

***Cognitive
Behavior
Management
#23***

Assertiveness Training

*Compiled by Jerome R. Gardner
2002*

This material is developed using information from three major sources: **Chapter 6, Assertiveness Groups** by Martha Davis, PhD, which appears in the book *Focal Group Psychotherapy*, Edited by Matthew McKay & Kim Paleg, 1992, New Harbinger Publications, Inc. **Your Perfect Right: A Guide to Assertive Behavior**, by Alberti and Emmons, Impact Publishers, 1970 and Chapter 10, *Asserting Yourself Respectfully*, from **The Heart of the Mind** by Connirae and Steve Andreas, Real People Press, 1989. The material has been modified to address the needs of children and adolescents.

Technique #23

Assertiveness

Clinical Prompt

- Step A: Determine Readiness for Assertiveness Training
- Step B: Language & Concepts
- Step C: Learn To Distinguish Between the Three Modes of Communication
- Step D: Define Criteria for Measuring Change in Assertive Behavior
- Step E: Identifying Mistaken Traditional Assumptions and Countering Them With Assertive Rights
- Step F: Confronting Fears About Being Assertive
- Step G: Criticism as a Form of Manipulation
- Step H: Assertive Position Statement
- Step I: Assertive Listening

Forms & Charts

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Form: CBM#23-001 | <i>Typical Response to Problem Situations</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-002 | <i>Six Problematic Social Scenes</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-003 | <i>Assertiveness Problems and Goals</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-004 | <i>Identifying Mistaken Traditional Assumptions and Countering Them With Assertive Rights</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-005 | <i>Confronting My Fears About Being Assertive</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-006 | <i>Daily Criticism Journal</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-007 | <i>Assertive Position Statements</i> |
| Form: CBM#23-008 | <i>Brainstorming a Compromise</i> |

Technique #23 *Assertiveness*

Introduction

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
But if I am for myself alone, what am I?
And if not now, when? Hillel*

Many people do not believe that they have the *right* to be assertive. Many are highly *anxious/fearful* about being assertive. Many lack the *social skills* for effective self-expression. Such people find situations such as someone 'cutting in line' ahead of them, dealing with persuasive car salesman, or beginning a conversation with strangers to be quite difficult and threatening and seem unable to find the behavior which enables them to act in their own best interest, to stand up for him/herself without undue anxiety or aggression, to express honest feelings comfortably, and to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others.

Assertiveness was originally described by Andrew Salter in the late 1940s as an innate personality trait. Wolpe (1958) and Lazarus (1966) redefined assertive behavior as 'expressing personal rights and feelings'. They determined that assertiveness was situationally specific: most people can be assertive in some situations, and yet be ineffectual in others. Assertiveness training expands the number of situations in which a person can choose to be assertive.

When a person is passive, opportunities are lost and unpleasant situations are tolerated. In time, bad feelings can build to a point

where one more events can trigger an explosion of resentment that in turn provokes upsetting criticism or rejection. Stress-related physiological responses can be caused by excessive passivity or aggression. Behavior that masks unpleasant thoughts and feelings may occur, such as drinking, withdrawal, or obsessing with physical symptoms (Gambrill, 197/8). Non-assertive behavior has been implicated in a wide range of presenting problems, including anxiety, depression, antisocial aggressive behavior, marital discord, and low-esteem (Ruben, 1985).

Aggressive patterns of communication are not assertive either. People with a great deal of anger, which could be viewed as the other side of fear, are often equally ineffective in representing themselves. While they may get immediate response, their effectiveness in meeting long range relationship goals are often marred.

Assertiveness training has been employed with a variety of populations, including grade school children, adolescents, college students, the elderly, psychiatric patients (both inpatient and outpatient), professional groups, women, alcoholics, addicts, and couples (Ruben, 1985).

The majority of assertiveness trainings focus on building assertive skills, modeling and rehearsal. The entire chain of behaviors, verbal and nonverbal, is presented, and the subject imitates it. Bandura (1969) has documented the effectiveness of modeling in establishing new behaviors and reducing avoidance behaviors.

While some clients may lack an assertive skill altogether, rehearsal usually reveals that most clients possess many of the necessary components of a skill which can be further 'shaped' by instruction, positive feedback, and prompting during subsequent rehearsal. Practicing new behaviors in a safe environment reduces discomfort, particularly when rehearsal closely resembles the actual problem situation.

Symptom Effectiveness

A study by Lawrence (1970) found significant effects after only 12 minutes of rehearsal. Kazdin (1975) determined that covert modeling, in which clients imagine themselves or someone else dealing effectively with social situations, was as effective as actual rehearsal.

Graduated homework assignments can allow clients to apply their newly acquired assertive skills first to situations in which the likelihood of success is high and the degree of discomfort is minimal. Initial success tends to reduce anxiety, increase the probability that clients will generalize the new assertive behavior to other situations and encourage assertive behavior in more challenging situations.

Time for Mastery

The key to becoming more assertive is *practice of new behavior patterns*. However, there may be some merit to a systematic, step by step process which includes understanding of the language and concepts. While the twelve minutes indicated above are real, and the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming processes may require no more than one-half hour, the inclusive process defined here, which includes teaching language, concepts, skills and providing *in vivo* practice, is one that is usually spread over several weeks in one hour segments.

Special Considerations

Some of the specific skills of assertiveness may require a maturity which is beyond a specific child. The Clinical Supervisor and the Mentor need to determine: a) if the child is ready to take the training, and/or b) how the training is modified to help this specific child benefit from the experience.

