



Family Education & Support Caregiver Program Session 2

~ Caregiver Support ~

Communication Skills



~ ASSERTIVE "CONFLICT RESOLUTION" COMMUNICATION SKILLS ~

SKILL 1: Think about the problem before stating your position.

Figure out what you want from the interaction before approaching the other person.

- What can each of you do that can result in your both winning?
- “Role-play” in your head how you will handle possibly difficult situations before you talk with the other person.



SKILL 2: THE ASSERTIVE REQUEST

State how you feel and what you want

- **Step 1--State *your understanding* about and respect for the other person's position.**
- **Step 2--State the PROBLEM as your problem.** After all, you are the one who is upset about it right now and want a change. Use "I feel...", "I think...", "I want..." statements to take responsibility for your own feelings and thoughts. Avoid the use of negative labels, blaming, exaggerating, attacking, bringing up past or irrelevant mistakes, etc.
- **Step 3-State your GOAL.** What actions do you want from the other person? Ask them for help and/or suggestions of how they can help in ways that would also benefit them.
- **Step 4- Listen** to the other person's response to your request. *Reflect back* what they are saying. "What I am hearing you say is....." or "It sounds like you feel.....because....." Ask if you are correct.

SKILL 3: DEALING WITH AGGRESSION and MANIPULATION

IF THE OTHER PERSON BEGINS USING NEGATIVE LABELS, ATTACKING YOU, MANIPULATING YOU OR USING AGGRESSION, YOU CAN:

- **Keep from going into a defensive or attack mode.** "Attacking back" will just lead to arguing.
- **Keep reflecting back what the other person is saying.** "I can see that you are very angry with me about ... I am sorry to see that you are so unhappy about this situation. Please continue to tell me more about why you are so angry..."
- **Get the other person to be *more specific* about his/her criticism.** Ask the other person questions like the following: **NOT:** *"I don't do that, you must be nuts."* **INSTEAD:** *"I really care about how you feel, but I don't understand exactly what you mean. Can you give me some examples?"*
- **Call a "time out"** –Tell the other person you need a few minutes alone and leave the situation until you can gather your composure and focus. This can take 5 minutes, 1 hour, or even longer until both people calm down.
- **Warn the other person that you will take a time out if they do not calm down or quit using negative labels about you.** **Example:** Say, "Please do not talk so loud and use negative labels to describe me. I will be much more willing to continue to listen if you will just describe exactly what I did and how you feel about it instead."
- **Use the "broken record" technique**—Keep very briefly repeating your position over and over until they understand or tire. You will sound like a broken record. Use this technique carefully, because it can be aggressive if not appropriate.



~ ASSERTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION ~

- **Don't play the devil's advocate.**

Many people tend to play a "devils' advocate" type of role to "help" others to clarify their position thinking that arguments help clarify issues. However, most feel unsupported and attacked when others use these conflictual methods designed to get better "logical clarification."

- **Use neutral, descriptive statements--no negative labels.**

Putting the other person down by using negative labels usually leads to "fighting" over terminology. **INSTEAD:** Use more neutral and descriptive words. For example instead of calling your partner "selfish," say something like, "There are several times when I felt hurt and angry that I would like to discuss with you. . ." Then just describe what they did and your resultant feelings. You don't need to use any labels.

- **Avoid using "zingers" toward the other person. Avoid extreme statements.** Expressions like "always," "never," and "every time" will usually just lead to irrelevant discussions. **Avoid dogmatic or authoritarian statements** which are those you may feel very sure or confident about and state it with *extreme confidence leaving little room for doubt*. These statements can be "red flags." The other person may get angry and get a permanent impression that you are "arrogant," "egotistical," a "know it all," and are very *controlling*.