



Assertion Training

Skills for Handling Demands and Criticisms

Broken Record (or Persistence)

Broken record involves saying what you want over and over again without getting angry, irritated or loud, regardless of how the other person is stonewalling your reasonable requests. When the other person repeats their request to you, simply repeat the same words of refusal. You may have to do this a number of times, but eventually they will get the message. You can add other words of acknowledgement, if you want.

Example of a Request: Can I borrow \$30 from you?

- I can't lend you any money at this time. (Followed by another stronger request)
- I really can't lend you any money. (Followed by another stronger and condemnatory request)
- Yes, we are friends, and I realize you need the money, but I can't lend out any money or I'll run out myself.

Fogging

Fogging involves the acceptance of manipulative criticism by calmly acknowledging to your critic the probability that there may be some truth to what is being said, yet it allows you to remain your own judge of what to do. This allows you to receive criticism comfortably without becoming anxious or defensive while giving no reward to those using manipulative criticism.

Example of a Manipulative Criticism: You made a stupid mistake... You make dumb remarks... You're a dork.... You're too short.

- That could be true. We all have a stupid side of ourselves.
- Yes, sometimes I do say things before thinking about them.
- You may be right that I acted like a dork in that situation
- Yes, I suppose I could meet criteria for being a height-challenged person

Negative assertion

Negative assertion occurs when you offer free information about yourself that you agree is negative. You offer that information, however, in a way that also communicates that you accept yourself as a person in spite of this negative trait or behavior. When you accept yourself as you are--warts and all--others find it difficult to manipulate you based on their criticizing your negative traits.

Example of a Legitimate Criticism: You hurt my feelings when you ignored me at the party.

- You're right. I got too caught up in my conversation with Pete. I regret doing that.
- I wasn't very sensitive to your needs, and I am so sorry.
- I have to admit I'm not very good at figuring out how to juggle socializing with multiple people at a party. I'll do better next time and spend time with you.

Negative inquiry

Negative inquiry involves asking the person who is criticizing you if they have any additional criticisms of you they would like to share. Negative inquiry communicates to the other person that you do not automatically reject yourself simply because you recognize you're human and have some negative behaviors and characteristics. It often leads also to the complaint that is unexpressed but which is at the root of the other person's dissatisfaction with you.

Example of a Criticism: You've been a lousy friend.

- What specifically did I do?
- Tell me more.
- Help me understand your view of the problem.
- Could you give me an example? (Response: You weren't at study group or the bike ride)
- So you're concerned about how much time we are spending together? (The unexpressed complaint)