

## Chapter 22 Assertive Dialogues of Participation

This chapter introduces you to non-assertive, aggressive, and assertive leader dialogues of participation. It assumes leaders are theatrical, able to change their script and that organizations can change addictive exploitative scripts into more liberatory ones.

**How to Confront Self and Other in your Caring and Loving Self** -I was born assertive, but grew up on a family and a Catholic, then a public and a private school system, and watching media that fed me a host of myths that bent my being into thinking I was non-assertive. I became a non-assertive leader, until I learned to rescript, to become an aggressive leader. That was an awful result, but at least I was heard and I was released from the hellish shy prison. Then I learned constructive uses of anger and how to control anger in a world full of provocation. Now I focus on being assertive, on intervening into addicted organizations, addicted into processes reinforcing and socializing non-assertive and aggressive behavior scripts; I rescript organizations to be assertive in their leadership.

We will start with non-assertion, and outline its basic scripted character, look at immediate solutions, and viable training exercises.

### **NON-ASSERTIVE LEADERS have these characteristics**

- Game is BE MEEK, then GET EVEN as MARTYR
- Suppress true feelings; not honest in expression; feels excluded; depresses from the suppressed
- Pretends to be SHY
- Pretends not to be able to say No!
- Pretends others can read their mind, can understand their un verbalized contracts
- SOLUTIONS: Get your inner dialogue to match your verbalized dialog; say No; disclose your anxiety publicly to diffuse it, and enter zone of authentic communication; make requests like a broken record; practice repeating back what was said (believers in anxious myth spend their psychic energy listening to their inner instead of verbalized dialog of others).
- EXERCISES: Broken record; repeat back (other exercises at end of chapter)

The non-assertive leader typically buys into one or all of these myths (Cotler & Cotler, 1977: 271-279).

#### ◆ **Myth of Anxiety**

- When they sweat, flush, crack voice, or tremble, the non-assertive person tries to cover up the visible symptoms of anxiety
- They obsess on internal dialogue: “I wonder if they can see me sweat?, etc”; Men are more likely to learn NOT to express anxiety
- They believe it a sign of weakness to show others tense or anxious feelings; get embarrassed
- Believe if they admit to anxiety, such as in an interview, the other person will reject or ridicule them

- Spend their energy covering up anxiety instead of focusing on the q & A of an interview or other situation; an interviewer can reach the conclusion the person is lying to them (instead of covering anxiety).
  - SOLUTION: Admit your anxiety; talk about
  - EXERCISE: In groups, do Round Robin, admit publicly to some anxiety: I get anxious in the following kind of situation \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- ◆ **Myth of Modesty**
- They learn adages like, “Be seen and not heard” and “never boast about your accomplishments or talents” or “never say nice things about yourself” or “don’t be vain!”
  - The result is during an interview, the person refuses to say anything positive about themselves; cannot even be accurate about their skills or accomplishments
  - Give a modesty performance, and don’t get the job
  - Can not sell themselves in an interview to get job, promotion, or raise
  - Does not inspire confidence in followers
  - Show an inability to receive or even to GIVE compliments. Result of inability of compliment others: followers do not feel such a leader acknowledges or appreciates their success
  - Modesty leader negates any success by their team or unit; counters any success with negativity, pointing out the flaws, attributions to random results, fluke, etc E.g. “don’t let this success go to your head!”
  - Modesty leader seems insincere, misleading, disingenuous, false, etc
  - SOLUTION: Practice being a good finder each day on the job; find someone to compliment on a job well done; praise yourself once a day to someone
  - EXERCISE: Role play: “What makes you think you are qualified for this leadership job?” (describe your leader experience and skill in appositive manner); Role play: go around to each person on your team and give a compliment for something they have done.
- ◆ **Myth of the Good Friend**
- Assumes other person can read the leader’s mind. The subordinate or their direct report knows what the non-assertive leader has done, accomplished, or sacrificed in working hard.
  - Result is non-expressed contract that the other never agreed to; e.g. “I will work hard putting in overtime for three months’ the boss will notice, and I’ll get promoted to vice-president.” But, the non-assertive leader never told their boss about the contract: no agreement
  - Example: non-assertive leader makes an unstated contract with a subordinate, assuming the employee is lazy, incompetent, needs pushing. Result: self-fulfilling prophecy, lack of growth and authenticity in relationship; undemocratic leadership
  - Result: the non-assertive makes a one-sided bargain, and then gets mad or angry or resentful or depressed when the other party reneges (on an agreement they did not know existed).

