

АССЕРТИВНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ: ГОВОРИ, ЧТО ДУМАЕШЬ, ДУМАЙ, ЧТО ГОВОРИШЬ

Аннотация Статья посвящена исследованию проблемы асертивности – ценному качеству в области навыков общения [2], что требует, как искреннего выражения чувств, так и сочувствия, чтобы гарантировать, что сказанное отражает потребности и чувства человека, а также уважительное отношение к поведению других людей. Как только кто-то начинает вести себя асертивно, другие сдерживают себя от проявления агрессии и пассивности в своей речи и передают нужное им сообщение таким образом, который будет подходящим наиболее целесообразным для обеих сторон в данном разговоре. Навыки, необходимые в социальном взаимодействии для практики уверенного общения, требуют развитого умения контролировать агрессивное поведение в повседневных разговорах, поскольку в ситуации может быть несколько возмутителей спокойствия, которые бросают вызов нашим умениям вести искренний разговор без столкновений, оценочных суждений и подавления своих основных потребностей. Сама возможность общаться уверенно при потенциально насильственном взаимодействии может показаться немыслимой для тех, кто происходит из среды с нехваткой эмоциональной или социальной поддержки. Однако при правильном обучении и практике уверенность в себе немедленно становится ключевым ресурсом в условиях общества, когда приходится иметь дело с соотношением сил и конфликтом интересов, потенциально подвергая или подвергаясь насилию любого рода, от мелких повседневных разногласий и до гражданской войны. Социальные практики, связанные со стремлением утвердиться, будут процветать по мере того как отдельные люди и как общество в целом будут учитывать как собственные, так и чужие потребности, и справляться с ними соответствующим образом.

Ключевые слова: асертивное поведение; ненасильственное общение; навыки общения, пассивное поведение, агрессивное поведение, коммуникация, эмпатия, социальные навыки.

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ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION: MEAN WHAT YOU SAY, SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

Abstract Assertiveness is an asset within the realm of social skills [2] that requires both authentic expression and empathy so as to ensure what is said is representative of one's needs and feelings while also being respectful to other people's repertoire. Once one engages unassertive behavior, they keep themselves from aggressiveness and passiveness in their discourse and convey the message they need in way that proves appropriate to both parties in a given conversation. The awareness required in social interaction in order to practice assertive communication demands a move from passion to compassion in everyday talk, as there may be several triggers in a given situation that challenge our ability to hold an authentic conversation (mostly) free from clash, judgement and suppression of one's basic needs. The very possibility of assertive communication in potentially violent interactions may seem inconceivable to those who come from a background that lacked emotional or social support. However, if properly taught and practiced, assertiveness immediately becomes a key resource for social settings where individuals have to deal with power relations and conflict of interests while potentially exposing or being exposed to violence of any kind, ranging from small everyday disagreements to civil war. Social practices around assertiveness will flourish to the extent that we as individuals and as a society become aware of own needs and other people's and deal with them accordingly.

Keywords: assertiveness; non-violent communication; social skills, empathy, passive behavior, aggressive behavior, communication, compassion

Assertiveness is an asset within the realm of social skills [2], such as civility, empathy, group coordination and public speech; its practices include, but are not limited to: stating opinions, agreeing, disagreeing, asking for clarification, apologizing, dealing with criticism and so forth [5]. Assertive communication requires both authentic expression and empathy so as to ensure what is said is representative of one's needs and feelings while also being respectful to other people's repertoire. Once one engages in assertive behavior, they keep themselves from aggressiveness and passiveness in their discourse and convey the message they need in way that proves appropriate to both parties in a given conversation. According to Rosenberg (2019), in order to effectively engage in assertive communication (or rather, Non-Violent Communication, as he puts it) four steps must be covered, as shown below.

Firstly, there needs to be a careful observation of observation of a given scenario rather than judgment of others, be it their intent, speech or action; such observation should translate into language that describes conflict objectively rather than subjectively i.e., a depiction of a situation free from value judgement. Secondly, there should be identification of current unmet needs. Such needs are universal and range from physi-

cal needs such as shelter and food to essentially emotional ones, such as love and privacy. Once a basic need is not met, it becomes the very root of negative feelings and emotions; these reactions must be appropriately named, as labeling feelings and emotions help understand the effect of such unmet needs. This will often be a challenge as many have not learned to listen to themselves to the point that they are able to appropriately identify and name what they are feeling. This step, however, would be the third in the process of communication-eventually, as a final step, there should be a request for whatever is necessary to meet one's needs which would ideally secure fluid interaction and better rapport among those involved. It is important to note that a request is not a demand: that means that it could be denied, which means this cycle of negotiation in assertive communication may take on much talk or eventually signal the end of an interaction because the needs of our party can just not be met by the other, for instance.

This structure goes both ways, given that one is also supposed to notice and address others' needs as they navigate through self-expression and negotiation in a non-violent conversation. In fact, whenever others notice that their best interest is a priority to those who they talk to, the conversation naturally opens up, as the interaction moves on from competing needs to cooperation in order to achieve a shared goal. Besides, the shapes and forms that such approach may take vary greatly and do not have to be covered in any particular format: there may be assertive communication in social interaction, for instance, through a single word, a simple gesture or silence alone, as long as contextual needs for observation, necessity, feelings and requests are met.

The awareness required in social interaction in order to practice assertive communication demands a move from passion to compassion in everyday talk, as there may be several triggers in a given situation that challenge our ability to hold an authentic conversation (mostly) free from clash, judgement and suppression of one's basic needs. The very possibility of assertive communication in potentially violent interactions may seem inconceivable to those who come from a background that lacked emotional or social support. However, if properly taught and practiced, assertiveness immediately becomes a key resource for social settings where individuals have to deal with power relations and conflict of interests while potentially exposing or being exposed to violence of any kind, ranging from small every day disagreements to civil war. Due to the lack of awareness and training in social skills, however, many people will usually resort to aggressiveness or passiveness when assertiveness would fit best; this in turn results in more overall violence, be it towards others or oneself.

