

Class #6: Being Assertive and the Broken Record Technique

What We Will Cover in Class #6:

1. Review homework
 - Relaxation Practice
 - Personal Declarations
 - Diaries of Thoughts
2. Behavioral Techniques
3. Communicating Assertively
4. The Broken Record Technique
5. Relaxation Ratings and Practice
6. Homework for next week

Communication: The Key to Understanding

Caregivers often find themselves in very demanding situations where they are frequently pulled in several directions at once. Many caregivers are confronted not only with the needs of the frail relative, but often with those of other family members and their employers too. For this reason, being able to clearly communicate to others is essential. Being able to communicate in a direct, honest, and respectful manner can help you feel more confident and calm in your interactions with others. Good communication skills can also enable you to achieve your goals with less stress and conflict.

Most people are not aware of the fact that their style of communication strongly influences the way others will respond to them. Remember, that you communicate with both your words and your behavior. Certain styles of communication, such as assertive communication, foster respect and openness. Other styles of communication, such as aggressiveness or passivity, foster a lack of respect and guardedness.

Almost all examples of interactions fall under these three types of communication. Again, the three styles are passive, aggressive, and assertive communication. Below, you will find examples of each type of communication in a situation common to caregivers.

An Example of the Passive Approach

Lidia takes care of her mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's Disease, forgets everything and requires a lot of attention. Lidia's brother, David, lives with them but doesn't do anything to help, even though he only works half a day. David has promised to take care of their mother for three hours so that Lidia can go out, but when the time comes he changes his mind:

David: Lidia, my friends just told me that they're all going to the baseball game, and I'm going with them. I'll be gone all afternoon.

Lidia: Oh, no! You told me that you were going to take care of Mom for three hours today while I go to the market and have a soda with Juanita.

David: I'm sorry.

Lidia: Oh well, you go and have a good time. I guess I'll just have to figure something else out.

Result:

Instead of honestly and respectfully holding David to his commitment, Lidia acted passively and allowed David to take advantage of her. She now feels disappointed and annoyed that she has to care for her mother while her brother goes out and has fun.

An Example of the Aggressive Approach

While reading the previous example, you may have thought to yourself, “I would not put up with that!” Another way to respond to the same situation, could be to move from an extreme of being passive to an extreme of being aggressive. You could get very angry, but that wouldn't help at all, as illustrated by the following conversation in which Lidia responds aggressively:

David: Lidia, my friends just told me that they're all going to the baseball game, and I'm going with them. I'll be gone all afternoon.

Lidia: You are so irresponsible! You said that you were going to take care of Mom and now you don't want to! You are going to stay and take care of her, whether you like it or not!

David: Who do you think you are? I'm free to do whatever I want! I'm not going to stay to help an idiot like you! (He leaves).

Result:

Both Lidia and David ended up feeling angry and resentful. Instead of respectfully communicating their own thoughts and feelings about the situation, they responded to one another with insults and demands. They also hurt one another. Lidia could have avoided trying to make David feel inferior.

An Example of the Assertive Approach

Assertive behavior avoids the two extremes of passive and aggressive behaviors. This time, the response of Lidia to David demonstrates how a person can protect his or her own interests without offending the other person or being taken advantage of.

David: Lidia, my friends just told me that they're all going to the baseball game, and I'm going with them. I'll be gone all afternoon.

Lidia: David, you must have forgotten that you promised to stay with Mom for three hours today. I've already made my plans. I would really appreciate it if you fulfilled your promise.

(David ignores her.)

Lidia: You know what? It really bothers me that you ignore what I'm telling you. I would prefer that you talk directly to me so that we could reach an agreement.

David: I'm sorry, but I want to go to the game.

Lidia: I understand you. But I'm hurt, and I resent that you don't have any consideration for what we had decided to do, especially now that I've already made my own plans. I really believe that you should do what you promised and spend three hours with Mom, like we had agreed.

David: Don't bother me so much. I'll think about it.

Lidia: Even if you think so, I'm not trying to bother you, David. But, after all, this was our agreement. I would prefer that you kept your promise. Remember that you promised me last week that you would spend three hours with Mom this afternoon? We even agreed about the time. Don't you think that you should do what you promised?

David: Oh, all right. I know what we'd agreed. I'll stay. But you can't blame me for wanting to go to the game.

Result:

After the conversation, Lidia felt very good. She did not feel guilty for making her brother stay, because that is what they both had previously agreed. She also felt satisfied with her ability to express her negative feelings and to be assertive without creating an argument. She was not irritated with David's irresponsibility for very long. David felt disillusioned, but not hurt or angry because Lidia did not do or say anything that could hurt his feelings or insult him. This was probably the reason why he cooperated with her instead of resisting her.

In this example, Lidia neither allowed herself to start an argument nor to justify her decisions. Finally, Lidia did not respond in an angry manner or become defensive when David asked her to stop bothering him. Also, Lidia's

attempt to look at things from David's point of view probably helped him to feel understood. Although assertive behavior often requires more time, it is usually much more rewarding.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Communicating Passively

When we communicate passively, we put the desires, thoughts, and feelings of others before our own. In essence, a passive approach says to the listener that we don't count, that the listener is more important, and that his or her rights need to be respected but ours don't. Although we may be able to avoid some stress and conflict by not having an open and honest discussion, we are left with feelings of not being appreciated or respected. These feelings can lead to low self-esteem, depression and feelings of isolation because we fail to share our true feelings with those we love.

