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# SESSION 5

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## **Objectives:**

- To identify assertive, passive and aggressive behavior.
- To practice responding in a variety of ways to specific situations.
- To understand personal responsibility, consequences and choices.
- To begin to apply the skills learned to date to prevention of interpersonal violence and abuse.
- To use visualization to further enhance these skills.

## **Outline:**

- Assertiveness

## **Split Session Option**

- Responsibility and Consequences
- Introduction of Prevention Skills

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## **Updating**

**Did any of you communicate differently with people this week?**

**What happened?**

**Did any of you feel afraid to speak up about something you were feeling?**

**What other feelings did you have?**

**This week we're going to talk about how feelings affect communication and some ways to be more clear in what you communicate.**

**Also we're going to talk about what to do when people don't listen and respect what you're saying.**

## **Assertiveness**

**Who knows what it means to be assertive?**

**Assertiveness is a behavior, a way of communicating.**

**When a person is assertive, s/he is directly communicating feelings, needs, or opinions without threatening or trying to manipulate another person.**

**By definition assertive behavior is appropriate.**

**The ability to be assertive is not something that we are born with. It is something we learn to do.**

Learning to communicate assertively means you behave with respect for yourself and others.

In order to be assertive, you have to practice.

### Flip chart 18

#### Types of Behavior:

- ✓ Assertive
- ✓ Aggressive
- ✓ Passive
- ✓ Passive-aggressive
- ✓ Covert

It is important to recognize the differences in all of these types of behavior.

*Aggressive* behavior or communication is without regard for the feelings or needs of others. It is self-centered.

*Passive* behavior is often without regard for the feelings or needs of yourself. It is also a way of putting the responsibility for what happens to your life in the hands of someone else.

*Passive-aggressive* behavior is expressed by angry people. It is a way of being passive to cover up your anger. It is very frustrating to be with passive-aggressive people because they don't act outwardly angry, but they don't help get things done and often find ways to stop everyone else too.

With groups grades 1 — 3 (and some older groups) it is preferable to limit the discussion to assertive, aggressive and passive behavior. The concept of passive-aggressive and indirect or covert behavior may be too complex or simply too many options. The first three are sufficient for children to see which direction their behavior is going.

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**Covert behavior includes roundabout tactics, like crying in the hope another person will take pity and give in; playing games such as, "I'll only love you if you let me have my own way;" pouting or being whiney.**

**Assertive behavior takes care of your needs without hurting someone else. It respects everyone involved.**

**It is important to know which way you are acting because then you have choice. You can keep behaving that way or you can choose to behave another way.**

## **Exercise**

Present the following situations and ask the group to decide whether the response is assertive, aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive or covert.

**Situation: Your friend asks you to come over to make pizza and you have a test you need to study for. Your response is:**

1. "Well, if you really want me to."
2. "Don't you know I have a test? You never think about anybody but yourself."
3. You grudgingly go to your friend's house, but you let the pizza burn when your friend has to leave the room.
4. "I'd really love to, but I need to do well on this test. Maybe we could do it another night this week."

5. Go over but sit with a long face and your arms crossed in front of you, refusing to participate.

**Situation:** Your mother wants you to take your sister with you to your dance class because she can't find a sitter.

**Your response is:**

1. Agree to take her, but tease her and treat her rudely all the way there and back home.
2. Whine, "You don't love me as much as you love her."
3. You explain, "I don't think I can watch her and be in the class. Could we see if the neighbor could watch her for awhile and I'll come straight home from dance."
4. You say, "That's not my job, I'd rather not go than be stuck with her."
5. You say, "Okay, I didn't want to dance today anyway. I'll just stay home."

**Situation:** Your teacher mistakenly calls your name when the person next to you was the one throwing paper wads.

**You:**

1. Tell her to wake up. The kid next to you did it.
2. Go and tell her after class that you want her to know it wasn't you. That she mistakenly thought it was you but that the person next to you had thrown it.
3. Put your head down and cry.

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4. Bow your head and say nothing.
  5. Don't say anything, but sneak back in the room later and write something mean on the blackboard.

**Situation:** You're staying overnight with a friend. Her parents go out and tell you not to worry, they'll be back soon. You feel uneasy and want to call your parents. You:

1. Refuse to talk the rest of the evening.
2. Feel worried, but decide they'll be back soon and you're too much of a worrier anyway.
3. Stay, but break something in their house on purpose.
4. Tell them that it's irresponsible to leave you alone and you demand that they drop you at home before they go anywhere.
5. Tell them that you're not allowed to stay alone at anyone's house and that you'd like to call and clear it with your parents before they leave.

**Situation:** Several friends are shoplifting at the convenience store. They dare you to join them. You say:

1. "I don't think that's something I want to do, I'll see you later."
2. "Well, if you're sure we won't get caught."
3. "You're all just stupid. I hope you get caught!"

4. "Go along with the group, but when they get caught, blame it all on them, saying they 'made' you do it."