Besides emotional issues, social, cultural and identity structures must be taken into account so as to assure that communication is actually perceived as assertive by both parties in an interaction. Given the fact that different repertoires make for different perceptions of beliefs, practices and linguistic patterns, successful assertive communication goes beyond saying what one means – it demands active listening in order to notice people's needs, feelings and repertoires so as to increase the chances that our talk prevents confusion or discomfort, while also getting one's point across clearly and connecting those in the conversation in the healthiest way possible. As a result, what is achieved is more than just clarity in communication; there is mutual respect and therefore better rapport, building up the connection between those involved in that exchange.

Bearing in mind the notion of clarity, rapport and repertoire for successful assertive communication, it is important to note that being from the same country, party, religion or any other discursive circle does not assure that communication will turn out easier and assertiveness will not be an issue. As a matter of fact, people will often find that their biggest challenges in trying to be assertive lie in circles closest to home. Whenever there is considerable social distance (say, strangers or acquaintances, for instance), people will tend to save their face, avoiding conflicts to some more extent by not showing strong opinions or giving up on an interaction rather than expressing strong disagreement or negotiating needs, for instance. In extreme settings, however (e.g. civil war) this may work the other way around, as the enemy is always seen as more than an outsider and a stranger: they are also perceived as an imminent threat to one's survival and highest goals, values, and needs; in more common settings, it is those who share routines, be it at the workplace or back home, who are seen as adversaries, resulting in domestic violence or moral harassment at work, for instance.

In order to allow for less friction and more collaboration in social interaction, be it at the threat of an imminent war or a mere misunderstanding with a partner, assertiveness works in favor of the needs of all people involved, establishing the grounds for clear expression of one's needs, fair negotiation and a goal oriented solution based on the assumption that conflict arises from the fact that our basic needs are somehow not being met. As a result, rather than perceiving conflict as something that must be avoided at all costs, we may turn the tables and look at it as a desirable signal that further negotiation must be conducted, feelings

must be expressed and/or basic needs must be met. Many of such needs may appear to be impossible to reach, as we are often used to some degree of oppression in communication such as: deceit, aggressiveness, neglect and so forth. However, living in society it is inevitable to notice how basic needs are universal and also how not attending to one's requests in that regard will carry on as a repercussion to everyone else in that system.

From this collaborative and collective perspective, the issue of assertiveness communication can never be approached as an individual cause, despite the fact that the urge to understand, learn and use it will usually stem from an individual level: internal conflicts that could be broadly labeled as lack of authentic and empathic self-expression. So once one notices the need to articulate or somehow display their emotions and negotiate their needs in order to take care of their own interests, as they navigate through discourse and social practice, they will also notice that such personal needs can only be fully met in a social setting if the other party's requests are not also heard and attended to the extent that their basic needs are met. In the long run, if the attempt to communicate only results in free speech and benefits restricted to one's own needs, then that will be met as aggressive towards others rather than assertive, as it will promote dissatisfaction, frustration and hatred among those who are not given the opportunity to express and negotiate their own needs as well.

Another critical issue in the social sphere regarding assertive communication is that what it means to speak one's mind, be heard, or have their needs met will vary dramatically from one cultural setting to another, from one person to another and from one particular circumstance to another. As Canagarajah states [1], grammar is always emergent in interaction—we cannot define the rules for appropriate interaction ahead of any given conversation, as there will always be a very complex and varying web of influences that will simultaneously come into play during any conversation: therefore, for instance, what may seem very assertive in an intercultural conversation with a stranger may be met as harsh if directed to a neighbor and vice versa. The variables that influence what it means to be assertive go way beyond what could be described (belief systems, power relations, social status, etc., to name very few); given such complexity in social interaction, only the state of presence in the form of self-awareness, active listening and rapport may signal what one needs to say and how they can convey their message most appropriately at any given social interaction.

Given the overwhelming differences in economic power across societies, as well as other power a symmetry typically found between minorities and hegemonies of any kind, it is critical to also consider the issue of assertiveness in the light of how power relations in general play out.

Resistance to domination often takes the form of aggression, but because that is met with repression or punishment, people will often resort to passive aggressive behavior and talk, making use of deceit and resources alike in order to hold some degree of autonomy while also preventing worse case scenarios (losing their jobs, being arrested and so forth) [3]. Such resources are precarious alternatives to actual assertive interactions that would result in a more leveled playing field in all kinds of asymmetric power relations, ranging from a child and their mother all the way to a boss and their employees or even a thief and its victim.

In order to promote assertive communication in such scenarios, the psychological and linguistic aspect of assertiveness must be incremented by its social variants as well. One can only hope to express themselves authentically and listen compassionately to the extent that their mind can process such things. That, in turn, demands that they feel safe—if their own livelihood is somehow at risk, for instance, assertiveness may look like some fancy remote concept that is not applicable to their actual routine; despite the fact that extreme situations call for appropriate negotiation of needs, sometimes even so much as attempting to negotiate a basic need might be life threatening if not done appropriately.

As a result, social practices around assertiveness will flourish to the extent that we as individuals and as a society become aware of something beyond our own belief systems and discourse: because it is such a collaborative skill, we will only experience assertive communication to the extent that we care for those who we talk to and learn what it feels like to be at the other end of the conversation with needs that urge to be met, just like the ones we also have.

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