
1 Being specific

Decide what it is you want or feel, and say so specifically or directly. This skill will help you to be clear about what exactly it is you want to communicate. Avoid unnecessary padding and keep your statement simple and brief.

2 Repetition (broken record technique)

This skill involves preparing what you are going to say and repeating it exactly, as often as necessary, in a calm relaxed manner. It helps you to stick to your statement or request without being distracted. Using this technique, you can relax because you know what you are going to say and you can maintain a steady comment, avoiding irrelevant logic or argumentative bait.

3 Workable compromise

This is important to remember when there is a conflict between your needs or wishes, and those of someone else. Assertiveness is not about winning, so you need to negotiate from an equal position. This means finding a true compromise which takes both parties' needs into consideration. Compromising on a solution to a difficult situation need not compromise your self-respect.

4 Self-disclosure

This skill allows you to disclose your feelings with a simple statement, for example, 'I feel nervous' or 'I feel guilty'. The immediate effect is to reduce your anxiety, enabling you to relax and take charge of yourself and your feelings.

5 Negative assertion

This skill involves calmly agreeing with someone else's true criticism of your negative qualities and accepting that you have faults eg, 'Your desk is a complete and utter tip. You are very disorganised.' 'Yes, it's true, I'm not very tidy.' The key to using negative assertion is, of course, self-confidence and a belief that you have the ability to change yourself if you so wish. By agreeing with and accepting criticism, if it is appropriate, you need not feel totally demolished.

6 Negative inquiry

This skill involves actively prompting criticism of your behaviour, to ascertain whether the criticism is constructive, or to expose it as manipulative and hurtful. For example, 'You'll find that difficult won't you, because you are so shy?' You reply, 'In what ways do you think I'm shy?' If the criticism is constructive, that information can be used constructively and the general channel of communication will be improved.