- The worker or your boss is NOT your close personal friend; they do not know how to read you.
  - SOLUTION: Before you contract with some other person; get explicit, get verbal about what your contract is, what you expect, make it clear
  - EXERCISE: Tell story of time when you made an assumption about a follower, or team member, that was unfounded; Or, tell a story of when you moved from an unstated to a stated contract, and the difference it made to your success
- ◆ **Myth of Obligation**
- Disregards personal feelings or needs, and just feels obliged to meet all requests of employees, customers, vendors, or superiors. Example stays late to work to get it all done and does not spend time with friends or family or in leisure to rejuvenate.
  - Can not say “No!” Stacks up more obligations than any superhuman could meet.
  - Result: workaholic stress. Begins to kill self through work; begins to wind down, get tired, and come in late, sleep through meetings. Marriage and family relations deteriorate. Kids grow up not knowing their workaholic parent
  - When the breakups and breakdown occurs; non-assertive leader turned workaholic feels angry and resentful: “I worked myself to death to provide for you!”
  - SOLUTION: Put in an eight hour day; no weekend work; do not take work home; take frequent breaks; do not skip meals;
  - EXERCISE: use the “No” words three times a day

A good book for learning to overcome non-assertive myths is Powell’s (1969) “*Why am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?*”

## **AGGRESSIVE LEADER**

**The aggressive leader is an addicted, predatory, brutal personality; addicted to rage, violence, hurt, and manipulation. Most males are brought up to be aggressive, to win at all costs, to squash the weak. Women leaders imitate it or have their own aggressive nature. Why is it that the most obnoxious SOB emerges to the top of the pyramid; not in all organizations, but in many?**

Leaders can become addicted to rage; become rag-aholics. And this is the perfect leader for the “Addicted Organization” (Schaef & Fassel, 1988). And the reverse: addictive organizations tend to act out the theatric-script of an addictive leader. There are two kinds of addictions: chemical (drugs) and process (anger, aggression, rage, predation). Our focus here is on process addiction, on aggression. A little rage is good: gets the juices flowing; gets you into an authentic zone of dialogue; too much out of control rage, gets you into rag-aholic behavior patterns.

There are so many non-assertive codependents in the organization, waiting to rescue and keep secret the impacts of the addicted raging aggressive bull leader, that the organization just recruits another addicted aggressive champion, each time the leader leaves. It is a vicious circle. The addicted leader's behavior, when out of control, requires intervention: assertive people to confront the behavior (see ABCDEF model of assertion, below).

In situation leadership, the leader's aggression is perfectly suited to the addicted systemicity of the organization, to all those codependents ready to rescue and pretend all is well and to all those workaholic non-assertives, ready to die for work. Aggressive leaders are ready to lead what Marx (1867) calls the "House of Terror" and be the vampire that sucks that last drop of blood from the worker's veins (see Marx Das Kapital, Vol 1, Chapter 10: the Working Day).

