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## ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

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### Abstract

Assertiveness is a very important skills that must be learned as it acts as a gateway to enhancement of confidence, respect and self-esteem.

Assertiveness training is a kind of behavior therapy which helps to increase the assertive behavior in an individual which will boost self-esteem, confidence and self-worth while placing an emphasis on respecting the wants and needs of both parties in a conversational exchange through effecting changes in both verbal and nonverbal assertive behavior. Based upon various research studies assertiveness training has shown to be very effective in bringing up the assertive behaviour in an individual.

**Keywords:** Assertiveness, Assertiveness Training, Components.

### Introduction

Assertiveness is a skill or ability to express or put forth one's own feelings, needs, wants and opinions directly while respecting the feelings, opinion and rights of others.

Assertiveness training teaches patients more constructive ways to express their feelings and present their needs, ways that appropriately balanced the need for self-respect and the need to respect others.<sup>1</sup>

Assertiveness training is an effective behavioural therapy that aims to help individuals change their self-image, easily express themselves, express their thoughts and ideas appropriately and consequently increase their self-esteem. Assertive training helps the people in their ability to say "no", response to unreasonable requests and make requests of others. This training program can be used for people of all ages and from different walks of life. Assertiveness training program is a life skill that builds self-confidence, improves social communication skills, teaches to exercise your rights whilst respecting the rights of others and ultimately increases the amount of life satisfaction and happiness one experiences in life. Training assertiveness skills to individuals is a behavioural approach that has become common in modern life and is specifically beneficial for those who have interpersonal problems.<sup>2</sup>

Assertive training focuses on increasing assertive behavior in individuals to help alleviate interpersonal problems.<sup>3</sup>

### Definition

#### Assertiveness training

Assertive training is a form of behaviour therapy designed to help people stand up for themselves—to empower themselves, in more contemporary terms. It is an answer that seeks to maintain an appropriate response in behaviour, far from passivity and aggression. Furthermore, it promotes fairness and equality in human interactions, based on a positive sense of respect for self and others. An assertive person will protect his/her boundaries, without stepping on someone else private space, and treating them with respect and compassion.<sup>4</sup>

#### Reason for Assertiveness training

Assertiveness training is based on the principle that all people have the right to express one's thoughts, ideas, opinions, feelings, and desires in a direct yet respectful and polite manner without causing harm, fear to others. When a person is not able to express himself, anxiety, depression, anger, worthless feelings develop which will affect our relationship with other people. Assertive behaviour is specific to the particular time and situation. Behaviour that is appropriately assertive for one person in one situation may be either excessively passive or too aggressive for someone else in different situation. Assertiveness training is based on the idea that assertiveness is not inborn, but a learned behaviour.

Behaving assertively can sometimes be difficult for almost anyone, and is often impossible for some people. For this reason, assertiveness training focuses not only on talking about the importance of assertiveness, but also on learning assertive behaviours and practicing these behaviours with the help of professional therapist.<sup>5</sup>

#### Purpose

- To teach people some appropriate strategies for identifying and acting on their desires, needs, and opinions while remaining respectful of others.
- It is important to learn how to communicate in a clear and honest way, because it leads to an improvement of relationships between people around (family, friends, classmates, colleagues).<sup>4</sup>



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## Format

Assertiveness training is ideally conducted in a group format of 6–10 members who are similar in terms of group characteristics and meets for 10–12 sessions. A group format is more effective than individual training sessions because participants can practice using assertive behaviour techniques with each other.

While assertiveness training may function as a standalone treatment, it has also been used as a facet of other treatment programs. For example, assertiveness training has been used as a component of evidence-based cognitive behavioural therapy and functional family therapy protocols for adolescent problems, including interventions for anger management, low self-esteem, and substance use disorders.<sup>6</sup>

## Components of Assertiveness training

Components of assertiveness training includes

1. Psychoeducation,
2. Teaching assertiveness skills and
3. Practicing assertive behavior.

**1. Psychoeducation** defines assertiveness and teaches clients about different types of response options employed in interpersonal communication. The three to interpersonal exchanges are discussed as follows:

- Aggressive responses include yelling, threatening, and putting one's own needs above the conversational partner's, or blatantly disregarding the conversational partner's needs.
- Passive responses involve putting the conversation partner's wants and needs above their own, or doing what someone wants them to do, even if they do not want to.
- Assertive responses consist of the person placing his/her own needs first in a direct, firm, and respectful manner while taking the conversational partner's needs and rights into account

**2. The second component** is teaching several assertiveness skills. The purpose of teaching assertive skills is to add assertive behaviour into people's repertoires. Clients learn how to respond to unreasonable demands, make requests, say "no," and express dissatisfaction. This involves direct instruction in nonverbal and verbal assertive skills such as body language, eye contact, modulation of tone and volume, and word choice. Training in specific assertiveness techniques such as the broken record technique, empathic assertion, escalating assertion, or fogging may also be given to the clients.

**3. Practicing the assertiveness** skills is the last component of assertive training which is done through behavioral rehearsal, role-playing, and response practice. This allows clients to practice assertive skills in increasingly difficult situations, such as saying "no," or refusing after being asked multiple times. Clients may practice hypothetical situations or practice what they want to say for a current challenging or uncomfortable social situation. Crucially, during role-plays, self-feedback, video feedback, and coaching are employed to improve upon assertive behavior.<sup>6</sup>

## Problems in Assertive training

1. Negative evaluations of assertive people by others
2. Confusion between assertion and aggression
3. Problems involves transfer of training the difficulty experienced by trainee in generalising assertive from the training context to real-life situations
4. Finally, some of the difficulties in applying assertion training outside the training context may be due to intuitive training procedures that are inadequately based in research context to real-life situation.<sup>7</sup>

## Evidence bases of Assertive training

In novice anaesthesia trainees, intrapersonal factors and communication performance benefit from repeated simulation training. Focused teaching may help trainees develop assertive behaviours.<sup>8</sup>

A study on design and evaluation of an assertiveness communication training programme for nursing students supports continuing investment in assertiveness communication training programmes for nursing students.<sup>9</sup>

Assertiveness training positively affected the assertiveness and mobbing scores. After the training, the assertiveness scores increased and the mobbing condition score decreased. Assertiveness training is an effective method for decreasing mobbing. In line with these results, training programs, which support nurses' personal development by providing counselling and support to nurse victims of mobbing, are recommended.<sup>10</sup>



Educational institutions that offer specific and targeted assertiveness education will be rewarded with more assertive graduates.<sup>11</sup>

Modified brief assertiveness training seems feasible and may achieve long-term favourable outcomes in improving assertiveness among nurses.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

Assertive training is a very helpful program to enable people to express one's own desire, need, wishes and opinion without hesitation in a respectful and polite manner keeping in mind the desires, wishes and opinion of others. Assertive training is needed especially in the modern world to be able to function smoothly within the society, schools and colleges, work place, and personal life.

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