



# ASSERTIVENESS IN CAREGIVING

*Firmly but Gently*

## AN INTRODUCTION TO ASSERTIVENESS

All people behave passively, aggressively, or assertively at some times and in some situations. Do you recognize when that happens in your life? Do you understand what triggers it and how to choose a different way of acting?

As an effective caregiver as well as in your personal life and relationships, knowing when and where you are most likely to be passive, aggressive, or assertive is critical. This preclass reading provides a brief introduction and our training class will give you some very useful tools for growing your capacity for interacting with others in a healthy manner.

As you read and participate in the class, be active. Assimilate ideas. Add your own personal examples. Take hold of the materials. Wrestle with it, apply it to your own life, test it, challenge it, and discuss it.

## THREE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Three fundamental principles underlie this training: individuals are response-able, people continually make choices, and God will direct you as you learn to think and act assertively.

### INDIVIDUALS ARE RESPONSE-ABLE

Individuals have a God-given ability to respond to life. We are not inert lumps of clay; each of us has a mind and a spirit capable of responding to God, to self, and to other people. We are alive, we are open, we are capable of interaction. We can try ideas on for size, we can experiment with new behaviors, we can test our own thoughts and perceptions as we bump us against the thoughts and perceptions of others.

We can change our behavior, revise our thoughts, and understand new ideas in new ways. We have the ability to respond to God, to ideas, to others. We have the ability to respond to life!

### PEOPLE CONTINUALLY MAKE CHOICES

Some choices are as obvious as whether to take a new job and move to a new community or whether to choose pork chops or chicken for dinner.

Other choices are not as apparent and may not seem like choices at all. A person who'd like to offer a sincere compliment may feel so embarrassed and tongue-tied he stand silently, wishing he could move toward the other person and say what he thinks. Another person may choose to keep an opinion to herself during a discussion among friends, perhaps saying to herself, "My opinion doesn't carry much weight anyway." Sometimes people make a choice *not* to choose; when they do, they are choosing the status quo and its consequences, whatever they may be.

Because all of us make choices of great and small significance every day, it's important to realize you are indeed making choices. And, because some of your choices may surprise and puzzle you, you need to begin to understand some of the reasons for those particular choices.

To discover some of the reasons for your choices and therefore to develop increased self-awareness, you can ask yourself certain questions:

What has been my experience in a similar situation?

What choices did I make then and was the outcome what I expected?

What do I expect to happen this time as a result of my choice?

The goal of developing your self-awareness is that you begin to make an increasing number of choices consciously and deliberately. Your choices then will reflect your growing awareness of God's will for your life, your own self-knowledge, and your awareness of the needs of others.

### **GOD WILL DIRECT YOU AS YOU LEARN TO THINK AND ACT ASSERTIVELY**

If you're willing to turn your learning process over to God, God will move you in a life-giving direction. God will show you how to maintain your Christian integrity as you follow the model and direction of Scripture in learning how to think and behave assertively. Making the decision to submit to God's leading as you learn about assertiveness is in itself an assertive act.

Learning new ways of acting and thinking might stir up all kinds of fear in you. Most people will admit to being wary of newness, cautious in the face of change. Your possible concern about learning to be an assertive Christ-Follower is no exception. While new ideas may excite and stimulate you, you are also likely to be experiencing some anxiety and fear.

### **SIX QUESTIONS YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT**

Here are six questions that might trouble believers when they think about becoming more assertive, along with the reasons why you don't have to worry about them.

1. Will becoming assertive make me rude and bossy and cause me to lose all my friends?
2. Will becoming assertive make me obnoxious, power-seeking, aggressive, and domineering?
3. Will becoming assertive compromise my Christ-given sense of servanthood?
4. Will becoming assertive make me a selfish, self-centered, self-serving person, always out to get my own way?
5. Will becoming assertive mean I will start saying no all the time when I actually enjoy saying yes to projects and people at times?
6. Will becoming assertive change me so much I won't even recognize myself?