Instructions

The assertiveness training model described here emphasizes the building of assertiveness skills, using model presentation, rehearsal, positive feedback, prompting, covert modeling, and homework assignments. Basic assumptions regarding one's assertive rights are made explicit, traditional assumptions and fears that inhibit assertive behavior are challenged, and the pros and cons of assertive and nonassertive behavior are explored.

There are three possible broad approaches to the conduct of interpersonal relations. The first is to consider one's self only and ride roughshod over others...The second...is to always put other before one's self...The third approach is the golden mean...The individual places himself first, but takes others into account.

Joseph Wolpe

Step A: Determine Readiness for Assertiveness Training

Discussion: Assertiveness Training can be helpful for people with either passive or aggressive styles. However, it is often better to deal with some of the issues which provoke these styles before entering into Assertiveness Training. This step is to help the Clinical Supervisor make that determination.

Either give the child Form **CBM#23-001** to fill out OR read and discuss the form with the child. The responses should tell you whether or not the child is or is not assertive in certain areas and help the child to recognize where s/he is or is not assertive.

Assertiveness training is most useful when the child can take the responsibility to identify social situations in which s/he has

difficulty communicating assertively and lack certain assertiveness skills, or are not comfortable in certain situations using the assertiveness skills s/he does possess.

After the generalized form is done, ask the child to select a social situation in which s/he did not communicate his/her feelings, thoughts, or wishes in a way that allowed him/her to achieve his/her desired outcome. Then ask some questions about this situation to get a better understanding of the problem.

1. "Describe briefly the setting and the person or persons with whom you were interacting."
2. "What did you actually say and do?"
3. "What was the other person's response to your behavior?"
4. "What did you say to yourself about the situation?"

Determine whether the client believes s/he has a right to be assertive in this situation; whether s/he anticipates rejection, failure, or some other catastrophe if s/he is assertive; or if s/he is rewarded in some way for being nonassertive in this situation.

5. "What would you have liked to have said or done to achieve a more favorable outcome?"

Determine whether the desired outcome can possibly be attained using assertive behavior.

6. "Have you been able to do that in any situation in the past?"

Determine whether in the past or in other situations the client has been able to be assertive in the way s/he desires, or whether s/he lacks a specific assertiveness skill.

7. "What do you think keeps you from doing this?"

Determine whether s/he defines the obstacle in terms of behavior s/he can change, such as his/her own nonassertive behavior, beliefs or fears. If the child sees Him/herself as a *victim* and sees the only solution to their problems as a change in the environment, the Clinical Supervisor may want to consider a different protocol to address this issue *before* doing assertiveness training. This question will also elicit beliefs about the dangers of being assertive.

8. "Describe briefly other kinds of social situations in which you've had difficulty being assertive and have ended up with less than what you really wanted."

Find out with whom they tend to have difficulty. If they have a significant *anger* problem [controlling their temper], the Clinical Supervisor may decide that they might benefit from an anger management training *before* participating in an assertiveness training. If their thought content is heavily loaded with *cognitive distortions* [See Technique #2 ***Altering Limited Thinking Patterns***], the Clinical Supervisor might first consider cognitive error correction or restructuring *before* attempting assertiveness training.

Clients are appropriate for assertiveness training if they indicate that they understand that their own nonassertive behavior is contributing to undesirable outcomes, that they can learn assertive behavior to achieve their objective, and that it is worthwhile for them to meet the basic requirements of the assertiveness training to achieve their goals.

Step B. Language & Concepts

Discussion

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication involves clearly stating your opinion, how you feel and what you want, without violating the rights of others. The underlying assumption in an assertive communication is: "You and I may differ and/or have different status [authority/subordinate], but we are *equally entitled to express ourselves respectfully* to one another". The major advantages of assertive communication include active participation in making important decisions, getting what you want without alienating others, the emotional and intellectual satisfaction of respectfully exchanging feelings and ideas, and high self esteem.

Assertive communicators speak in a calm, clear tone of voice. They make good eye contact. They have relaxed, good posture. Demonstrate an assertive exchange between a teacher and a student:

Teacher: I notice that you haven't finished that paper that was supposed to be done on Monday, and here it is Friday. I'm feeling really tense and up against a wall. I need this done by Monday so I can post the grades. I would very much appreciate you spending the weekend to finish it. If you do, you can have time off next week. If you don't we will both be in hot water.

Student: Yes, I'm behind on this project. It turned out to be more complicated than I anticipated. I'm not thrilled about working on it this weekend here at school, but if you'll let me work on it at home on my own computer, I promise I'll have it done for you for the Monday schedule.

Teacher: That seems reasonable to me. Thanks.

Assertiveness is a skill that can be learned, not a personality trait that some are born with and others are not. No one is consistently assertive. For example, you may find it easy to be assertive with strangers, but have difficulty being assertive with

your parents. You may choose to be assertive with your friends in one situation and passive or aggressive with them in another. Learning to be assertive means that you can choose when and where to assert yourself.

Aggressive Communication

In aggressive communication, opinions, feelings and wants may (or may not) be honestly stated, but at the expense of someone else's feelings. Aggressive communicators are usually loud and direct. They tend to have excellent posture and, if possible, tower over others. Sarcasm, rhetorical questions, threats, negative labels, profanity, you-statements, absolutes, such as *always* and *nobody*, finger pointing, table pounding, hands on hips and glaring are a few of the weapons in their arsenal. Demonstrate an aggressive teacher speaking to the student.

Teacher: You idiot, there are so many mistakes in this project that I need a new eraser! I don't care if you have to stay here all weekend; get it fixed by Monday or you flunk. You're always missing your deadlines and you never do things right. You students are a bunch of worthless kids. It's because of lousy students like you that America is losing its cutting edge on education!

