martyr style do not pertain to these risks of choices beyond personal security. Clearly then, three types of martyrs may be observed: those who hold pessimistic and gloomy attitudes; those who martyr purposefully to produce guilt in others, and those who knowingly espouse a risk-producing cause or situation.

The general characteristics of martyrs are these:

- negative in life-view.
- pessimistic.
- closed to new ideas or to others' ideas.
- self-defensive.
- willing to engage in self-sacrifice.
- blameful.
- prone to use the past to predict the future in negative ways.
- guilt-producing.
- highly manipulative.

4. Assertive Style

This is ideally the most well-rounded person. The Assertive style is presented as a model of behavior. Self-analysis may show you times you can be quietly confident and assertive, and other times when you use one of the other three styles more than this one. This is to be expected and nothing to worry about! A goal may be to be more aware of the degree of worth of the other styles in particular situations. To learn to question your choice of behavior, ask, "Would greater use of the Assertive style cause me to be more effective in this situation?" As awareness of choice of style and its worth increases, it becomes easier to make the choice that will lead

you to the most effective use of style. Using assertive behavior may be risky at times, so it is helpful to be especially well prepared before entering a situation where you will attempt to be assertive. This helps overcome any insecurities you may feel. The characteristics of assertive people are:

- a positive life view.
- self-confidence.
- respect for others.
- an understanding and empathetic nature.
- flexibility in dealing with others.
- strong commitment to whatever is undertaken.
- acceptance of responsibility.
- open-mindedness.

Though it is always difficult to be objective about yourself, it is worth the effort to try to do so. The following continuums, if marked as objectively as possible, can give some insight into your personal style. Please review the characteristics listed and mark an “x” where you find yourself in your typical daily interactions. (Place your mark anywhere along the line that is appropriate to your self-assessment.)

1. *Passive Style*

0		10
Seldom, if ever	Sometimes; Moderately	Very often; Usually

2. *Aggressive Style*

0		10
Seldom, if ever	Sometimes; Moderately	Very often; Usually

3. *Martyr Style*

0		10
Seldom, if ever	Sometimes; Moderately	Very often; Usually

4. *Assertive Style*

0		10
Seldom, if ever	Sometimes; Moderately	Very often; Usually

When you're finished with the style ratings, it can be very helpful to discuss your ratings with others with whom you work, reacting to such questions as:

- Am I content with my ordinary style?
- Is my usual style effective with others?
- Do others seem to see me as I see myself? Do they react to me as I expect?
- What might be some reasons that I use styles that may not be the most effective in my interactions with others?
- Would I like to become more assertive?²
- What behaviors would I need to change, or to learn, to become more assertive?
- Do I dare risk trying new behaviors? In what situations could I try? Is it easier at particular times? If so, what are those situations? How can I extend those times?

²Refer to Appendix B, page 26, "Effects of Behavior Styles."

V. The Assertive Style Delineated

The term “Assertive,” is sometimes misused in describing Aggressive behavior. A major difference is that Assertive persons are respectful of others. Aggressive people move directly toward their objective, and sometimes give little consideration for the thoughts, knowledge, feelings or beliefs of others. Assertive people, by contrast, have confidence in the validity of their objectives, but are willing to show respect for others as they move toward their objectives.

When you are trying to speak up, as described in a common scenario in the introduction to this bulletin, it is necessary to test your motivation for wanting to be more involved in the group. If you are attempting to express honest belief but are willing to listen to the beliefs of others, this illustrates assertive behavior. If, on the other hand, you express or imply that there are few beliefs worth hearing, different from yours, that tends to be aggressive behavior. Having an open mind is typical of assertive people. Aggressive people may or may not be open to input from others. All elected officials have both a right and an obligation to express themselves whenever they have something to say. How they do it, however, is crucial. Beliefs that are expressed assertively are usually acceptable to others. When you use aggressive, dominating behavior and attempt to influence others in an unfair manner, however, your behavior is seldom respected.

People will tolerate inappropriate behavior for some time, but sooner or later the individual loses all credibility with others and is made to know it. Fellow officials cease to try to communicate with the person who they expect to act aggressively and rudely, and they increasingly exclude him/her from informal interactions. Other people’s trust of the domineering person

becomes eroded, and disgruntled citizens may finally protest openly against his/her domineering, disparaging behavior. Indulging in hostile, aggressive behavior in the public setting may win the battle at the moment, but it surely loses the war in the long run.