### **GOD WILL DO GREAT THINGS**

Learning to be more assertive is a challenge, but one that will bring great reward. It is an essential task for Christ-Followers to live a healthy, productive God First Life. As you learn about assertiveness and act on what you learn in this class, God will bless you both spiritually and emotionally. You will then be a greater blessing to the people around you at home, at work, in the community, and at church.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If you'd like more information about how to be an assertive Christian, you may want to read *Speaking the Truth in Love: How to Be an Assertive Christian* by Ruth N. Koch & Kenneth C. Haugk, Stephens Ministries (St. Louis), 1992. We recommend purchasing from an online used bookstore such as Thriftbooks or Abebooks.

Training Class Notes – Week 5



# ASSERTIVENESS IN CAREGIVING

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*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. Ephesians 4:15*

## I. THE POWER OF SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

NOTES:

## II. DEFINITION OF ASSERTIVENESS

### Focus Note 1 – Definition of Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a positive and constructive way of relating to other people that respects their needs, wants, and rights as well as one's own needs, wants, and rights.

### A. ASSERTIVENESS IS POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE

### B. ASSERTIVENESS IS A WAY OF RELATING

### C. ASSERTIVENESS RESPECTS OTHERS' NEEDS, WANTS, AND RIGHTS

### D. ASSERTIVENESS RESPECTS YOUR OWN NEEDS, WANTS, AND RIGHTS

## E. ASSERTIVENESS IS NOT AGGRESSIVE

### Focus Note 2 – Definition of Aggressive Behavior

People behave aggressively when they express themselves in a threatening, abusive, or hostile manner. Aggressive behavior shows itself in insults, belittling, and sarcasm. Manipulation – using others for one's own purposes without regard or respect for them as persons – is a sign of aggression. Aggression shows itself when one individual assumes the right to make decisions for another. People who make demands of others and label others are showing signs of aggression.

#### NOTES:

## F. ASSERTIVENESS IS NOT PASSIVE

### Focus Note 3 – Definition of Passive Behavior

People are passive when they fail to express their feelings, needs, or affections to others, or when they fail to stand up for their own rights. People who are afraid to exercise authority and therefore do not make their own decisions are being passive. Passive people won't say *no*, even when they don't want to do something, and they won't say *yes*, even when they do want to do something. Passive behavior can mean constantly letting others take advantage of you. People behave passively when they allow their ideas or opinions to be easily changed by others, which is different from just being flexible.

#### NOTES:

## G. ASSERTIVENESS IS NOT PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE

### Focus Note 4 – Definition of Passive-Aggressive Behavior

Passive-aggressive behavior is marked by hidden hostility. When someone is asked to do something, and they apparently agree but does not follow through, even though they could, that is passive-aggressive behavior. Passive-aggressive behavior includes stubbornness, pouting, insistence on proper procedure to the nth degree, or sabotage. All a passive-aggressive person's opposition takes place behind the scenes and under cover, while on the surface they seem agreeable and compliant.