The underlying message in an aggressive communication is: "I'm superior and right and you're inferior and wrong". The advantage of aggressive behavior is that people often give aggressors what they want just to get rid of them. The major disadvantages are that aggressiveness can cause others to retaliate in kind or even in some devious way. Aggression tends to create uncooperative enemies with whom you'll have to deal in the future.

Passive Communication

In passive communication, opinions, feelings and wants are withheld altogether or expressed only partially and indirectly. The

passive communicator tends to speak softly. Eye contact is often poor and posture is frequently slouched yet tense, conveying a message of submission. Demonstrate a passive student responding to an aggressive teacher.

Student: (under her breath) I don't have to take this kind of abuse from this jerk!
(Out loud, after a big sigh, with faint sarcasm) I'll get on it right away.

Step C. Learn To Distinguish Between the Three Modes of Communication

Process: Give the child a copy of the ***Six Problematic Social Scenes***, adapted from Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988 [Form: **CBM#23-002**]. You can put each scene on a three by five card or copy it *in toto*. Discuss each scene and ensure that the child understands the concepts of assertive, passive and aggressive communication and can identify it. You may also decide to create different scenes that are more appropriate to the individual child you are working with. However, if you use the attached Form: **CBM#23-002**, the answers are as follows.

Answers:

Scene 1: **A** is aggressive. **A** uses sarcasm, rhetorical questions, you-messages, and absolutes. S/he does not take into account the feelings of **B**, who becomes immediately resentful and uncooperative in response to the accusations.

Scene 2: **A** is aggressive. The tone is accusing and blaming. **B** responds with reluctance and out of guilt.

Scene 3: **A** is passive. **A**'s timid requests, preceded by apologies, make it easy for busy **B** to say 'no'.

Scene 4: **A** is assertive. The request is specific, non-hostile, open to negotiation, and successful.

Scene 5: **A** is passive. **A** can't say 'no' directly and instead asks a series of questions, hoping to discourage **B**. Finally **A** makes a lame excuse that **B** easily counters.

Scene 6: **A** is assertive. She calmly stands up to the prevailing opinion of the group and achieves a clear, non-threatening statement of her position.

Step D. Define Criteria for Measuring Change in Assertive Behavior

Process: Use the following example and the blank Form: **CBM#23-003** for exploring the needs of the individual child. Examine with the child how the form was filled out and discuss the ratings of importance and difficulty. After you are sure that the child understands the nature of what is being requested, you can give the child the blank form as homework, or fill the form out with him/her.

Assertiveness Problems and Goals: SAMPLE

Instructions: rate situations on a 1 [low] to 5 [high] scale in terms of their *importance* and of the *difficulty* in achieving assertive behavior.

Five Social Situations In Which I Have Importance Difficulty Total
Difficulty Being Assertive

Examples:

1. Problem: I always say 'yes' to my boss when he asks me to do overtime. (passive)
Goal: I'd like to say 'no' when I'm feeling burned out or have made plans for the night. 2 x 3 = 6
2. Problem: I never ask my peers for help. (passive)
Goal: I specifically want to ask for help when I don't know how to get along and I don't know the answer to a question. 1 x 3 = 3
3. Problem: I rarely tell my parents what I think of what they're doing when I know it will start a fight, since we see things so differently. (passive)
Goal: I want to tell my father that I think he has a drinking problem. I want to tell my mother that I disagree with her policy of cleaning up my father's messes when he gets drunk. 5 x 5 = 25
4. Problem: I get tongue-tied when I try to express my positive feelings to my girl/boy friend, so I don't do it. (passive)
Goal: I want to tell him/her how much I appreciate her 4 x 5 = 20
5. Problem: I tend to blow up at my brother when he behaves like a smart aleck and doesn't do his chores. (aggressive)
Goal: I would like to calmly re-state what I want him to do and the consequences if he doesn't. 3 x 4 = 12

Total = 66

Step E. Identifying Mistaken Traditional Assumptions and Countering Them With Assertive Rights

Depending on the appropriateness, you may want to give the child a copy of **Form CBM#23-004** which compares traditional assumption and individual rights and have discussion about the conceptual content.

Step F. Confronting Fears About Being Assertive

Discussion: Some children hesitate to behave assertively because they fear that something bad will happen to them. Three typical fears, include: fear of rejection, fear of failure and fear of making a fool of oneself. Here are nine questions and hypothetical answers to guide the child in examining his/her fears about being assertive and in deciding whether it is worth it to him/her to be assertive in a particular situation.

Read and discuss the following example with the client. If you are sure that the child understands what is being asked, you can give a blank copy as homework for each specific situation that is being addressed.

CBM#23-0005

SAMPLE

Confronting Fears

1. If I am assertive in this situation with so-and-so what is the worst thing that could happen?

(Example: If I ask someone to the dance and s/he says 'no', I will feel worthless.)

2. What beliefs do I have that would lend probability to this happening?

(Example: I'd have to believe that my worth hinges on

someone indicating his/her approval of me by accepting my invitation.)

3. Is there any evidence to support this belief?
(Example: Not really.)
4. What evidence is there to refute this belief?
(Example: I have value that is independent of this person's opinion. I value myself as a person; I have a lot of good qualities and I am a good friend, student, musician, and son/daughter.)
5. What would be a more realistic negative outcome of my being assertive in this situation?
(Example: The person could say 'no', in which case I would be disappointed.)
6. How might I respond to or cope with this negative outcome?
(Example: I would feel disappointed for a while. I would remind myself of my value as a person and that one rejection doesn't destroy my worth. I would talk to my best friend about it, and then ask someone else to the dance.)
7. What is the best thing that could happen?
(Example: S/he would accept my invitation and we would have a great time.)
8. What is going to happen if I continue to do what I have been doing? (Example: I will spend Friday night at home alone.)
9. Is it worth it to me to be assertive on this situation. [Weigh your responses to questions 5-8 before answering.]
(Example: It is worth risking the disappointment of someone turning down my invitation on the chance that I won't have to stay home Friday night but instead will have a date for the dance.)