VI. Messages and Their Meanings

Assertive behavior is often expressed in “I” messages, rather than “You” messages. Examples are: “I didn’t understand what you meant,” rather than, “You didn’t say that clearly.” Or, “I don’t agree with your position,” rather than, “You’re all wrong to think what you do.” Or, “I would appreciate a chance to express my views now,” rather than, “You’ve talked enough—it’s my turn!” The “I” message is not egotistical or selfish—it is a direct, honest, non-judgmental, non-threatening statement. As the examples illustrate, however, the “You” message is dominating, disrespectful, judgmental and very threatening. The assertive “I” message expresses an honest feeling, opinion or belief, without causing hostility. The receiver of such a message can take it or leave it, so to speak. It doesn’t demand a response, as does the judgmental “You” message. That kind of message clearly gives receivers two choices: they can meet it passively, submitting to the aggressor, or they can accept the inherent threat and “come out fighting.” When hostility is met with hostility, a conflict immediately develops. Then no one wins—neither the organization, the combatants nor anyone else present.

To better understand the assertive “I” message, as opposed to the aggressive “You” message, practice turning the following (negative) “You” messages into (positive) “I” messages:

- “You don’t know what you’re talking about!”
- “You make me mad!”
- “You shouldn’t do that!”
- “You don’t have a right to talk now!”³

When you have turned these “You” messages into honest, direct, non-threatening “I” messages, take some “You” messages commonly heard in public meetings and practice turning those into “I” messages. Notice that all the “You” message examples have hostile implications. They are disrespectful of the receiver and do, indeed, demand a response, either submission or reactive hostility. Public officials who can behave assertively, and honestly state their own position without resorting to manipulation of others are both wise and courageous. These people will find a high degree of acceptance in group interactions.

The “I” message and the “You” message are at opposite ends of a behavioral continuum. Between those extremes, there is often a legitimate place for a “We” message. A “We” message can be effectively used: 1) to show inclusion of others, as, “We need to work together on this problem”; 2) to express commonly held beliefs or opinions, such as “We believe this course of action is the way to proceed”; 3) as a conciliatory message, as, “I’m sorry we disagree on this; let’s see if we can work it out together.” The dangers of the “We” message are: 1) that the user may be assuming the “We” without valid evidence or support, thus misrepresenting others for whom it purports to speak; and 2) it can be used in a patronizing manner. (Everyone knows all the stories of the “We” messages in hospital

³Refer to page 21 for examples of these “You” messages turned into “I” messages.

care, such as “Are we ready to eat our breakfast?”) Patronizing anyone indicates a basic lack of respect for the individual.

At this point, then, we have learned that to speak up in a positive, acceptable manner, officials need to:

- Assess their sense of confidence, reinforcing it, if necessary.
- Practice using positive inner sentences.
- Use assertive behavior.
- Use “I” and “We” messages.⁴

VII. Necessary Behavior Skills

To be effective with others, you can learn certain helpful behavioral skills. One important skill is listening. Real listening isn’t practiced as much as a passive sort of hearing. In its best sense, listening implies:

- paying close attention to a speaker.
- being willing to hear whatever is said, without selecting out parts of it.
- attempting to keep an open mind.
- asking for clarification when you don’t understand.

Some people are very adept at hearing only what they want to hear. Either they don’t really attend to the speaker, or they filter out ideas that may be new or different because they feel threatened by the unknown. This latter process is called “selective listening.” Using selective listening, people hear only what they already thought they would hear, or only what they care to hear. In attempting to become a more valuable, assertive

⁴Refer to Appendix C, page 27, “The Dominating Secretary.”

board member, such behavior is self-defeating. Selective listeners never hear anything new and never test their own knowledge or beliefs. Ultimately, they never show respect for the others with whom they associate. Real listening shows flexibility, willingness to hear another's view and a basic respect for others.

Another behavior important to public officials is the ability to empathize. Empathy implies:

- attempting to see as another sees.
- trying to understand another's thinking.
- putting oneself in another's place.
- accepting that others' value systems have credibility.

Empathy is sometimes used as a synonym for sympathy. Sympathy, however, is feeling sorry for another, while empathy is a feeling of identity with another's feelings or thinking.

A third behavioral skill to learn is persuasion. Persuasion implies:

- convincing another to accept your logic.
- showing others reasons to accept the soundness of your thinking.
- convincing others of the feasibility of your attitudes, beliefs or values.