#### NOTES:

ASSERTIVE	AGGRESSIVE	PASSIVE	PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE
<b>Expresses oneself effectively</b>	Expressing oneself in a threatening, abusive, or hostile manner	Fail to express their feelings, needs, or affections to others and/or themselves	Expresses oneself indirectly
<b>Positive</b>			Marked by hidden hostility
<b>Constructive</b>	Insults	Does not stand up for their own rights	Asked to do something, agree, but does not follow through even though they could
<b>Respects others needs, wants, and rights</b>	Belittling	Afraid to exercise Any authority	Stubbornness
<b>Respects your own needs, wants, and rights</b>	Sarcasm	Do not make their own decisions	Pouting
<b>Takes responsibility</b>	Name Calling	Won't say "no", when they don't want to do something and won't say "yes" when they do	Insistence on proper procedure to the nth degree
<b>Uses constructive feedback</b>	Manipulations – assumes the right to make decisions for another.	Letting other take advantage of you	Sabotage
<b>Invite suggestions or solutions</b>	Manipulative advice giving	Allow ideas or opinions to be easily changed by others (this is different from being flexible)	On the surface they seem agreeable and compliant but behind the scenes they take opposition
<b>Use appropriate volume</b>	Make demands	Lack confidence	Withdraw, silent treatment
<b>Maintain eye contact</b>	Labels others	"I am not good enough"	Have not and will not take responsibility for their own behavior
<b>Being clear and direct in what you want to say</b>	It's all about their wants and needs	"It doesn't matter"	
<b>Reaches goals with hurting others</b>	They believe their opinion is fact	You win, I lose attitude	
<b>Shows expression which matches the message</b>	Interrupts and talks over others	_____	
<b>I win, you win attitude</b>	Violates social boundaries - Invades personal space of others	_____	
_____	I win, you lose attitude	Actions and words show they just don't care. Will even say "I don't care"	_____
_____	_____		Actions and words show they are pushing away those they care about
<b>Actions and words show they care about the situation, themselves and others</b>	Actions and words show they care about themselves		

### III. WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW TO BE ASSERTIVE

#### A. DECIDING WHETHER TO BE ASSERTIVE

##### Focus Note 5 – Five Questions to Ask When Deciding to be Assertive

1. Is this a problem (and how do I know that it is a problem)?
2. Is this the time and place to respond assertively?
3. What are my chances of at least a small measure of success initially?
4. Am I willing to invest time and energy, and endure some risk, in order to make the change?
5. Will I stay relatively calm while I try new behaviors, not letting fears or anxiety overwhelm me?

#### B. DECIDING WHAT TO SAY

##### Focus Note 6 – Principles for Deciding What to Say

- Say something
- Be honest
- Use "I" messages
- Use "I want" statements
- Combine "I want" statements and "I" messages
- Avoid labeling
- Be concise
- Don't apologize for asserting yourself
- Avoid sarcasm
- Be as persistent as necessary

## C. DECIDING WHAT TO DO

### Focus Note 7 – Keeping Nonverbal Communication Assertive

- Look the way you feel
- Use assertive gestures
- Speak clearly
- Face the person
- Maintain eye contact
- Be aware of your body orientation
- Pay attention to the quality of your voice
- Listen

## D. YOUR ASSERTIVENESS CHALLENGE

### Focus Note 8 – Your Assertiveness Challenge

#### A. Decide Whether to Be Assertive

Write your answers to the following five questions about whether to be assertive. This will help you determine whether this is a situation that warrants an assertive change in your behavior.

1. Is this a problem?
  
2. Is this the time and place to respond assertively?
  
3. What are my chances of at least a small measure of success initially?
  
4. Am I willing to invest time and energy, and endure some risk, in order to make the change?
  
5. Will I stay relatively calm while I try new behaviors, not letting fears or anxiety overwhelm me?

**B. Decide What to Say**

According to the *Principles for Deciding What to Say (Focus Note 6)*, think about what you might say in order to respond assertively to the situation. It may also make sense to write this in the form of a dialogue in which you write out what the other person might say in response.

*My Main Concerns* (Write what you're concerned about in truthful, respectful and non-threatening words).

*What Will I Say?* Write what you would like to say. You may write it out in full, or just jot some notes to help you remember what you want to say.

**C. Decide What to Do**

Think about the aspects of nonverbal communication (*Focus Note 7*). Decide which ones you need to pay special attention to or practice, and write them below.

## IV. ASSERTIVELY MAKING, GRANTING, REFUSING, AND NEGOTIATING REQUESTS

### A. RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FROM YOUR CARE RECEIVER

#### Focus Note 9 – Examples of Requests from a Care Receiver

1. "Could we meet for an hour and a half instead of just an hour? I never seem to have enough time to say all I want to say."
2. "Could we meet twice a week instead of once? It seems so long between your visits."
3. "Would you please provide transportation for me to and from the church for our caring visits? I really don't like driving after dark."
4. "I would like my husband to sit in on our visits. He has a lot on his mind and would benefit from

being able to talk about things. Besides, I always have to repeat everything we talked about, and this way he'll be able to hear it firsthand."