Here are key characteristics, solutions, and exercises for Aggressive Leaders

- Game is BEING WRONGED, then GETTING MAD & GETTING EVEN
- Eric Berne's "NIGYYSOB" (Now I Got You, You Son of a Bitch).
- Does not express hidden hurts; is not honest about hurt; gets Defensive without owning up to the feeling
- Plays Avenging Angel of Doom role in situation
- Pretends to be Explosive as out of personal control; pretends anger is NOT their choice, not in their control
- EXERCISE: Fogging (Smith, 1975: 104-107). Fogging teaches people how to cope with manipulative criticism without getting angry or losing your cool. Do not deny the criticism, fog it. Be a Fog Bank; offer no hard surfaces for their rocks to strike. How: Agree with the truth, the principle, or the odds. "I agree with the [grain of] truth in your statement." "You could be right; I agree with the principle you are stating." "I agree with the odds as you stated them." Remember this is only for dealing with manipulative people trying to get you to blow your cool. It is not for genuine relationships. Why Fogging: forces aggressive leader to actively listen to exactly what the manipulator critic is saying (Smith, p. 111): "I understand why you would think that."
- FOGGING EXAMPLE:
  - Customer: You are the worst leader I have ever seen!
  - Leader: (agree with grain of truth) I can see how you could conclude that.
  - Customer: Let me put it another way: Your leadership is so far below normal, I think you are a moron.
  - Leader: (agree with principle) I'm not surprised you feel that way. Sometimes my brain gets distracted; I wonder how I keep so many things going. It's a good principle to keep our focus when leading.
  - Customer: Let's try something else. Fog this: you are to worst excuse of a leader I have ever seen in my life.
  - Leader: (agrees with the odds) "Maybe you are right. I wonder if that's why I not getting the results I want. I'm not perfect. I try to learn something new from each experience. Want to try another one?"

- **NEGATIVE INQUIRY METHOD:** Negative inquiry is getting the critic to open up, without becoming defensive, spiteful, or manipulative (giving counter-criticism). Replies to sarcasm or manipulative or incomprehensible feedback by doing negative inquiry: “What is negative about not providing you structure?”
- **NEGATIVE INQUIRY EXAMPLE:**
  - Follower: You don’t provide any structure on these assignments; you are not an effective leader!
  - Leader: What is **NEGATIVE** about not giving you structure?
  - Follower: Without structure, I don’t know if what I am doing is the right thing. I don’t want to be responsible.
  - Leader: So, it is negative when you have to figure out how to do some assignment on your own, and become responsible?
  - Follower: yes, giving me structure is your job; you get paid to do that; I don’t earn your salary. It’s just irritating?
  - Leader: Is it the way that I give a vision of what to do, but don’t give you the step by step actions you can take to get the job done that irritates you?
  - Follower: No, it’s the money you get that I do not get.
  - Leader: So, if you got more money, you would assume responsibility for structuring the assigned tasks that our group takes on?
  - Follower: Like that will happen. No, its more that you talk a lot, but when I go away, I do not know what you want.
  - Leader: You are saying I talk a lot, and you leave without understanding?
  - Follower: Yes, it’s just that you don’t seem to care how your assignments affect us.
  - Leader: And, how do they affect you?
  - Follower: You are not the only one making assignments; I have other work to do.
  - Leader: So, you are saying you are overloaded, etc.

The point is to do inquiry into the negative, to get clarity, to explore what is going on, and find negotiated settlements (workable compromise).—all without tripping into an aggressive leader script.

**Constructive Aggression** It has taken me my whole life to understand aggression. I dig down and tap my rage, try now to control it, to make good use of its energy. “Anger is not necessarily a negative emotion: it can be handled properly, and controlled (Goodloe, Bensahel & Kelly, 1984: 14). The issue is overreaction, letting the adrenaline overwhelm and flood you with anger. Anger is an important human expression; it tells people something matters to you, that they matter to you, that results matter, and that your feelings matter. Anger is an honest reaction when you are treated wrongly, misjudged, treating inequitably. Anger begins with hurts, and mushrooms to rage, and to acting out. It is the acting out bit that leads to trouble. For me it’s about cursing, about getting loud, about quick shallow breathing, and feeling the heat, then kicking the waste basket, or slamming a door. Getting to awareness of situations that set me off, of learning to speak about the anger instead of act it out, of learning to confront in love; this all helps. Mostly its about not over-working, learning to relax, to take my time, to go with the flow. Its learning control, to change my own mood, to be responsible for me. Its finding meaning.