Persuasion implies assertiveness, rather than aggressiveness, as you attempt to convince, rather than use force of personality, or your position, to gain particular goals.

Another skill to learn is confronting. Confronting implies:

- looking directly at an opposing person without threat.
- squarely facing issues representing opposing views.
- openly "clearing the air" between people.

Confrontation, if used assertively, can successfully clarify problems or issues in a positive manner. When the consequences of not solving a problem between people seem more threatening than the idea of the confrontation, then confrontation may be worth the risk. If there is significant hostility present, however, the risks of increasing it may be too great to attempt confrontation.

VIII. How Do We Change?

In trying to learn to express yourself in positive and non-threatening ways, you need to realize that old habits are hard to break. If you have been using passive, martyring or aggressive behavior in their negative aspects, change requires:

- an earnest desire to change.
- the will to learn new ways.
- definitions of personal rewards from change.

Needs, Rights and Obligations

As you sincerely attempt to be increasingly effective by learning to express yourself well, it is helpful to think of some basic personality needs, rights and obligations. Needs and rights are legitimate demands of the self. Unless the search for development and fulfillment of these needs, rights and demands is accompanied by recognition and acceptance of certain obligations to others, however, you can easily slip into aggressive rather than assertive behaviors. Assertive behavior includes a confident expectation of normal self-development, but aggressive behavior too often assumes self-fulfillment no matter the cost. To be more specific, as local policy makers try to do their jobs well, to be effective with fellow board or

council members and with the public, they need to consider the following needs, rights and obligations:

1. Needs

a. *Belief in self*

This includes the acceptance of self as having intrinsic worth as well as particular abilities, talents, skills and the potential to develop such qualities. It is important to see yourself as having characteristics that cause—or can be developed to cause—others to see you as an interesting and valuable person. A sense of self-worth can free you to be able to share experiences, ideas or knowledge with others, to their benefit and your own. It can also enable you to recognize your particular lacks and feel comfortable in asking others for their help when you need to. To admit a lack is threatening only to the person who has limited self-belief and self-acceptance.

b. *Honest self-expression*

People cannot justifiably cast blame on others for using, abusing or ignoring them if they never state their feelings or beliefs in a clear and honest way. Often those close to them, particularly, are expected to be mind readers and “see through” word games or other verbal subterfuges. Others may not hear what they want to hear, or expect to hear, when honest opinions are expressed. However, this is the only way to begin a real communication. (Diplomacy is important to use in this context—a little tact goes a long way!)

c. *Desire for self-fulfillment*

Unless each individual has a real need to assert her/himself and to develop innate potential, self-fulfillment probably won't happen. No one can be pushed into self-development. Circumstances may set the stage and show you advantages in such development—such as possibly improved personal

relationships, better job opportunities, etc. But actually changing your behavior will come only through your inner determination to do so.

Another basic need that must be acknowledged is the need to ascertain particular human rights, and then to confidently stand up for those rights.⁵

2. Rights

- a. The right to expect respect as a human being.
- b. The right to have our ideas heard.
- c. The right to have feelings and opinions and to express them.
- d. The right to behave as we feel is proper for us.
- e. The right to object to others' actions concerning us.
- f. The right to say "No" to excess demands and not feel guilty about it.
- g. The right to fail at our efforts at times.
- h. The right to make mistakes.
- i. The right to say "I don't know" and to ask for help.

Assertion of such basic human rights must include the concomitant acceptance of certain obligations to others, also.

3. Obligations

- a. The obligation to treat others with respect.
- b. The obligation to keep our word to others.
- c. The obligation to try not to hurt others.
- d. The obligation to be sensitive to others' self-development needs.
- e. The obligation not to take advantage of others.
- f. The obligation to be responsible for the results of our actions.

⁵Refer to Appendix D, page 28, "Behavior Styles Practice."

As you think of the material given above, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I understand the difference between “aggression” and “assertion,” as presented above? (Review earlier pages, if necessary.)
2. Am I perceived negatively as aggressive or positively as assertive by those close to me?
3. Am I perceived as passive to a negative extent?
4. Am I perceived as a pessimistic martyr or martyr/manipulator?
5. If I don't like either my self-image or my perceived image in others' eyes, do I have the motivation to try to change?
6. Do I honestly and confidently believe in my right to self-development and self-assertion? (You may not be so confident about how to accomplish it, but you certainly can be confident about the right and the need for the development of self.)
7. As I try to learn and practice new behaviors, will I be able to realize that my changing may be threatening to those close to me and be able to reassure them by use of compromise, or bending, behaviors when necessary? (Remember: change upsets the status quo, and that in itself can be seen as a threat to others. This increases the risk as we try to change.)
8. As I recognize my needs and assert my rights, am I willing to fulfill my obligations to those around me, as well as to myself?