**Can you think of some situations from your life when you acted in one of these ways but you see another way you could act now?**

**Since practicing is an important part of learning any new skill, we're going to practice asking for what we want in an assertive way.**

**I want each of you to think of something you would like to ask for in an assertive way. For example, "I feel tired. I would like to stand up and stretch." or "I can't think of anything. Could you give me some help?"**

**How did it feel to do that? Did any of you feel nervous or uncomfortable or afraid? Remember the things we've learned already about getting ready to communicate:**

### **Flip chart 19**

#### **REMEMBER:**

- ✓ get yourself centered;
- ✓ breathe;
- ✓ make eye contact;
- ✓ talk in a normal voice; and
- ✓ be honest and direct.

**While it's okay to ask for what you want, that doesn't mean you will always get it.**

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Many of us are afraid to ask for what we want because we are afraid of hearing the word "no." We take it personally. We think that when someone says no to our request, they have said no to us as a person.

Saying "no" is a right each of us has. And if it is our right, it is also a right other people have.

It is okay to say "no" if someone asks you to do something you think is wrong or that your parents would think is wrong.

It is okay to say no to things that feel wrong, that your instinct tells you shouldn't do. There are times that saying "no" will keep you safe.

- What if a friend says, "Let's take this shortcut through the woods."
- What if a friend wants to pick flowers from someone's yard on the way to school. What would you say passively, aggressively, or assertively?
- What if a friend suggests you buy a snack for her because she doesn't have any money, but you're saving up for something. What would you say passively, aggressively, or assertively?
- What if someone makes fun of you for not going along with the group? What would you say?

Discuss the importance of being responsible for what you say and how you say it. For example, if they say "no" when asked by a parent to go to bed. What happens?



**Think of some situations in which you ask for something assertively and deal with the consequences assertively?**

For example, you say, "I'm doing a report in school on giraffes and I'd really like to finish watching this special." Mom or dad say "no." Your response could be, "Could we tape it then and I'll finish watching it after school tomorrow?" This way you've worked out a compromise.

**Earlier we said that one of the reasons people don't like to ask for what they need is because they don't like to hear the word "no."**

**Well, another reason is because people are sometimes afraid that they are putting the relationship at risk, that the other person may not like or love them anymore.**

### **Flip chart 20**

- ✓ **More relationships are ruined by what is NOT said than by what IS said.**

source unknown

**Not letting people know how you feel is the biggest problem in most relationships.**

**Remember when we said, "There's more to what you say than what you say." Those feelings and thoughts that you hold on to begin to show in your tone of voice and body and face, even when you think you're hiding them.**

**So it is important to speak up.**

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**Some kids live in situations where the grownups want them to be passive all the time.**

**At the same time, many grownups want to hear what you have to say if you are appropriate in how you say it and if you pay attention to things like when you say it and who else is around.**

**Assertive communication is one way to be heard, understood and to have a better chance of having your wishes or needs met.**

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This is an extremely powerful and empowering exercise! It is at the heart of prevention of child abuse and of breaking down blind obedience to adults, which makes many young people vulnerable. Begin with group members who have a particularly strong ego or self-esteem, so you are sure they won't fall apart. Participation in this exercise gives group members the experience of standing up for themselves successfully.

## **Confrontation Exercise**

**Out of the blue admonish one of the children for doing something they didn't do. Wait for the reaction. Most children will silently do what they are told.**

For example: "Marvin, I've told you to listen and you haven't, now go to the corner and take a timeout."

"Sally, you know you're not allowed to wear your coat in this room, now you'll have to stay 15 minutes late."

"Tina, you simply haven't participated enough in this group so we're going to ask you not to come anymore."

Ask if they deserve what you have done. Ask how they might respond assertively to let you know you've made a mistake. Do this example with all or most of the children.

Allow them to coach each other as is appropriate. Talk about assertive, aggressive, passive and passive-aggressive responses.

In each case, they should resolve this by an assertive response, setting straight the injustice, in a clear voice with good eye contact.

Really emphasize the fact that they don't have to do what they are told when it is unjust simply because they are children.

## **Split Session Option**

If the session will be conducted in two parts, go to Selfwork # 1.

## **Reentry for Split Session**

What experiences did you have with being assertive since the last session?

What did you notice about your own style of communicating?

## **Responsibility and Consequences**

Who can tell me what responsibility means?

Being responsible for something means you make a choice and accept that the choice was yours.

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**Being responsible means accepting consequences.**

**What are consequences, what does that mean?**

**Consequences are what happens as a result of an action or inaction, something that follows.**

**The way you communicate and behave with people has definite consequences.**

Discuss the idea that making choices to communicate in one manner as opposed to another doesn't mean one choice is better than another. For example, what if a kid was hitting you or harassing you and you felt that speaking to them assertively might make things worse. You might choose to be passive, but to get away from that person. Then you could tell someone else.

**Everyone is passive sometimes. What are some consequences of being too passive?**

It could mean that you almost never get what you need or want. Having people not want to spend time with you because you never care about anything may be a price for passive behavior.

**Everyone is aggressive sometimes. What are the consequences to being too aggressive?**

Having a friend be hurt and not want to spend time with you might be one of the consequences of aggressive behavior.

The most important consideration when you're choosing a way to communicate something is: does it accomplish what you wanted in the long term?