It's important to also consider the impact passive behavior has on others. By communicating passively, we often show that we don't respect others' abilities to take disappointments, to shoulder some responsibility, and to handle their own problems. This often makes others feel that we don't respect them. Passive communication makes it less likely that the listener will ever consider our needs in the future since we've already shown that they aren't really important anyway.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Communicating Aggressively

When we communicate aggressively, we disregard the desires, feelings, and thoughts of others in order to get what

we want. We don't show respect for ourselves or for others. We often react aggressively when we feel threatened, but this is rarely effective. Our aggressive behavior causes others to take an aggressive or defensive stance. We can't force others to cooperate with us, and acting aggressively is more likely to make others very uncooperative. Aggressiveness will usually cause others to become even less inclined to help than they otherwise may have been, in order to avoid being "bullied" into something.

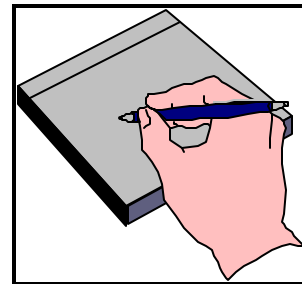
Advantages and Disadvantages of Communicating Assertively

Behaving and communicating assertively shows we respect our own thoughts, feelings, and desires as well as those of others. Being honest, direct, and respectful makes others feel as though they have been listened to and have been given an opportunity to make their concerns understood.

Assertiveness does not guarantee that we will get what we want, but it does make it more likely that we will reach a solution that most people will be satisfied with. Along with this, it's important to understand that others may react negatively to our assertive behavior. They may be used to our old way of behaving passively which allowed them to get what they want. Or, they may be nervous about engaging in a discussion in which thoughts and feelings are openly voiced and respected.

Homework to Do Before Class #7

1. Daily Relaxation Practice and Ratings: Use the Relaxation Diary on page 49 to evaluate your level of relaxation before and after the exercise each day.



2. Broken Record Practice Sheet: Write down at least one experience that you had this week in which you used the broken record technique, using the recording sheet on p. 48 of this workbook
3. Complete at least one Diary of Thoughts this week. We encourage you to do more than one, if you can.
4. Read pages 44 through 47 in this workbook. These pages discuss differences among passive, assertive, and aggressive behaviors and talk about both the advantages and risks of being assertive.

Broken Record Practice Sheet

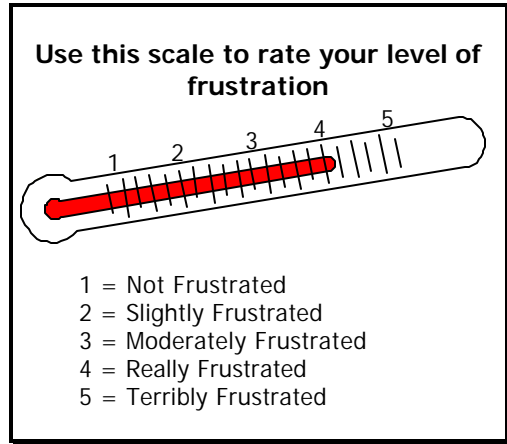
Describe below the situation or the problem where you tried the Broken Record technique involving assertive behavior. Comment on the results you got and the ease or difficulty you experienced applying this technique.

Using the following scale, indicate the level of anger or frustration that you felt before and after using the broken record technique:

1. Describe the first situation/problem:

• Describe the technique used:

• The results and how I felt doing this:



Level of anger or frustration *before* using the technique: _____

Level of anger or frustration *after* using the technique: _____

2. Describe the second situation or problem: _____

• Describe the technique used: _____

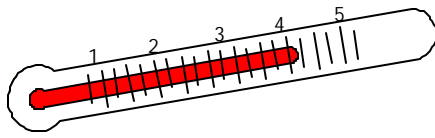
• The results and how I felt doing this: _____

Level of anger or frustration *before* using the technique: _____

Level of anger or frustration *after* using the technique: _____

Relaxation Diary: Tension Rating Scale

Use This Scale to Rate Your Level of Tension



- 1 = Not at all tense
- 2 = Slightly tense
- 3 = Moderately tense
- 4 = Really tense
- 5 = Terribly tense

In-Class Practice Rating:

Before the relaxation exercise, I felt (rate your tension from 1 to 5): _____

After the relaxation exercise, I felt (rate your tension from 1 to 5): _____

DATE	TENSION	COMMENTS (why I felt this way, etc.)
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	
	Before relaxing: _____ After relaxing: _____	

Diary of Thoughts

1. Situation Causing Me to Feel Upset or Angry

2. My Feelings

3. Automatic or Negative Thoughts I Had About Myself in This Situation

4. Danger Signals, Stop Signs

5. Distortions, Unhelpful Thought Patterns

6. Adaptive Thoughts, More Adaptive Ways to See the Situation