Step G. Criticism as a Form of Manipulation

Discussion: The Mentor will discuss with the child the fact that many people have difficulty dealing with criticism because they experience it as personal rejection. Explore this attitude for this client - How does s/he experience criticism?

Additionally, for some clients, all directive communication becomes in his/her mind criticism. People who are used to being manipulated by others often see all behavior as manipulative. For children with problems in living, this experience may also be true. Ask the child to describe times when s/he was criticized? Does s/he include direction as criticism?

The 'natural' response is to feel defensive when we receive criticism. This is true for all people. Those who tend to be aggressive in their behaviors may counterattack; those who are passive may 'suffer in silence'. But neither response provides a basis for **learning** about yourself and about how others see you. By not defending yourself, you open up the possibility that you are taking a joke seriously, or taking a serious comment as an attack. Assertive communication will require attentive listening.

So the first lesson you need to keep in mind is: *no points to defend*. What this means is that no matter what the criticism is, you do not need to defend yourself. If someone says you're 'crazy', you can ask 'How so?'. 'What is it that I do that makes you believe that I am 'crazy'?' You may learn that the person has a perspective that makes a bizarre statement make sense.

Obviously, the Mentor will need to *model* this lack of defensiveness throughout the engagement. If the Mentor becomes defensive when the child in anger calls him/her a 'jackass' or a 'moron', it is not likely that the child will learn not to be defensive.

Seven [07] assertive strategies for dealing with criticism will help

keep relationships and self-esteem intact. These strategies include 1) acknowledgment, 2) clouding, 3) probing, 4) the content-to-process shift, 5) time out, 6) slowing down, and 7) the broken record technique.

These strategies have underlying concepts that may require that the Mentor tailor them to the unique needs and age development of the child. The Mentor should take the time to discuss these strategies and understand how the child would see using such strategies. The Mentor may want to 'role play' each strategy to ensure that the child 'gets it'. Take as much time on each piece as necessary. Afterwards, the Mentor can give 'homework' on each strategy or group of strategies and have the child record and report on a situation where criticism was given and how the strategy was used. Child and Mentor can then evaluate both whether the correct usage occurred and the impact that the usage had on the situation.

Like any other new skill, practice is key. The child needs to be encouraged to record in a Daily Criticism Journal Form: **CBM#23-006**, the occurrences of criticism, the strategies employed and the outcomes.

1. Acknowledgment

When someone offers constructive criticism, you can use this feedback to improve yourself. When you have made a mistake, having someone point it out to you can be helpful in preventing future errors.

Whenever you receive criticism with which you agree, whether it is constructive or simply a reminder, acknowledge that the critic is right. Examples: 'Yes, I did manage to put on one navy and one black sock this morning. Thanks for pointing it out.' 'You're right, I am running 30 minutes late with my appointments today.' 'Thanks for letting me know that my voice is too soft for you to hear in the back of the room.'

You do not need to give excuses or apologize for your behavior. As a child when asked such questions as 'Why did you spill the milk?' or 'Why were you ten minutes late?' You might have been expected to give reasonable answers, and, if you did not have reasonable answers, you may have learned to manufacture reasonable excuses. As an emerging adult you can choose to give an explanation for your behavior, but you do not need to do so. Ask the child if s/he really want to give an answer, or if s/he is just responding that way out of habit.

2. Probing

Occasionally you will be uncertain about the critic's motivation. Is the critic trying to help you and merely going about it awkwardly? Is the critic actually trying to hurt you under the guise of being helpful? Are the critic's comments actually hiding unspoken beliefs, feelings, and desires? Especially if the critic is someone who matters to you, you may want to probe further into the criticism to answer these questions. This requires listening carefully - a major feat when someone is giving you criticism. Nonconstructive, manipulative criticism with which you disagree needs some definition. An important point for the child to understand is that there is both *style* and *content* to criticism. Often we get defensive because of the style of the critic, while the content is not as problematic. Listen closely to the communication and identify the style and content.

The style may be perceived as aggressive and the content true. Or the style may be perceived as merely assertive and the content not true. Or the content may be perceived as both true and not true depending upon certain circumstances. By having *no points to defend* and by asking the probing questions about the reasons the person is saying what they are, you may learn something about yourself and others. Most people who are not trying to take advantage of you will find your nondefensive manner very powerful. Those who are trying to be manipulative will find it

difficult to deal with. They *want* you to be defensive - this is what verifies the effectiveness of the attack.

3. Clouding

When you have determined that the criticism is more to aggrandize the critic than to serve you, this may deserve the assertive technique known as clouding. Clouding is an attempt to 'cloud' the critic's issues by continuing a nondefensive response, through a process of defusing the content. The manipulative critic usually takes a grain of the truth and elaborates on it, using his/her ample imagination to put you down. For example: 'Williams, late with that report? You're always late. I can't imagine, how you have gotten this far with your inadequate work habits. Why, if everybody in this school were as slow and lazy as you are we would have to hang a hammock in every classroom!'

What should you listen for? Manipulative critics are expert at name-calling and *you*-messages. They bring up old history. They use absolutes such as *always*, *never* and *everyone*, so these are key words to listen for. If you are foolish enough to try to reason with them, you only give them more ammunition for their case. They are not interested in listening to you, even when they ask you a question. Their fragile egos require them to be right and to always win their point.

