Ask Assertive Communication

GROUP INTERACTION—What are some of the differences between ask assertive communication and tell assertive communication?

START HERE: OBJECTIVES

1. To define and contrast ask assertive and tell assertive communication.
2. To understand the relationship building and persuasion power of ask assertive communication.
3. To review several of the other benefits of the ask assertive communication style.
4. To practice the ask assertive skill.

I. OVERVIEW OF ASK ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION VERSUS TELL ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION.

A. Definition One: Ask assertive communication is the process by which one relies mostly on questions to realize whatever interpersonal communication outcomes they wish to achieve.

B. Definition Two: Tell assertive communication is the process by which one relies mostly on statements to realize their interpersonal communication objectives.

C. In ask assertive communication you are the one who does most of the listening and tell assertive communication the other person is the one who does most of listening.

D. In ask assertive communication assumptions are tested via questions while in tell assertive communications assumptions are test by making pronouncements.

E. Ask assertive communication often aims not only to achieve a clear understanding of what is being said but also to create a safe environment conducive to the person saying more - being even more open and forthright than they normally would be.

GROUP INTERACTION—In what ways do you think improving one's ask assertive communication skills make for better relationships?

GROUP INTERACTION—In what ways do you think enhancing one's ask assertive communication skills could help you be more persuasive?

II. ASK ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS.

A. Assumptions can damage a relationship.

1. When we make untested assumptions about what someone's actions or words mean we can get onto shaky ground.
2. Usually we communicate our assumptions in the form of statements such as "You sure are angry today" or "That really hurt your feelings" or "You are really confident today" or whatever.
3. If our assumptions are inaccurate and then stated as truth you not only risk inaccurate thoughts, decision and actions but you also risk irritating or hurting the other person.
4. Whenever people are insulted, irritated or hurt they tend to be much less relationally responsive to you.
5. Relational effectiveness is almost always connected to business and professional effectiveness - especially if the business and professional objectives are to be accomplished with the least amount of collateral damage possible.

B. Thoughtful questions tend to enhance relationships.

1. Testing assumptions and maintaining good relationships are not mutually exclusive.
2. Thoughtful and well-timed questions can either validate or invalidate assumptions with no damage to relationships. To say, "So, is what you are saying (thinking, feeling, etc.) (*whatever your assumption is at this point*)" will almost never damage the relationship. If you are wrong the person with whom you are interacting can always communicate where you heard right and where you are still off.
3. Actually this process of careful listening, asking questions for clarification and then feeding back to the person what you thought you heard them say not only does not usually bruise relationships but instead strengthens them.

   "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable. To say something you value deeply to another person and have him or her value it equally by listening to it carefully and appreciatively is the most universal way of demonstrating affection." -David Augsberger-

C. Relationship skills are fundamental to healthy and effective leadership.

1. One worldwide leadership expert for a major automobile manufacturer after an extensive two-session interview on effective leadership development observed in summary, "After years of focusing on leadership development I have observed two central truths. First, leadership development is far more whole person than I ever thought it was. What happens in their broader life at home, in the community and within themselves is a whole lot more important than I once thought. And, second, if I can teach a person effective relationship skills - and I am not just talking social skills here - then the rest is relatively easy. If I cannot teach them to build genuine relationships then their ability to progress - at least without leaving a lot of bodies in their wake - is severely limited."
2. The wisdom to ask the right questions is fundamental to any leadership development process.
3. As a rule, the younger the worker is in terms of their generational cohort the less they respond to a tell assertive style.

GROUP INTERACTION—What are some of the other benefits of the ask assertive communication style?

III. Other benefits and perspectives.

A. Persuasion is greatly enhanced by effective listening skills
   1. The ask assertive approach is usually more effective when persuasion is necessary because asking questions allows the other person to come to their own conclusions.
   2. A person's own conclusions arrived at by really thinking through something are usually more deeply and lastingly held than "spoon-fed" conclusions. .

B. The "ask assertive" approach makes it much more difficult for the other person to tune you out. The "tell assertive" approach gives the person room to simply "check out" of the conversation and think about something else while you are talking. It is virtually impossible to mask this "tune out" during an "ask assertive" interaction.

C. Proper questions and question sequences can help teach the other person how to think more effectively. In other words, over time the experience of listening to and answering process oriented question sequences that are at the heart of the "ask assertive" approach begins to enter into the other persons thinking habit patterns - especially if you expose them to this approach frequently. .

D. An "ask assertive" approach tends to open the other person up while a "tell assertive" approach is often met with more defensiveness.

E. Many of the great thinkers and influencers of all time used the ask assertive approach. For example, The ancient texts indicate that Jesus rarely asked questions to which he didn't already know the answer.

F. The maturation component - people tend to grow more and access the adult parts of their personality when they are treated like adults and ask assertive, if done right, can help accomplish that desirable outcome.

IV. Cautions.

A. It is unwise to always ask questions or answer a question with a question. There are many times when statements are not only acceptable but are the most appropriate response.

B. Be careful not to abuse the power of the "ask assertive" approach to inappropriately manipulate or retaliate.

C. Avoid making the "ask assertive" approach a game.

D. Track your inner spirit to monitor the integrity of your ask assertive process. For instance, if you ask painfully obvious rhetorical questions or patronizing parental-type questions the ask assertive approach will be perverted and your desired outcomes will not be achieved.

GROUP INTERACTION—What are some of the things you learned about ask assertive communication from the role playing exercise?

IV. CAUTIONS.

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GROUP INTERACTION—What two or three changes could you make immediately to become more ask assertive in your communication?