

Four Steps of Assertiveness

There are four parts to effective assertive communication - Here is the formula:

- (1) Empathy Statement.
- (2) I feel _____.
- (3) When/because _____.
- (4) I need/would like/wish _____.

Step 1: Empathy Statement. This statement shows the other person that you are trying to see things from their point of view and/or that you appreciate them. Doing this helps them listen to what else you have to say.

Example: "I know that you work really hard to provide for our family."...

Step 2: "I feel..." Start by expressing how you feel about the behavior. Stick to one of the five or six basic emotions. Use "frustrated" sparingly as it loses its meaning if it is spoken too frequently.

Example: "...But, I feel angry..."

Step 3: "When..." Tell the person what specifically bothers you about the behavior or situation.

"...because..." Tell the person how their behavior affects you.

Examples: "...when you come home from work and don't help out with the chores or work with the kids, because I'm tired too and need your help."

Step 4: "I need/would like/wish..." This is the tough part for people who feel guilty simply letting others (especially family members) know what their needs are. "I need" has nothing to do with being selfish. Instead, it means giving listeners a clear signal of what you want them to do differently, so they have an opportunity to change.

Examples: "I'd like it if you would help the kids with their homework when I make dinner."

Does the formula always work? Of course not, but it works a high percentage of the time and it gives you a better tool to deal with situations than anger, passivity, or avoidance – which rarely achieves the desired results.

If it doesn't work at first, try different variations using your own words. Keep at it; people often don't immediately respond differently to your words because of previous established communication patterns.

Remember: Always make sure your tone conveys sincerity, clarity, genuineness and respect toward the other person and his or her opinions and feelings.

PRACTICE

(1) Empathy Statement: _____

(2) I feel _____

(3) When _____ because _____

(4) I need/would like/want/wish _____