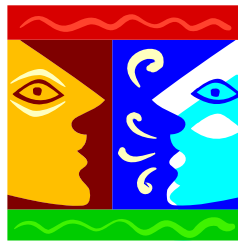


**American Dental Association  
Annual Meeting – October, 2009 – Honolulu, Hawaii**



## **Managing Maalox Moments: Assertively and Confidently**



### **ABOUT OUR SEMINAR:**

Your ability to communicate confidently with colleagues and patients significantly influences how others respond to you. Today we will discuss how to build confidence through assertive communication, with an eye on maintaining positive relationships and reaching goals.

**Just as challenging interpersonal transactions involve your communication with others, this session involves practice with others to start building skills. Your participation during this seminar will increase the benefits you receive from it!**

**DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PRESENTATION:** This seminar was developed specifically for the dental profession by Suzanne Boswell and Jean Corcoran, Ph.D. Suzanne Boswell is a professional speaker, author and patient researcher from Raleigh, NC. Co-author of this program, Dr. Corcoran, is licensed as a Clinical Psychologist and is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

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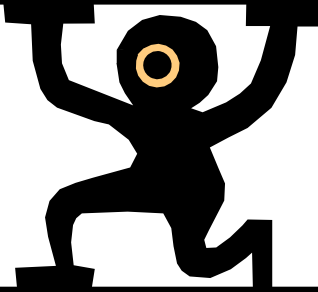
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## ASSERTIVENESS

A manner of behaving that respects

- the rights of others
- and the rights of yourself
- at the same time.



## ASSERTIVE RIGHTS

**I HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- Have and express my own feelings and opinions
- Have my needs be of equal importance to the needs of others
- Ask for what I want knowing others have the right to refuse
- Say “no”

## ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

What it looks and sounds like

**VOCAL:**

- Speak clearly, with confidence
- Relaxed, well-modulated voice – free of emotion
- Using a moderate tone encourages others to hear your words
- Avoid interrupting – allow the other person to verbalize thoughts and feelings

**VISUAL:**

- Make eye contact
- Keep face and body free from stressful expression and gesture
- Maintain an open posture, avoid crossing arms or putting hands on hips
- Maintain confident posture, respecting the bodily comfort zone of the other person
- Listen actively
- Nod as you are listening, if you are truly in agreement

**VERBAL:**

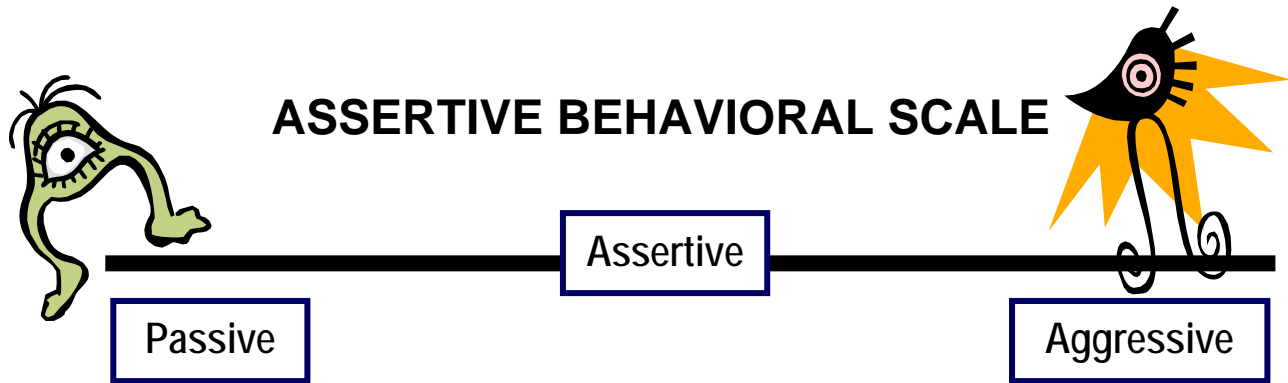
- Be direct and to the point
- Use “I” language
- Request, don’t demand
- Create a feedback loop to ensure the other person that you listened
- After feedback, ask the other person if you correctly understood

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### You are PASSIVE when you ...

- Allow needs, opinions, judgments of others to become more important than your own
- Do not stand up for yourself

#### Typical phrasing:

- "I shouldn't say this, but ..."
- "I'm not really sure ..."
- "I'm not an expert, but ..."
- Rambling (beating around the bush)
- Apologizing excessively

#### Outcomes of passive behavior

Rarely experience direct rejection
May not be taken seriously
May be taken advantage of
May feel resentful

### You are AGGRESSIVE when you ...

- Blame, accuse, threaten, humiliate, or put down another person
- Act with little or no regard for the rights of others.

#### Typical phrasing:

- Sentences begin "You..."
- Absolute terms: "Never" "Always"
- Intent is blaming others, demanding, or being accusatory

#### Outcomes of aggressive behavior

Others avoid these individuals
Others seldom challenge them
Others may get angry also
They may get their way but others may feel resentment

### You are ASSERTIVE when you ...

- Acknowledge your feelings and needs as legitimate
- Express yourself in a direct, honest and constructive way
- Demonstrate a regard for the legitimate rights of others
- Vocal tone is even and reasonable,

#### Typical phrasing:

- Vocal tone is even and well-modulated
- "I" messages (instead of using an accusatory "you" as the opening word)
- "I want you to ...", "I feel uncomfortable when you ..."

