

Class #7: Accepting Your Assertive Rights

What We Will Cover in Class #7:

1. Homework:
 - Relaxation Practice
 - Broken Record practice
 - Diary of Thoughts
 - Reading on Acting Assertively
2. Your Basic Rights of Acting Assertively
3. Relaxation Ratings and Practice
4. Homework for the next class

PLEASE NOTE THAT NEXT WEEK IS THE LAST CLASS

Basic Rights of Assertive Behavior

- 1. *I have the right to act in a manner that promotes my dignity and self-respect, as long as I do not violate the rights of others with my behavior.***
- 2. *I have the right to be treated with respect.***
- 3. *I have the right to say “No” without feeling guilty.***
- 4. *I have the right to feel and express my feelings.***
- 5. *I have the right to take the necessary time to calm down and think.***
- 6. *I have the right to change my mind.***
- 7. *I have the right to ask for whatever I wish.***
- 8. *I have the right to do less than what I could if I were using all my reserves.***
- 9. *I have the right to ask for information.***
- 10. *I have the right to make mistakes.***
- 11. *I have the right to feel good about myself.***

*From the book *The Assertive Option: Your Rights and Responsibilities* (pp. 80-81) by P. Jakubowski and A.J. Lange, 1978, Champaign, IL: Research Press. Copyright 1978 by the authors. Reprinted by permission.

Personal Rights and Responsibilities

An important factor to be able to becoming assertive is to develop the ability to accept your assertive rights. When you deny yourself these rights, you are denying an important part of your humanity and might even hurt yourself or your loved ones. When you refuse to accept these rights you are really telling yourself that you have to prove others your worth by doing everything possible to comply with their wishes, forgetting your own wishes and not bothering or making anybody unhappy. What happens when you do this? You are suppressing your own impulses to behave assertively and you avoid saying what you want, what you think or what you feel in order to avoid feeling guilty. As a result, you feel hurt, resentful or angry with yourself.

To accept your rights and act taking them into account, in a responsibly assertive manner, does not mean that you are demanding from others more than what you deserve. It only means that you ask for the consideration and courteous treatment that you deserve. It does not mean that you only think about yourself and that you are insensitive to the needs of the others. The right to assertive behavior can be expressed in a humane and considerate manner. To accept your rights means that you act in a manner that tends to

balance the power without oppressing others. When you behave assertively, you are expressing yourself without infringing on the rights of others.

Limits, Responsibilities and Balance

Before describing some of the basic assertively rights, we want you to consider three points:

First: To have the right to behave assertively is not like having a license to act in any manner without considering the other people.

Second: Accepting those rights brings

personal power, which in turn brings responsibility. For example, we all have the right to

make mistakes, but we also have the responsibility to accept our mistakes and not to blame the “system” or other people, and to sincerely try to avoid making them again.

Third: Our rights to assertive behavior do not deny the rights of others in a situation. You have the right to make a mistake, but the other person has the right to not appreciate the fact that you made an error, to feel disappointed and to ask you to correct the error.

Basic Assertive Rights

The participants in assertiveness training groups have identified more

Reading for this week: Adapted from the book *The Assertive Option: Your Rights and Responsibilities* (pp. 80-92) by P. Jakubowski and A.J. Lange, 1978, Champaign, IL: Research Press. Copyright 1978 by the authors. Reprinted by permission.

than 100 rights, from which these most basic 11 were derived.

1. Your Dignity and the Rights of Others

You have the right to choose your values and your lifestyle, as long as they don't interfere with the rights of others. This basic right means that you have the right to be yourself and to feel good about yourself (without feeling guilty), as long as you don't hurt anybody by doing it. It is not healthy to feel guilty about ourselves.

Since every person is unique, assertions that will promote one person's sense of self-respect will differ a bit from what others may think or consider to be important. Some people may wish to respond energetically to someone cutting in front of them in line, while others might wish to ignore it. Exaggerations are dangerous; for example, to think it is impossible to have self-respect, unless you express your opinion at every point of a conversation. This type of conduct will quickly become hateful.