5. "Do you mind if we change the day for our meeting next week? I'm going to be out of town over the weekend."
6. "I'm feeling more and more uncomfortable meeting with you in my home because I'm afraid my family might overhear. Could we find another place to get together?"
7. "I'm so busy I don't even have time to shop for groceries. If I were to give you a list and some money, could you go shopping for me?"
8. "I so appreciate all you have given me; I would like to do something for you. Could I take you out to lunch?"

### 1. SAYING YES TO CARE RECEIVER REQUESTS

### 2. SAYING NO TO CARE RECEIVER REQUESTS

### 3. NEGOTIATING REQUESTS WITH YOUR CARE RECEIVER

## B. SKILL PRACTICE MAKING AND RESPONDING TO REQUESTS

### Focus Note 10 – Four Steps in Making a Request

1. Describe the situation
2. Express your feelings
3. Specify what you want
4. Consequences associated with your request

#### NOTES:

### Focus Note 11 – Situation 1

The Care Partner and the Care Receiver have met just about every Tuesday for the past year and a half. The Care Receiver is homebound and really looks forward to the caring visit as one of the highlights of their week. The Care Partner's child just won first place in the spelling bee and will be participating in the regional spelling bee on Tuesday. The Care Partner would like to change the day of the next visit.

#### NOTES:

### Focus Note 12 – Discussion Questions for Situation 1

1. How does the Care Receiver feel about the conversation?
2. How does the Care Partner feel about the conversation?
3. Did the Care Partner use the D-E-S-C steps in making his or her request?
4. What consequence did they describe?
5. Did the Care Partner remain assertive throughout the conversation?
6. How could the Care Partner have been even more assertive in the conversation?

### Focus Note 13 – Situation 2

Your Care Receiver is no longer physically able to drive. Their neighbor often provides transportation, but the neighbor is out of town for two weeks. A nationally renowned college choir will be singing at church; the college is the Care Receiver's alma mater. The Care Receiver deeply wants to attend the concert and asks their Care Partner for a ride. The Care Partner was not planning on going to the concert. It is the same night as their favorite television program.

#### NOTES:

### Focus Note 14 – Discussion Questions for Situation 2

1. How does the Care Receiver feel about the conversation?
2. How does the Care Partner feel about the conversation?
3. Why did the Care Partner respond to the Care Receiver's request the way they did?
4. Did the Care Partner remain assertive throughout the conversation?
5. How could the Care Partner have been even more assertive in the conversation?

**NOTES:**

### Focus Note 15 – Situation 3

Your Care Receiver is going on a three-week vacation several states away and is feeling very concerned about being out of contact with the Care Partner for such a long time. They usually meet once a week and are also in touch by telephone one or two times a week. The Care Receiver wants the Care Partner to call him or her twice a week while they are gone so they will have chances to talk while they are away

**NOTES:**

### Focus Note 16 – Discussion Questions for Situation 3

1. How does the Care Receiver feel about the conversation?
2. How does the Care Partner feel about the conversation?
3. Why did the Care Partner respond to the Care Receiver's request the way they did?
4. Did the Care Partner remain assertive throughout the conversation?
5. How could the Care Partner have been even more assertive in the conversation?