IX. Summary

You can learn to express yourself without turning others off by following these guidelines:

1. Review your accepted images of yourself, which provide your sense of confidence.
2. Be willing to risk some new behavior that will challenge those concepts.
3. Use the “A-B-C Theory” and positive inner sentences.
4. Analyze your behavior style and practice learning behaviors that will be more acceptable and thereby more effective.
5. Practice using the confident, respectful Assertive style.
6. Develop the ability to use direct, honest “I” messages.
7. Become skilled in
 - a. listening
 - b. empathy
 - c. persuasion
 - d. confrontation
8. Learn to understand and to stand up for your needs, rights and obligations.
9. Believe in yourself—respect others!

“I” messages derived from the “You” messages given on page 13:

- “I believe there is more information that would aid you in this area.”
- “I feel angry because of your behavior (or remarks).”
- “I really prefer that you not do that.”
- “I would appreciate it if you would hold your remarks until later.”

For Further Reading In This Area

A New Guide to Rational Living. Albert Ellis, Wilshire Book Co.

Communications in Community Groups, No. 36-7. The NCR Series on Community Development and Human Relations. Robinson & Clifford, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

How to Overcome Your Fears. M.P. Leahy, Wilshire Book Co.

Guide to Developing Your Potential. Herbert A. Otto, Wilshire Book Co.

Personality Development. Lucy Rau Ferguson. Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.

You and Me—The Skills of Communicating and Relating to Others. Gerard Egan, Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.

Your Thoughts Can Change Your Life. Donald Curtis, Wilshire Book Co.

APPENDICES

Appendix A-1

WHO AM I? STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Using about five minutes, list your weaknesses and your strengths below. Keep thinking and writing all the time. Do not joke about them or in any way discuss them with others. Be as honest as you can with both positive and negative qualities. (A few words or brief phrases will be adequate.) Write all you are able in the time allotted.

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

Which column was longer? What does this say to you?

SELF-IMAGE NOTES

For the next five minutes, think about yourself. You have a self-concept—a sort of mental image of yourself that you carry in your mind's eye. Think about it and write a few notes about it. Think of such things as:

1. The image you have of you, as a person.
2. The image you think others have of you (how you affect others).

Perhaps the following questions will help you describe yourself: (Don't try to answer all these questions individually, but use them as a guide in thinking of your effect on others, as well as your own sense of self.)

1. What kind of personality do you have? Is it very different in different settings—at home, at work—with peers, with friends? How?
2. What do you think you offer to friends and fellow officials as a person?
3. How do others react to your personality? How do your friends see you? Your fellow officials? Your constituents?
4. What are areas of personality you would like to develop?
5. What type of image do you project in relation to success in your job or professional life?

Now sum up what you feel is your self-image and describe it below:

In the space below, write down ways you could improve your self-image.

EFFECTS OF BEHAVIOR STYLES

BEHAVIOR

INTERACTIONS	AGGRESSIVE	MARTYR	PASSIVE	ASSERTIVE
Attitude toward others	I'm OK You're not OK	I'm not OK You're not OK	You're OK I'm not OK	I'm OK You're OK
Attitude toward spouse	He/she must do as I say	He/she never does what I say	I must do what he/she wants	I consider his/her opinion. We do it together.
Contribution to partnership	A driving force; may dictate	A basic hindrance	Highly agreeable, but a follower	Mutual responsibility and action
Approach to children	Strict discipline	Inconsistent; sends guilt messages	Smothering or clinging love	Understanding. Discipline fair but firm
Attitude toward work	Highly motivated to get results	Lets it be known how hard he/she works	Willing to help but seldom initiates	Deep involvement
Approach to problems	Ignores; tries to make them appear trivial	Passes the buck or blames other party for problem	Talks about them; does little	Explores, weighs, reaches conclusions
Communication	Talks but does not listen	Talks today, deep silence tomorrow. Manipulates through guilt	Chatters and agrees; wants others' approval	Listens and questions; then speaks tactfully but honestly

THE DOMINATING SECRETARY

Anna, a secretary of our planning commission seems to consider herself in charge of everybody who works in the office. Although she has never been appointed “in charge” of the other secretary, Anna plays that role with her, which causes some problems. The greater problem, however, is that she tells the professional staff when they will be able to get their work typed, what is appropriate to do and how it should be done. In a small office, in a small community where everyone knows each other well, it is frustrating and embarrassing. The former chairperson of the commission would not deal with this problem. Now we have a new chairperson who is an effective communicator. We hope she will handle the problem of the dominating secretary.

