

BODY LANGUAGE & ASSERTIVENESS

WORKSHOP GUIDE



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will help you improve your face-to-face communication skills through effective body language and assertiveness.

This guide is designed for a manager or a facilitator to deliver a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts Workplace Essentials Series. Each video comes with a series of activities around the following structure:

LOOK - watch the video and reflect on the content and message.

THINK - activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace.

REMEMBER - a summary of the key learning points.

Each section relating to the video will last around 15 minutes.

ACTION PLAN - At the end of the series of videos and activities delegates should be encouraged to share the most important actions they will take and record actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- Body language
- Assertive versus aggressive
- Assertive tips

VIDEO 1 – BODY LANGUAGE

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

A large part of your job depends upon good communications skills. Some of this may be written communication such as emails and reports, but the majority of it will be face-to-face. A good understanding of body language can help you deal more effectively with colleagues, customers and suppliers.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to think about how to use body language to help people feel at ease with you.

Responses could include:

- Think about seating, make sure you're not hidden in anyway – remove any obstacles between you and your colleagues or audience.
- Maintain good eye contact as much as you can.
- When addressing important issues, spread your palms up to encourage a positive reaction.
- Use postural echo; that is copying their posture, to create rapport, but be careful not to make this too obvious!
- If someone is looking around obviously disinterested in what you have to say, direct their attention back to you by asking questions.

REMEMBER (2 minutes recap)

DON'T

- Adopt 'status' positions.
- Fold arms defensively.
- Use closed hand gestures.
- Build barriers.

DO

- Use friendly eye-contact.
- Use open hand gestures.
- Echo posture.

VIDEO 2 – ASSERTIVE VERSUS AGGRESSIVE

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

Assertive behaviour doesn't come naturally to most of us. It requires thought, confidence, and on some occasions, a certain amount of courage. But we can learn how to be assertive. Of course, behaving assertively won't guarantee that we always get what we want. But, it gives us a better chance of doing so and, at the same time, maintains good relationships with our colleagues.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

If you're not a naturally assertive person, what can you do to put yourself in an assertive frame of mind?

Explain to the group that in any situation, behaving assertively begins by thinking positively about how we are going to behave. To do this, think:

- "I'm clear about the issues."
- "I know what I want."
- "I'm going to find out what his or her position is."
- "He or she can be very abrasive, but I'm not going to get into an argument!"

REMEMBER (2 minutes recap)

- Submissive.
- Aggressive.
- Assertive.

VIDEO 3 – ASSERTIVE TIPS

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

Being assertive is about being honest about what you need, want, feel or believe in a way that's respectful of the views of others. However, many people find it difficult to get the balance right between assertiveness and aggression; especially when they feel their position is under threat. But it's a skill that can be learned, and it's invaluable in the workplace.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

What's the best way to deal assertively with someone who becomes aggressive as a response to criticism?

The first principle of assertiveness is to be honest. That may seem obvious, particularly as no one wants to have the reputation of being dishonest. But, a common sign that people are behaving submissively is when they say:

- "I agree" (when they **don't**)
- "That's a good idea" (when it **isn't**)
- "That went well" (when it **didn't**)

The second key principle of assertiveness is to stick to your bottom line. Decide what is and is not negotiable and stick to it!

- Acknowledge what the other person has said.
- Stick to the original issue.
- Ask relevant questions.
- Use logic, never threats or manipulation.
- Don't reject the person, reject the request.
- Repeat yourself if you need to.

The third principle of assertiveness is communicating as equals:

- Ask relevant questions. Listen to one another.
- Use open, positive body language.
- Test your understanding of the other person's position.
- Suggest solutions and build on each other's suggestions.
- Summarise the agreement to avoid misunderstandings.

REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

- Be honest.
- Stick to the bottom line.
- Negotiate as equals.

BODY LANGUAGE & ASSERTIVENESS – ACTION PLAN

Remind the group of the key learning points from this session.

Divide the group into pairs. Ask each member of the group to identify one specific action they will take to apply what they have learned when they return to work.

Ask for two or three examples. Bring the session to a close.