When you're tempted to justify yourself or retaliate in kind to manipulative criticism, remind yourself that you will only feed a senseless argument which you cannot possibly win. If you are still unconvinced, reflect back on times you have tried to reason or get even with a manipulative critic. Why continue to waste your time doing something so unpleasant and unproductive? As an alternative, learn how to stop manipulative critics in their tracks. On the other hand it is difficult for all of us to just sit and listen to a manipulative critic and not have some 'nasty' thoughts which fuel some strong emotions that make it hard for us to not respond with a behavior that is likely to escalate the issue. While

this is true for all manipulative critics, it is especially difficult for a child, whose critic is often a person of authority. That is why it is important to teach effective ways to diffuse manipulative criticism through agreement.

a. *Agree in Part*

The first way involves finding some part of the manipulative critic's statement that you think is true, and agreeing with it. Rephrase the critic's sentence so that you can honestly concur. Drop the absolutes. Ignore the rest of the message. In response to the example just stated, you might simply reply, 'You're right, I am late with this report'.

The critic will usually try to force you into admitting further wrongdoing. But if you continue to find some part of what the critic is saying to agree with, s/he will soon tire of trying to prove that s/he is right and you are wrong. After all, it is not much of a challenge to argue with someone who keeps agreeing with you.

b. *Agree in Probability*

A second form of clouding which you can use with a manipulative critic requires that you find something in what the manipulative critic is saying with which you can probably agree. You can think to yourself that the odds of his/her being right are one in a hundred as you reply: 'You're probably right that I'm often late'. Again, change the wording slightly so that you do not compromise your integrity and agree with something you don't believe.

c. *Agree in Principle*

The third and final form of clouding involves agreeing with the manipulative critic in principle. This requires simple logic: if X, then Y. 'If everyone in the school were as slow and lazy as you say I am, we would have to reduce the expectation and have a special

school.'

4. Content-to-Process Shift

When your conversation with someone gets stymied because of strong feelings or because of a conflict of needs or wants, shift the focus of the discussion from the topic to an analysis of what is going on between the two of you.

For example, you are assertively asking your friend to talk to you more, and s/he responds with: 'You feel like I'm ignoring you? Why, I remember a time you hardly spoke to me.' Rather than getting into a fruitless argument about the past, you reply: 'You appear to be angry with me'. You state a *simple observation about the nature of the interaction while ignoring the content of the interaction entirely*.

The purpose of this tool is to get the conversation shifted back to the original topic and away from the manipulative criticism. Typical problems that you may have in practicing content-to-process shift for the first time include:

- a. Lapsing into an explanation of why the other person has gotten off the track, when the purpose of this tool is simply to point out that the conversation has been derailed so that it can be brought on track again.
- b. Being accused of psychoanalyzing the other party as a ploy to discount the content-to-process shift. A good response to this is, 'I'm simply stating my own opinion, and then to return to the original topic.'
- c. Being told that the process comment is wrong. Rather than getting into a debate, use acknowledgment or clouding, and then return to the original topic.
- d. Rigidly sticking to the original topic when the content-to-

process shift comment has brought up something that would best be resolved before your return to the original topic. This is particularly true when the other party has an agenda that is so important to him/her that it prevents him/her from recognizing yours.

5. Time Out

When you reach an impasse in a discussion, you may want to postpone the conversation until another time. Time out is useful when the interaction is either too passive or too aggressive. One of you may be silent, crying, distracted, unready to make a decision, or agreeing with everything the other says. Or perhaps one of you is hitting below the belt by name-calling, bringing up ancient complaints, or being manipulatively critical. If you or the other person feels too pressured to communicate or think at the moment, give yourself time to cool off, reflect on what has been said, and return later with the positive intention of communicating instead of merely proving your point and winning. For example, in response to a person who is pouting, you assertively call a time out: 'This is not a good time to resolve our difference of opinion. Let's talk about it tomorrow'.

6. Slowing Down

Don't think that you have to respond immediately to every situation. You don't have to produce an instant answer. Many people believe that they do not think well 'on their feet' and need to mull things over before a response. When the other person does not think that way, the conversation may end up going too fast, with one making a response that they may not feel good about after they think about it. Momentary delays allow you to:

1. Be sure that you understand what the speaker has said.
2. Process what has been said.

3. Become aware of what you think, feel and want in regard to what has been said.
4. Avoid saying things that you may regret later.
5. Consciously influence the situation toward the outcome you want.

Typical statements that you can use to slow down an interaction include:

- This is too important to race through...let's slow down.
- That's an interesting point...let me think about it for a moment.
- Wait a minute. I want to give you my honest answer.
- Is this what I hear you saying?, (Repeat what you think you heard while taking time to take it in and reflect on it.)
- I'm not sure I understand ...could you say that again?

7. Broken Record Procedure

The *broken record procedure* is one of seven [07] assertive skills that will help the child deal more effectively with uncooperative and manipulative people.

The key to the broken record technique is persistent repetition in the face of adversity. The child will need to be reminded of his/her legitimate rights [See **Form CBM#23-004**] so s/he is not manipulated into giving in to individuals whose interests conflict with his/her own. Occasionally, you encounter people - salespeople, children, or a stubborn friend - who will not take 'no'

for an answer. When you have a legitimate authority to set limits and someone else is having difficulty getting your message, you need to take a stand and stick to it. This is not a method to avoid following the directives of a parent and/or teacher, simply because you 'don't feel like it'.

This approach is also effective in telling people what you want when their own wishes are preventing them from seeing yours.