Questions:

1. What behavior style is Anna using?
2. What behavior style did the former chairperson use?
3. How might the new chairperson use “I” and “We” messages to work out the problems with Anna?

BEHAVIOR STYLES PRACTICE

After reading through the concepts presented in this text, practicing them is the next important step in learning to use them daily. With real effort, they can become a part of the daily behavior, a part of what is called “personality.”

Study each of the following problems, as though you were actually experiencing them. Concentrate particularly on understanding assertive behavior and recognizing the negative effects of aggressive, passive and martyring behaviors. Public officials who can use assertive behavior will significantly increase their effectiveness with the public and their acceptability by other officials.

Problem A

You have just taken office as the new city clerk and are trying to understand what you have to do in your new job. When you find certain details to be confusing, you go to the former clerk and ask for help in clarification. You are met with, “Well, you should be smart enough to figure this out just like I had to!” said in a very snippy manner, designed to make you feel like a fool.

1. What would your real feelings be at this point?
2. How would you act following this response? What does this tell you about yourself?
3. Would your sense of confidence carry you through this “put-down”?

4. If you were to respond with passive behavior, what specific things might you say or do?
5. If you were to respond with martyr behavior, what specific things might you say or do?
6. If you were to respond with aggressive behavior, what specific things might you say or do?
7. How could you use assertive behavior to respond to this situation? (Give specific examples again.)
8. Which style has the best chance of a positive result? Why?

Problem B

You are the township supervisor and are presiding at a board meeting. Most of the citizens attending are there to protest the placement in their neighborhood of an adult foster care group home. You also question the wisdom of this particular siting but feel the people should recognize that local government has no real control over the decision. You keep trying to explain this, but get drowned out by the clamor of the irate citizens. Finally, one person, who is known to be bad tempered, stands up and shouts out, "If you can't represent us better than that, we'd better recall you!"

1. What would your real feelings be at this point?
2. How would you act? Would you engage in a hostile or defensive shouting match? Or would you be intimidated by the person?
3. Would your sense of confidence carry you through this attack?
4. Develop some "I" messages you could use to respond to this negative behavior. (Remember, they are direct expressions of feelings, designed to bring about better understanding.)
5. How could you use listening, persuasion, empathy or confrontation to help this situation?

Problem C

You are an elected official attending the annual MTA convention. During a discussion of allocation of road funds, some members from the big urban townships are complaining loudly about unfair allocations in their townships. When people from your part of the state try to be heard about their problems, the others just ignore them, saying, "You people up there in those rural townships don't know what problems are!"

You feel this is rude, unfair and also incorrect. You know certain facts that would prove that some northern townships have been treated more unfairly than the ones who are complaining. You would like to be able to tell them so!

1. What would your feelings be about the rude behavior you've just experienced? Would you let them keep belittling the problems of your friends and you? Would you be able to speak up, assertively, and tell them the statistics you know?
2. How would you really act, in this situation?
3. Review the assertive behavior principles. How do your needs, rights and obligations apply to this situation? (Be specific.)
4. How could you use "I" or "We" messages in response to the attack described above?
5. What are possible ways in which listening, empathy, persuasion or confrontation could be employed to turn around this situation?

Problem D

You are a new commissioner. The chairperson of the commission just asked you to fill in for him in representing the county in an important court hearing. You have never been in this position before and are petrified at the idea. You tell him you couldn't do it. The chairperson just doesn't understand such a response and is very upset with you.

1. What would your feelings be at this time? Would you feel humiliated? Would you feel frustrated? Would you want to change your response?
2. How does Ellis' A-B-C Theory apply here?
3. What positive inner sentence might you have used to change your response?
4. Would you have enough confidence to dare to go into a new situation, even though you feel insecure?
5. Would you dare take the risks required to accept this new role?



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