2. The Right to Be Respected

You have the right to be treated in a courteous manner by sales persons, teachers, parents, employers, doctors and, more generally, you have the right to be treated as a capable human being and not in a condescending manner. Respect does not mean deference, the unquestioned approval of all your actions, or the automatic compliance

with your wishes. Since we are all equal, we all deserve to be treated in a manner that recognizes our human dignity.

3. The Right to Say "No" Without Feeling Guilty

As everybody else, you have a limited amount of time and energy; the decision about how to spend this time partially determines the quality of your life. To regularly deny our own wishes to satisfy those of others is counterproductive.

Many have a problem saying "no" because they keep telling themselves to be unselfish. This is an honorable objective, but many times to be "unselfish" really means that "If I don't think first about the others and I give myself until I hurt, then I am not being selfish." This is a destructive thought.

4. The Right to Feel and Express Your Feelings

Instead of accepting our right to have feelings, often we say to ourselves that we should not feel the way we do. "I should not feel depressed, I should not be so sensitive, I should not have sexual desires." This manner of thinking will only make us feel guilty about our own feelings. Since we are humans and our feelings are a natural part of being human, it is more logical to accept the human right to feel and express our true feelings than to feel guilty about having them.

We also tell ourselves that we should be understanding of other people; this is another worthy objective that is often misinterpreted to mean that we should not feel. This misinterpretation occurs when we incorrectly reason that if we had understood the other people, we would not--should not--feel irritated or disappointed at them. This ignores reality: we can both think and feel at the same time. Understanding and accepting others does not mean to passively accept their abusive behavior, especially when that behavior has concrete negative effects on us.

5. The Right to Calm Down and Think

People who deny themselves the right to take a break for a moment in order to think how to respond, often act in an aggressive and counterproductive manner, like jumping to conclusions, interrupting others or attacking others who seem to be doing things too slowly.

The hurry in making a decision does not automatically result in things being done more effectively.

6. The Right to Change Your Mind

The decisions involving subjects like providing help in a charity event, to make a luncheon date a week in advance, to disagree with the opinion of another person or to deny an employee a day off are all based on facts that we have in front of us at the

time. Later on, we may obtain new information, including information about our feelings, which may certainly require that we change our mind. To change our mind, based on new information, shows flexibility, while refusing to change our mind when it is logical to do it, shows more rigidity and obstinacy and strength of spirit.

7. The Right to Ask for What You Want

A natural part of our humanity is to have desires. When we don't ask for what we want we may try, consciously or unconsciously, to get what we want by dubious means, which could cause bad feelings or ruin a relationship.

To ask for what we want gives the other person a sort of permission to ask, clearly and directly, for what he or she also wants. Nobody has to guess what the other person wants, which will probably increase the mutual satisfaction in a relationship.

8. The Right to Do Less than You Could If You Were to Use All Your Reserves

You have the right not to give 100% of your time. You have a perfect right to waste your own time, to know what you want to know, to ask for help even if you don't need it, only to enjoy getting the help from other people on tasks that are not very pleasing. You have the right to organize your work in order to better enjoy your life, and you have the right not to do the best you

can. (Many things do not deserve to be done the best possible way and you will feel better if you recognize this fact.)

It is more human and realistic to do what you reasonably can. You have the basic human right not to force yourself continuously, trying to reach your physical, mental and emotional limits.

You should not treat yourself like if you were a working robot instead of a human being.

However, this right does not justify not to fulfill what you have agreed to do. If, for example, you make a commitment to do a certain job, you have the obligation to do good job, as you had promised. If you are convinced that you promised to do the job with an extremely high level of work quality, you might ask the other person for a change in the agreement.

9. The Right to Ask for Information

When you are going to make a decision, many times you might not be sure of your feelings or of the facts. You

have the right to obtain a second opinion, to request that an inadequately done job be corrected without any additional charges, to get exactly what you have paid for and to say “I do not understand.” You have the right to know exactly what types of services will be rendered by the professionals or merchants that you are dealing with, how will the work be

performed, how long it will take and how much it will cost. You have the right to make precise questions in order to make a decision that is based on information and, when you do it, you will undoubtedly avoid having many problems in the future.

