**Assertiveness**

Materials: Three Different Types of Behavior, Role Playing: Timid – Assertive – Aggressive

Objectives: Students will be familiar with the concept of assertiveness and its importance in daily life in the United States. Students will understand the difference between assertive and aggressive behavior, as well as assertive and timid behavior.

1. Write on the board the three words TIMID – ASSERTIVE – AGGRESSIVE. Ask the students if they know the meaning of these words. If they do, ask a volunteer to give a brief definition of each of the words. Ask if everyone agrees or if they want to add to or change the definitions in any way. Basically timid means not brave or confident, assertive means confident and aggressive means forceful. Remind students that these three words are adjectives and tell them that today you are going to be using these words to describe people’s behavior.

2. Ask students to describe what a timid person would look like, for example if they were talking to another person, how would they be standing or sitting (their posture), where would they be looking, what would they be doing with their hands what would their facial expression look like, what would their voice sound like? Write their replies on the board under the word TIMID. Ask if someone would like to demonstrate what a timid person would look and sound like using the written description as a guide. If no one volunteers, you can show them. Follow the same procedure for assertive and aggressive. You can use the handout Three Different Types of Behavior as a guide.

3. Ask the students what type of behavior is considered normal or desirable in their home country. Ask them if the same type of behavior is expected of men and women in their home country. Do they see a difference in how people behave in the United States as compared to their home country?

4. Point out, if they haven’t already realized this, that in the United States, people are expected to be assertive. Although in other cultures it may be a sign of respect or simple politeness not to look directly into someone’s eyes, in the U.S. people think you are trying to hide something if you don’t look directly at them. Ask them if the assertiveness of people in the U.S. makes them comfortable or uncomfortable. What specifically is difficult for them?

5. Hand out Role Playing: Timid – Assertive – Aggressive to each student. Explain that for each of the Role Playing situations they will role play what a timid person would do and say and then what an aggressive person would do and say and finally what an assertive person would do and say. Demonstrate an example for them and then have them practice in pairs. After they have had a chance to practice ask for volunteer pairs to role play one situation for the class. If you have time you can have pairs role play all three responses, but if time is limited have them role play the assertive response only.

6. Ask the students how they felt when they were role playing each type of behavior. Give students plenty of time to respond. For some students being assertive is very unnatural and uncomfortable. Encourage students to choose one situation in daily life where they could feel comfortable being assertive. This could be something as simple as making eye contact with a cashier and confidently saying, “Have a nice day.”

Three Different Types of Behavior

Timid

Not looking directly at the person you are speaking to

Speaking so softly (quietly) that the person you are addressing has difficulty hearing you.

Bent or “turned in” posture

Wringing your hands

Not stating clearly what you want

Apologizing too much

Assertive

Looking directly at the person you are speaking to

Speaking in a clear voice

Straight posture

Stating clearly and politely what you want or need

Apologizing when appropriate

Aggressive

Scowling at the person you are talking to

Speaking loudly or in a threatening manner

Standing too close to the person you are talking to or trying to “tower over” them

Pointing a finger or a clenched fist at the person’s face

Demanding that you get what you want

Role Playing: Timid – Assertive – Aggressive

Situation 1 – You want to buy a new laptop computer. You check online for a good deal at your favorite store and you find the computer you want at a good price. The ad says the sale price is good online or in the store. You go to the store and find the computer but the price listed isn’t the sale price. You talk to the sales person and he says he doesn’t know anything about a sale.

Situation 2 – While you were out shopping a friend asked you if you could let her borrow $50 to buy a new dress. She says she doesn’t carry cash and she forgot her credit card. She tells you she can pay you back when she sees you next week. You let her borrow the money. When you see her again she doesn’t say anything about the money she owes you.

Situation 3 – You and a friend are eating at a very expensive restaurant. It is your birthday and you saved your money so you could have a special dinner at a nice restaurant. You and your friend order different food. When the food is served your friends food is cooked perfectly. You ordered your meat cooked medium and it is cooked rare. You send it back to be cooked a little more but when it is served again it is cooked well done.

Situation 4 – You bought a new pair of shoes. You wore the shoes twice and the heel broke off. You bring the shoes back to the store to get a refund. The salesperson says it must be your fault the shoes broke.