#### Outcomes of assertive behavior

Increased self-confidence
Earn respect from others
Increased likelihood of being heard
Likelihood of being taken seriously

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**CONFIDENT, ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION  
USING "I" LANGUAGE  
FIRST ENVISION THE DESIRED OUTCOME**

**"I feel \_\_\_\_\_"**

(honest, authentic feeling expressed)

**"when you \_\_\_\_\_"**

(describe behavior of concern)

**"because \_\_\_\_\_"**

(describe the negative impact the behavior has on you.)

**Ask for what you want (knowing others may refuse)**

**"I would appreciate if you would ... \_\_\_\_\_"**

(be specific in asking for what you want)

**Ask for confirmation or feedback (knowing others may refuse)**

**"Will you be able to do that ...?" "Tell me your thoughts on this ..."**

(ask the other person for verbal confirmation ... and wait for response!)

## Example:

- *I feel a lot of irritation and pressure ...*
- *When people [team mates] leave dishes in the break room sink and don't pick up after themselves*
- *(because) it looks messy and it's a breeding ground for germs ... and then I feel like I need to clean it up myself!*
- *I would appreciate (and I think we'd all appreciate) when each person cleans up after herself/himself.*

**IMPORTANT:** Ending the conversation here leaves the issue up in the air. It assumes that people will follow through, but that may not happen! At this point it's important to ask for what you want ...

- *Could we all agree to clean up our own dishes in the break room, so that nothing is left in the sink? (Now look at each person and wait for a response!) If this presents a challenge for anyone, let's talk about it now so we can work something out ... maybe a schedule for "kitchen maintenance".*

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## CLIMB YOUR LADDER OF ASSERTIVENESS

Becoming adept at assertive communication is a learned skill. It requires time and practice.

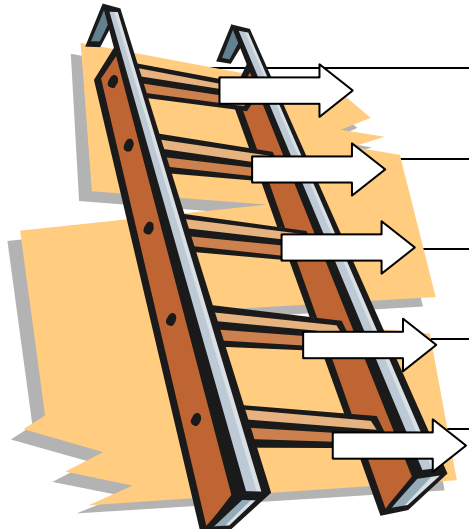
It helps to recognize the hierarchy of assertiveness in each individual's life.

The hierarchy changes from person to person. Who makes up your own hierarchy?

**GUIDELINES/INSTRUCTIONS:** Create your own hierarchy on the ladder below. The person on the bottom rung of the ladder is someone you feel comfortable being assertive with. The top rung is the person you are uneasy being confident with. The goal is to gain confidence step-by-step with each level.

**IMPORTANT:** The individuals represented on this hierarchical ladder are different for each person. There are no "rules" as to what type of individual is on what rung. In general, however, people to whom we are relatively anonymous (such as strangers who call on the phone) are often on lower rungs and can be effective for the practice of assertive communication!

There are 5 rungs on this ladder; however, we can have as many rungs as necessary to help us to move forward. We can choose to take baby steps up the ladder that has many rungs or we can bound up the ladder that has few rungs. This progression is up to you and your comfort level!

Who is on your ladder?	Example list
	<b>Boss or authority figure</b>
	<b>Relative</b>
	<b>Salesperson</b>
	<b>Teenager</b>
	<b>5 year old child</b>

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## MANAGING INTERACTIONS

Every interaction between two people is unique. What occurs in the transaction depends on many factors including the way YOU feel, the way the OTHER PERSON feels, as well as the unspoken and spoken messages sent in the moments of the transaction. It is not possible to control the feelings or actions of the other person; all you can do is manage your own feelings and messages.

### Managing the Maalox Moments

1. **Recognize the Maalox Moment**
2. **Take a deep breath**
3. **Pause – take a 10/count**
4. **Don't interrupt**
  - a. **Allow an angry person to de-fuse**
  - b. **Listen actively**
  - c. **Provide feedback**
5. **Envision the desired outcome – act accordingly**



#### WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE... YOU STILL HAVE CHOICES

1. Accept the situation (or person) and don't complain. Put your efforts in what you CAN control, not in what you CAN'T control.
2. Leave the situation (or person)... or don't put yourself in this situation (or with this person) again.
3. Change your response to the situation or person. You can't change what comes AT you; you can only change what COMES OUT of you.

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## THE PROMISE TO MYSELF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

### **SELF AWARENESS & ASSERTIVENESS**

**I will manage interpersonal transactions more effectively when I:**

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### **INTERACTIONS**

**The most important concept I learned that will help me  
Manage Maalox Moments:**

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