Understanding your choices gives you the most control.

## Prevention Of Sexual Abuse

Let's talk about another part of being responsible for yourself.

Who does your body belong to? If your body belongs to you, do you have the right to say who touches you and how?

What do you do if someone touches you in a way that you don't like.

Let's try some simple ways people touch us and see what you could say.

► Do you like to have people pinch your cheek?

How does it make you feel when people touch you in ways you don't like?

Discuss anger, confusion, embarrassment, worry, etc.

What could you say to get the person to stop?

Role-play each of the following dilemmas being sure they use all the avenues of communication; words, body language, eye contact, etc.

■ pinching on arm

You want to actually roleplay these examples, but don't overdo it. All touches should be light or simulated, pretending to do something without actually doing it.

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- rubbing back of neck
  - bear hugs
  - auntie who fusses over you
  - slaps on the back

**What are the thoughts and feelings that come up when you speak up for yourself?**

- fearing of being rude
- obedience
- embarrassment
- not knowing what to say
- feeling they won't like you or want to be with you

**Each of you has a right to speak up if someone touches you in a way you don't like or feel comfortable with.**

➤ **What if I'm a friend of your dad's and I'm hugging you too hard.**

**You can say "Don't." But I can then say "Don't what?" But if you say "Please don't hug me so hard, I don't like it," that leaves very little room for question.**

➤ **What if I'm your Uncle and I want you to sit real close to me and you feel uncomfortable? When you ask to get up, I ask you to stay because you're my favorite niece.**

➤ **What if I'm a friend of the family and I want to kiss you but you don't want me to? What if I said, "You're**

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**my favorite buddy! I came all the way over here just to be with you? You like me, don't you?"**

**You always need to remember, other people can't read your mind. If you don't like what's happening, you need to speak up for yourself and take action that takes care of you.**

## **Relaxation**

**Now get comfortable, close your eyes, begin counting your breathing (Presenter count 4 counts inhale, 8 counts exhale, count aloud), allow yourself to relax and go into your own thoughts.**

**Now think of some touch that you don't like. Picture yourself looking at the person, moving their hand away and saying, "Please don't do that, I don't like it."**

**Pause for about 10 seconds between each .**

**Now think of another kind of touch that you don't like. Again picture yourself looking at the person, telling them to stop and having them stop.**

**Now think of a time when someone asked you to do something that made you uncomfortable. Picture yourself looking right at them and saying NO.**

**Now think of a time when you were asked to do something that you really wanted to do. Picture yourself looking right at the person and saying YES.**

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**Now think of another time when someone asked you to do something that made you uncomfortable. Picture yourself standing up and all saying, "No, that makes me feel uncomfortable. Leave me alone."**

**Now think of yourself as someone who is willing to speak up to take care of yourself no matter how hard it might be.**

**Now see yourself as being able always to stand up straight and say what you want to say to anyone. All this week you will carry with you that picture of yourself speaking up.**

**Now, pay attention to your breathing again for a moment, move about in your chair, bring your attention back into the room and when you are ready open your eyes.**

## **Session 5 — Self-work Activities**

1. Look at how you talk to people and how they talk to you. Practice being assertive. Notice what works and what doesn't work
2. Do the Who Am I exercise. Remember, **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS TO THIS EXERCISE.**



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## **Who Am I Exercise**

List for yourself the following:

- Things I like about myself
- Things I don't like about myself
- Things I like to do when I'm alone
- Things I like to do with other kids
- Things I like to do with grownups
- Things I hate doing that others ask me to do
- Things I wish I could do but think I can't

Now notice some other things on the list that might tell you about yourself. See if there are any surprises. Ask yourself:

- Do I have a preference for doing things by myself or with others or both?
- Do I have a preference for inside or outside things?
- Do I have a preference for kids or adults?
- Do I do things I don't really like to do to please others?
- Do most of the things I like to do cost money?

When I look at the things I like to do most, are those the things my parents would say I like to do most?

Were there any surprises in doing this list, anything I learned about myself?

(Exercise adapted from *I Am Not A Short Adult*, Marilyn Burns, pg. 17)

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Dear Parents,

We are exploring different patterns of behavior. We talked about the differences between assertive, aggressive and passive behaviors. We aren't teaching that one is better than another. Rather, we are looking at how we behave, how people respond and how children shape their own behavior.

*Assertive* behavior is that which communicates directly one's feelings, needs or opinions without being threatening or trying to manipulate the other person. It is not forceful. It is simply and clearly communicating or standing up for your rights. By definition, assertive behavior is appropriate behavior.

We are also discussing personal safety skills, being able to recognize what makes you feel uncomfortable, how to speak up for yourself and how to get help when you need it.

By teaching children effective communication skills, assertive behavior and a willingness to speak up, we can help protect them and prevent interpersonal violence and abuse.

Sincerely,

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## **Types of Behavior:**

✓ Assertive

✓ Aggressive

✓ Passive

✓ Passive-aggressive

✓ Covert

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## **REMEMBER:**

- ✓ get yourself centered;
- ✓ breathe;
- ✓ make eye contact;
- ✓ talk in a normal voice; and
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