1. Decide exactly what you want or don't want. Review your thoughts about the situation, your feelings, and your rights.
2. Create a brief, specific, easy-to-understand statement about what you want. One sentence is best. Give no excuses or explanations. Do not say "I can't". The other person will point out to you that this is just another excuse and show you how you can. It's much simpler and more truthful to say "I don't want to". Eliminate any loopholes in your brief statement which the other person could use to further his or her position.
3. Use body language to support your statement - good posture, direct eye contact and a calm, confident and determined voice.
4. Firmly repeat your brief statement as many times as necessary for the person to get your message and to realize that you won't change your mind. S/he will probably invent a number of excuses or simply say 'no'. Eventually even the most aggressive person will run out of no's and excuses, if you are persistent. Change your brief statement only if the other person finds a serious loophole in it.
5. You may want to acknowledge the other person's opinions, feelings, or wants before returning to your broken record. But do not feel obligated to answer questions. Be careful not to be distracted from your goal.

The Mentor may want to have the child use a specific situation from his/her completed Form **CBM#23-003** or use another example. The child should think through the problem and offer his/her own thoughts on a brief statement and role play its use and body language.

Step H. Assertive Position Statement

Discussion When you want to express yourself on a specific issue, use an assertive position statement. The issue may be a small one, such as where to have dinner with your friend. The issue may be a major one, such as explaining to your teacher why you deserve a better grade. In any event, you need to express your position clearly and fully, because partial communication can lead to misunderstandings and frustration.

An assertive position statement includes four [04] important dimensions:

1. Your perspective on the situation
2. Your feelings
3. Your wants
4. A reinforcement to motivate the other person to cooperate

The first element is your definition of the problem, or how you see the situation. It's essential for focusing the discussion. Here is your opportunity to share your opinion and beliefs regarding the issue at hand. Try to be nonblaming. Use noninflammatory language that states the problem as *objectively* as possible. For example: 'It's time to make a decision about where we're going to eat tonight. I know you love Mexican food, but we've eaten at Tijuana Joe's the last three times we've gone out for dinner. We're in a bit of a rut!'

Remember, this is your perspective, the other person may have a different perspective.

The second element, your feelings, gives the other person a better understanding of how important an issue is to you. Do not substitute an opinion for a feeling ['I think Mexican food should be abolished!']. An example of a feeling is, 'I hate Mexican food!' Once they are expressed, your feelings can often play a major role in helping you get what you want, especially when your opinion differs markedly from that of your listener. If nothing else, the listener may be able to relate to and understand your feelings about an issue, even when s/he totally disagrees with your perspective. When you share your feelings, you may become less of an adversary. Expression of your feelings often makes possible either an agreement to disagree or a workable compromise. Unfortunately, feelings are often left out of communication.

The other person may feel differently. S/he may love Mexican food and not understand how anyone could 'hate' it. However, this is not a discussion about whether or not Mexican food is any good, it is how you feel about Mexican food.

The third element, your wants, is best stated in a simple sentence or two. Instead of expecting others to read your mind and magically meet your needs, as in the case of the passive individual, you clearly state your wishes and needs. Try to be specific about what you want. Ask people to change behavior, not attitudes. Rather than assuming that you are always right and entitled to get your way, as an aggressive person might, state your wants as preferences rather than commands. For example: I would really like to go to a French restaurant tonight.

The other person may want Mexican food. However, s/he now understands a perspective that we have had Mexican food three times in a row and you don't like it. That represents a clear statement of past conciliation; perhaps it is time for them to be

conciliatory too.

The fourth element is to motivate the other person to give you what you want by reinforcing his/her cooperation. Let the other person know how s/he will benefit by cooperating with you: 'We'll save money', 'I'll be less tired and more fun to be with', 'I'll make your favorite meal', 'You'll have more time to...'. If the other person is very resistant, positive reinforcement may not work. In such cases, state the negative consequences for failure to cooperate. When describing negative consequences, do not make threats such as this: 'If you don't pick up after yourself, I'm going to throw out every stitch of your clothing I find on the floor'. This only breeds defensiveness and hostility. Instead, say how you will take care of yourself if your wishes are not accommodated: 'If you won't help with the chores, I'll hire a maid with your allowance money'. If you drink, I'll drive." "If you don't go with me, I'll invite a friend to go instead.

Here are a few examples of the assertive position statement:

'I've noticed that you've been late to our meeting several weeks running. We end up having to stop the meeting to fill you in. I'm really irritated when this meeting runs into the lunch hour, and I would appreciate your making a point of getting here on time. That way we can break earlier for lunch.'

'In talking with you this past hour, I'm impressed that we have so much in common. I sure have enjoyed getting acquainted with you. In fact, I haven't had such a good time in months!' I'd like to invite you to dinner to continue our conversation.

'In reviewing your performance record over the last six months, I see that you haven't met your monthly quota once. We've talked about this before. I am disappointed with your performance. I want you to

reach your quota this month or quite frankly, I'm going to have to ask you to leave.'

Expressing thoughts, feelings, and desires in assertive position statements enhances the chance that the message you want to send will be the message the listener receives. Notice that these assertive position statements do not blame or use attacking labels. The listener is less likely to become highly defensive, tune out what you are saying, and prepare a counterattack or retreat. The situation is described specifically and objectively without slipping into negative judgments. By using *I*-messages, rather than *you*-messages, you own your opinion, feelings, and wants. When delivering an assertive position statement, use good posture, direct eye contact, and a calm voice.

An assertive position statement is difficult to ignore or misunderstand. Just in case, check to be sure that your listener is following what you're saying. You can do this by periodically asking the listener to summarize what s/he heard you say. If the synopsis is accurate, you can safely proceed. Don't ask your listener, 'Do you understand?'. Instead, you might say, 'I would like to hear your version of what you heard me just say', or 'Could you restate what I've just said, so I can be sure I'm making myself clear?'