## **ASSERTIVE LEADER**

- Does not play games; moves quickly into authenticity (inner dialog transparent in outer dialog)
- Takes responsibility: “I have a problem” (takes ownership of their aspect of a problem; reason: it does not set off other person); never says “You have a problem, sticks to describing the ABC’s (antecedents, behaviors, consequences).
- Uses complete A, B, C, D, E, or F (Antecedents, Behaviors, Consequences, Desire, Effects, & Feeling) levels of assertiveness when necessary
- Uses only as much assertion as needed to communicate (A before B or C; D before E or F)
- Stretches point-of-view to listen to other, to caring, to understanding, to reacting with true expression of feelings
- Willing to learn and grow in the relationship by giving and receiving feedback
- Knows their Assertiveness Rights
- EXERCISE: Practice saying “No” without giving excuses; practice making a request that gives reasons to another person’s “no” three times (Broken Record exercise, from Smith, 1975: 73-74). Most people have only 2 No’s in their repertoire.

## **What is ABCDEF Model of Assertiveness?**

- First Step – “I have a problem with your behavior” (take ownership of problem!)
- Step A – Antecedents to situation
- Step B – Behaviors you observe in situation
- Step C – Consequences that follow if behaviors persist
- Step D – Desire you have for different behavior
- Step E – Effects resulting if they do not change behaviors
- Step F – Feeling you state the result from their continued lack of change in behavior

## **What are your Assertiveness Rights (Smith, 1975: i).**

1. You have the right to judge your own behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon yourself
2. You have the right to offer no reasons or excuses for justifying your behavior
3. You have the right to judge I you are responsible for finding solutions to other people’s problems
4. You have the right to change your mind
5. You have the right to make mistakes – and be responsible for them
6. You have the right to say, “I don’t know.”
7. You have the right to be independent of the goodwill of others before coping with them
8. You have the right to be illogical in making decisions
9. You have the right to say, “I don’t understand.”

**10. You have the right to say, “I don’t care.”**  
**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY NO, WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY**

The assertive leader learns how to be partners with their non-assertive and aggressive inner selves. Each leader has all three selves. The question is which self takes the lead. There is a time for quiet contemplation, for going along without saying anything. There is a time for constructive aggression, to be angry at oppression. And there is time to get assertive, to take your stand, to say no to exploitation, especially your own.

**APPENDIX: MORE ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING EXERCISES**

The 3 No’s Rule: Most people cannot say no more than twice; this is why salespeople are taught the 3 No’s Rule. Get them past the first two No’s and the world is yours.

- Pick partner
- Ask for a Raise 3 times as partner replies three times with different reasons you can not have raise
- Overcome each objection with your own reason why you merit your raise
- Exercise: Ask to borrow something from your partner; Overcome their “No” three times, each time a new reason

Unresolved Conflict Exercise: This is a variation on the three No’s Rule, here the assertive partner pushes to get beneath the surface of a conflict to deeper issues.

1. Write down unresolved conflict
2. Pick partner and ask 6 WHY questions

**ASK - Why is it unresolved?**

**ANSWER – It is unresolved because of “A”**

**ASK – Why is “A” unresolved?**

**ANSWER – “A” is unresolved because of “B”**

**ASK – Why is “B” unresolved?**

**ANSWER – “B” is unresolved because of “C”**

**CONTINUE 6 rounds**

3. ASK – WHAT is YOUR ROLE in keeping it unresolved?
  4. Tell NEW STORY – What are you willing to let go of, to resolve this conflict? Tell story of the relationship working effectively
- SWITCH ROLES and REPEAT**

What do you want Assertiveness Exercise:

- ◆ List 10 things you as leader would like to HAVE, DO, or BE and ways you BLOCK YOURSELF from getting them
- ◆ **REPEAT in rapid Q & A with one-on-one partner, for at least 20 rounds, then switch roles**
- ◆ **Next: WHAT DO YOU WANT PART OF THE EXERCISE:**
- ◆ With Partner: ASK: **What do you want?**
- ◆ REPLY: with, **I WANT ...**

- ◆ **ASK: How can you get it?**
- ◆ **REPLY: with, I CAN GET IT BY ...**