If somebody reacts defensively or condescendingly to your questions, it does not mean that you are ignorant or that you do not

have a right to ask those questions. It is simply the person’s professional attitude, and it is reasonable to think that those who treat you badly before you have contracted them to do a job, will have the same attitude when they get to perform the work.

You may help yourself to accept the assertive rights by following these four steps:

- 1: Be conscious of the internal messages that you are giving yourself that are causing you to believe that you are not entitled to rights.
- 2: Develop more realistic messages to counter your rights-denying messages.
- 3: Practice, repeatedly, the counteroffensive messages by repeating them in a low voice. Having other people tell us that we have rights, or reading books that confirm those rights, is a helpful step.
- 4: Act in a simple and appropriate manner, giving yourself the right, while internally telling yourself that you have the right to do it.

10. The Right to Make Mistakes

Nobody has gone through life without making errors. It is impossible to avoid making a few errors, because it is impossible to be perfect and to know everything. Moreover, if you could have avoided making the mistake, you probably would not have made it in the first place. For example, if you drive an automobile too fast and you have an accident, you made the mistake of assuming that you could have braked in time. It is true that the accident might have been avoided if someone else had been driving at that moment because he or she might not have made the same incorrect assumption; but to tell yourself that you should not have made a wrong assumption in the first place is to reason after the fact.

11. The Right to Feel Good About Yourself

Many people have difficulty granting themselves this right, because they have been taught to be modest or humble. This is another worthy objective that is often misinterpreted to mean: "I should not feel good about myself. I should act as if I were worthless. If not, I would be too vain and would appear to be conceited."

Being humble or modest does not mean putting yourself down. Being humble simply means that, although some of your talents or achievements are better than those of other people, it does not make you a superior human being.

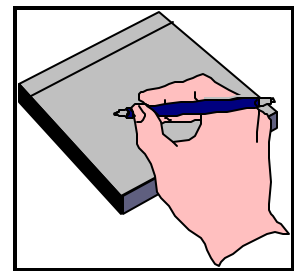
Having the right to be happy about yourself does not mean that you honestly have to express your happiness in a superior or condescending manner.

Helping Yourself to Accept Your Assertive Rights

Although other persons may deny us our rights, many find that often the bigger problems are within themselves. For example, they may have been raised believing that others should always be considered to be first and, consequently, they have reached the conclusion that they are not good enough to have rights. To have problems accepting assertive rights is not a sign of weakness. Frequently people convince themselves that they do not have rights because they have been giving themselves those internal messages, and they lack any better messages to give to themselves. Or it may be that they are surrounded by people who regularly deny them those rights.

Homework to Do Before Class #8

1. Daily Relaxation Practice and Ratings: use the Relaxation Diary on page 60 in this manual to evaluate your level of tension before and after each exercises, every day.



2. Continue to practice the Broken Record technique and record your experiences, using the recording sheet on page 59 of this manual.
3. Continue to complete at least one Diary of Thoughts before next time. We encourage you to do more, if you can.
4. Read carefully this chapter's material on assertive rights (pages 52 through 57) and be prepared to discuss your thoughts on this topic more, at the last class.

Broken Record Practice Sheet

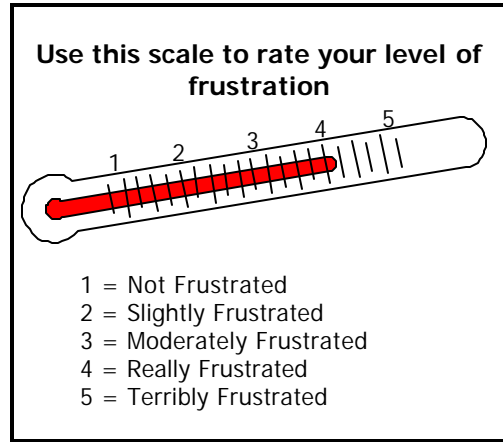
Describe below the situation or the problem where you tried the Broken Record technique involving assertive behavior. Comment on the results you got and the ease or difficulty you experienced applying this technique.

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: _____

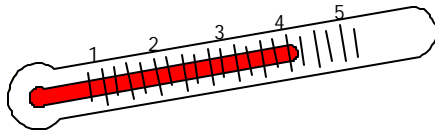
• The results and how I felt doing this: _____

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