Hand out copies of the Form **CBM#23-007**. Have the child complete an Assertive Position Statement for a specific situation. Review and discuss. When you are satisfied that the child understands and can create an Assertive Position Statement, you can use it as homework and have the child fill out as many Assertive Position Statements for specific situations as required.

Step I. Assertive Listening

Discussion: In listening assertively, you focus your attention on the other person so that you can accurately hear the speaker's opinions, feelings and wishes. Use the procedures of *slowing*

down and *time out* when appropriate. Assertive listening involves three [03] steps:

1. **Prepare:** Become aware of your own feelings and needs. Are you ready to listen? Are you sure that the other person is ready to speak?
2. **Listen:** Give your full attention to the other person: listen to the speaker's perspective, feelings, and wants. If you are uncertain about one of these three elements, ask the speaker for more information. Examples: 'I'm not quite sure how you view the situation could you say more about it?' 'How do you feel about this?' 'I don't understand what you want. Could you be more specific?'
3. **Acknowledge:** Communicate to the other person that you heard his/her position, using reflective listening. For example, 'I hear you don't want to take on this new project because you're feeling overwhelmed with your current responsibilities and want to catch up'. Another way to acknowledge the other person's feelings is to share your own feelings about what has been said: 'I'm feeling overwhelmed too, and I feel bad about having to ask you to do more work.'

Role Play - Expressing and Listening

When you are involved in a heated conflict with another person, the two of you can take turns using assertive expressing and listening. Many problems are revealed simply by stating clearly what each of you thinks, feels and wants. This can frequently clear up misunderstandings or create unexpected solutions to problems. Opportunities for this type of communication abound between people who live or work together. Sometimes these opportunities occur spontaneously, but often you need to arrange a mutually convenient time and place to discuss the

problem.

Workable Compromise

Discussion: When two people's interests are in direct conflict, a firm compromise that totally satisfies both parties is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Instead, you can look for a workable compromise you can both live with, at least for a while. Here are a few examples of workable compromises (Davis, Eshelman, & McKay, 1988).

- My way when I do it, your way when you do it.
- My way this time, your way next time.
- Part of what I want with part of what you want.
- If you'll do X for me, I'll do Y for you.
- We'll try my way this time; and if you don't like it, you can veto it next time.

Although a compromise may naturally emerge in your discussion, you sometimes need a brainstorming session to come up with one. Brainstorming a workable compromise involves four steps. Use the steps listed on Form: **CBM#23-008, Role Play** to working out a compromise. The Mentor may choose to give this assignment as Homework - working out a compromise in a situation with a friend, which is documented, reviewed and discussed.

Another approach to finding a workable compromise involves asking the other person to counter your proposal. If you find the counter proposal to be unacceptable, be sure that you understand the feelings and needs of the other person regarding the issue at hand, and then come up with another proposal of your own. Continue back and forth until you come up with a

proposal you both can live with.

A useful question to ask when you're having difficulty arriving at a compromise is: "What would you need from me to feel okay about doing this my way?" The answer to this question may serve as the basis for a workable compromise.

Form: **CBM#23-001** Typical Response to Problem Situations

1. As you walk out of a supermarket, you realize that you have been shortchanged a dollar.

I would _____.

2. You order a rare steak and it arrives medium-well.

I would _____.

3. A co-student asks you to give him a lift to where his car is being repaired. It is not convenient for you to do this favor.

I would _____.

4. You are going to a movie with someone who gets a phone call from an old friend just as you are going out the door. The phone conversation goes on and on and you realize that you are going to be late if you don't leave right now.

I would _____.

5. You've been waiting in line for a movie for 30 minutes and somebody cuts in ahead of you.

I would _____.

6. You are watching your favorite TV program when your girl/boyfriend says "I have to talk to you right now, it's really important".

I would _____.

7. The teacher criticizes you in a way that seems unfair in front of your peers.

I would _____.

8. An acquaintance suggests that the two of you go to restaurant A and you very much prefer to go to restaurant B.

I would _____.

This form is adapted from, Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988.

Form: **CBM#23-002**

Six Problematic Social

Scenes (adapted from Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988).

Scene 1.

- A. Looks like somebody's been driving by the Braille system. Isn't that a new dent I see in the car?
- B. Its not my fault and I don't want to talk about it now!
- A. No way are we going to let this go. You always try to weasel out of your responsibilities.
- B. Get off my case!
- A. I want to take care of this right now.
- B. No way!

A's behavior is _____ Assertive _____ Aggressive _____ Passive

Form: **CBM#23-002a**

Scene 2

- A. Why didn't you call me last night? You know that I was feeling lonely because your Dad is away on a business trip.
- B. I was busy.
- A. Too busy to call your own mother?
- B. Sorry, Mom, I just forgot.
- A. Well, I think that you are very thoughtless.
- B. Thanks a bunch, Mom.

A's behavior is _____ Assertive _____ Aggressive _____ Passive

Form: **CBM#23-002b**

Scene 3

- A. I know that this will be a big inconvenience to you, but would you mind changing the time of our appointment on Thursday?
- B: No can do.
- A: Well, I hate to bother you, but could you at least look at your calendar to see if there might be some other time you can squeeze me in.
- B: Look, I'm busy ... get back to me later.
- A: All right. Sorry for the interruption.