**NOTES:**

## V. ASSERTIVELY DEALING WITH ANGER

### A. EXPLORING ANGER

#### 1. WHY PEOPLE BECOME ANGRY

#### 2. WAYS PEOPLE EXPRESS ANGER

#### Focus Note 17 – Ways People Express Anger

- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Verbal Outbursts | 6. Complaints           |
| 2. Blame            | 7. Intimidation         |
| 3. Sarcasm          | 8. Criticism            |
| 4. Poisonous Talk   | 9. Withdrawal into Self |
| 5. Gossip           | 10. Physical Violence   |

#### 3. AGGRESSIVE, ASSERTIVE, AND PASSIVE ANGER

#### Focus Note 18 – Aggressive, Assertive, and Passive Anger

AGGRESSIVE ANGER	ASSERTIVE ANGER	PASSIVE ANGER
Seeks to punish a person who does wrong	Seeks to help a person who does wrong	Seeks to punish self for doing wrong or angry feelings
Has unreasonably high expectations of everyone	Knows even the best people sometimes make mistakes	Has unreasonably high expectations of self
Cares about what happens to oneself	Cares about the welfare of others	Feels powerless to affect anyone's welfare
Does not care about the other person's viewpoint	Tries to be understanding	Seethes inside when their own viewpoint is not recognized
Holds grudges	Knows the value of forgiving	Holds anger inside
Is stubborn, immovable, and demanding	Is flexible and willing to seek alternatives	Resents others for not agreeing with them
Does not notice one's own areas of weakness	Recognizes that one can always improve	Feels paralyzed by awareness of their own weaknesses
Is outwardly condemning and	Recognizes everyone has	Is inwardly condemning and

judgmental

faults

judgmental

#### 4. ASSERTIVELY RESOLVING SITUATIONS THAT CAUSE ANGER

### B. YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES OF ANGER

#### Focus Note 19 – Thinking about My Own Experience of Anger

1. Identify an angry situation in your life. This might be someone who is angry at you or someone with whom you are angry.
2. Try to figure out what caused the angry person to feel unjustly treated. Write down your thoughts.
3. What change do you think needs to take place to remove the cause of the anger? Write down your thoughts.
4. Write out an "I" message that expresses your feelings and an "I Want" statement that expresses your desires in this situation.
5. Pray for God's help and wisdom in dealing with this situation?

## VI. ASSERTIVELY EXPRESSING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

## VII. IS ASSERTIVENESS CHRISTIAN?

Thank God for the gift He has given us in allowing us to learn how to care and serve more assertively. It will be exciting to see what happens in your lives in the weeks and months to come as you practice assertive living and grow in your abilities to communicate and relate assertively. Continue to work on this every day and hold one another accountable for assertive behavior and communication in your Care Partner training.

### VIII. THE CAREGIVER’S GUIDE

For each of the four points and center of the Caregiver’s Guide, write words or sentences to summarize what you learned about assertiveness as a Care Partner. How can you demonstrate the character and skills of a caregiver?

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### IX. LOOKING AHEAD

Next class we will cover two topics in the same amount of time we usually spend on one.

The first one, “Boundaries in Caregiving,” builds directly on this assertiveness module. It will challenge

you to understand what boundaries are appropriate for you as caregivers, for your Care Receivers, and for your caring relationships.

The second topic, "Crisis Theory in Caregiving," will give you a much greater insight into what happens inside yourselves and others when crisis strikes. You will need to read the Preclass Reading assignments for each topic in your Care Partner Training Manual before our next class.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your Training Facilitator about them.

## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR WEEK 6

*Care Partners Training Manual – “Boundaries in Caregiving” Pre-class Reading*

*Care Partners Training Manual – “Crisis Theory in Caregiving” Pre-Class Reading*

## X. CLOSING PRAYER

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS WEEK

My Prayer Partner is \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer partners can do together as much or as little as they desire. Here are some possibilities.

- Pray privately for each other.
- Share prayer concerns (in person or over the telephone) once a week and pray for each other (privately).
- Meet regularly in person to share prayer concerns and pray for each other.
- Talk regularly by telephone to share prayer concerns and pray for each other over the telephone.
- Practice a spiritual discipline, such as Bible study, together.

Prayer requests and testimonies to share with my prayer partner

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Prayer requests and testimonies shared by my prayer partner

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_