A's behavior is _____ Assertive _____ Aggressive _____ Passive

Form: **CBM#23-002c**

Scene 4

- A. Susan called and asked if we could babysit Friday night so that she can have a little time alone with her husband. I think that it would be fun.
- B. Fun? After working all week? You know I'm always dog-tired by Friday night!
- A. I'd really like to help Susan out. Friday night is your night to play couch potato, Saturday we have plans, so how about Sunday?
- B. Much better I'd enjoy that.

A's behavior is _____ Assertive _____ Aggressive _____ Passive

Form: **CBM#23-002d**

Scene 5

- A. Can I borrow your car tonight? I have to go to the library.
- B. When?
- A. Just from six until nine, when it closes.
- B. That means you won't be back until nine-thirty.
- A. So nine-thirty then. Can I have it?
- B. Will you put gas in it?
- A. I can put a buck into it, if you like.
- B. I don't think I can spare it tonight. I might need it to go out - the kids have bad colds. What if I had to take them to the hospital in an emergency?
- A. Have Joe drive you - he's going to be here all evening.
- B. Well, I guess you're right. Okay.

A's behavior is _____ Assertive _____ Aggressive _____ Passive

Form: **CBM#23-002e**

Scene 6

(Over lunch, A tells her girlfriends that she is a pro-lifer, and they criticize her for not being willing to leave the choice about whether to have an abortion up to the individual woman.)

- A: You certainly have a right to your opinions, but I happen to believe that the unborn child has a right to live, and it depresses me to think that a child's life is snuffed out because it's inconvenient to the mother. I'd like to see stronger legislation to protect the unborn child's rights and support motherhood.

A's behavior is _____ Assertive _____ Aggressive _____ Passive

Form: **CBM#23-002f**

Form: **CBM#23-003**
and Goals

Assertiveness Problems

Instructions: rate situations on a 1 [least] to 5 [most] scale in terms of their importance and of the difficulty in achieving assertive behavior.

<u>Five Social Situations In Which I Have</u>	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Difficulty</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Difficulty Being Assertive</u>			

Examples:

1. Problem:

Goal _____ x _____ =

2. Problem:

Goal _____ x _____ =

3. Problem:

Goal _____ x _____ =

4. Problem:

Goal _____ x _____ =

5. Problem:

Goal _____ x _____ =

Total =

Form CBM#23-004 [page one]

**Identifying Mistaken Traditional Assumptions and
Countering Them With Assertive Rights** (adapted from Davis,
Eshelman & McKay, 1988)

Mistaken Traditional Assumptions Your Assertive Rights

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. It's selfish to put your needs before others. | You have the right to put yourself first sometimes. |
| 2. It's shameful to make mistakes. | You have a right to make mistakes. |
| 3. If you can't convince someone that your feelings are reasonable, then they must be wrong. | You have a right to be the final judge of your feelings and accept them as legitimate. |
| 4. You should respect the views of others, especially if they are in a position of authority. Keep your differences of opinion to yourself. Listen and learn. | You have the right to express your own opinions and beliefs. |
| 5. You should always try to be logical and consistent. | You have the right to change your mind. |
| 6. You should be flexible and adjust. Others have good reasons for their actions and it is impolite to question them. | You have a right to question what you don't like and to protest unfair treatment or criticism. |
| 7. You should never interrupt people. Asking questions reveals your stupidity. | You have a right to ask for clarification. |
| 8. Things could get even worse; don't rock the boat. | You have a right to negotiate for change. |
| 9. You shouldn't take up others' valuable time with your problems. | You have a right to ask for help or emotional support. |
| 10. People don't want to hear that you feel bad, so keep it to yourself. | You have a right to feel and express pain. |
| 11. When someone takes the time to give you advice, you should take it. | You have the right to ignore the advice of others. |
| 12. Knowing that you have something special or have done something well is its own reward. People don't like showoffs. | You have a right to receive formal recognition for your special qualities and talents and for your work and achievements. |
| 13. You should always try to accommodate others. If you don't they won't be there for you. | You have a right to say 'no'. |
| 14. Don't be antisocial. People will think that you don't like them if you say that you would rather be alone than be with them. | You have a right to be alone, even if others request your company. |

Form CBM#23-004 [page two]

Identifying Mistaken Traditional Assumptions and Countering Them With Assertive Rights (adapted from Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 15. You should always have a good reason for what you feel or do. | You have a right not to justify yourself to others. |
| 16. When someone is in trouble, you should give help. | You have the right not to take responsibility for everyone else's problems |
| 17. You should be sensitive to the needs and wishes of others, even when they are unable to tell you what they want. | You have a right not to have to anticipate the needs and wishes of others. |
| 18. It's always a good policy to stay on people's good side. | You have a right not to worry about the goodwill of others. |
| 19. It's not nice to put people off. If questioned, give an answer. | You have the right to choose not to respond to a question or situation. |
| 20. You should be able to answer all questions about a field of knowledge with which you are familiar. | You have the right to say 'I don't know' or 'I don't understand.' |

Form CBM#23-005 Confronting My Fears About Being Assertive

1. If I am assertive in this situation with so-and-so, what is the worst thing that could happen?

2. What beliefs do I have that would lend probability to this happening?

3. Is there any evidence to support this belief?

4. What evidence is there to refute this belief?

5. What would be a more realistic negative outcome of my being assertive in this situation?

6. How might I respond to or cope with this more realistic negative outcome?

7. What is the best thing that could happen?

8. What is going to happen if I continue to do what I have been doing?

9. Is it worth it to me to be assertive in this situation? [Weigh your response to questions 5-8 before answering.]

Form: **CBM#23-007**

Assertive Position Statements

Instructions: Use this form to write assertive position statements for situations in your life in which you would like to convey your position clearly.

Situation: (Describe)

I think (your perspective)

I feel

I want

If you
