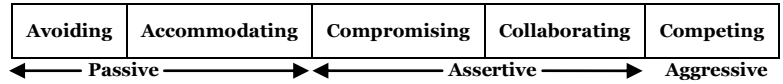


# Be Assertive Not Aggressive!

Dr. Sitaram Dixit – Chairman, CGSI

## CONFLICT RESPONSES & ASSERTIVENESS



If we look at the world around us, we will find that people nowadays are naturally becoming more and more aggressive in their behaviors and actions. Typically, aggressiveness manifests itself in knee-jerk intolerant actions that we noticed among our writers, actors, filmmakers, scientists, ex-soldiers, politicians, and the likes in the recent past with an explicit view to enforce their beliefs, on their perceptions of the growing intolerance of others. Tolerances are a giving and take phenomenon, and it is necessary that each one on their part have to be a little more tolerant to accept and understand the other's point of view. Only when we are willing to respect an opposing ideology with an open mind and then willingly argue out its inadequacies if any, with a suitable logic, we can consider ourselves tolerant and not otherwise. Doing this alone will truly make us, non-aggressive and help us clearly exhibit our point of view, assertively and effectively to a logical conclusion, acceptable to all the stakeholders concerned.

The English Dictionary states that the word Assertiveness is a derivative of the verb "to assert", which means, "to state an opinion, claim a right, or establish authority". If we assert ourselves, we "behave in a way that expresses our confidence, importance, or power, earning our respect from others". Aggressiveness means, "characterized by aggression: inclined to behave in an actively hostile fashion". We all know the difference between claiming a right and being actively hostile. The approach one uses to get better results will depend on one's personality.

Principally, we can say that **assertiveness is being firm, but polite**. Aggressiveness in contrast, is firm but impolite, pursuing one's own aims or interests forcefully, selfish, and sometimes excessively. An aggressive person seems, self-righteous, intimidating, physically threatening more like a bully, humiliating, ignoring others feelings, and views. A person need not be intimidating or act threatening, but can still be an aggressive person. Such 'passive-aggressive' individuals are uncomfortable to share their true feelings and agree with others in public but complain or disagree behind their backs, damaging relationships, and losing mutual respect.



Frustration is due to deep chronic lack of confidence and displeasure arising from unsettled problems, or

discontentment of underlying issues. It does not occur overnight but over a long period. When the person feels frustrated, and their emotions threatened, they ignite and explode. Aggression caused by frustration in most instances becomes a forceful argumentative act, displaying harmful, destructive behavior, primarily to dominate another individual causing great harm. Another dimension of this behavior is being passive/non-assertive. Non-assertiveness is polite (considerate of other people's perspectives), but not firm, i.e., unwilling to stand up for one's own needs. Non-assertive people need to understand the differences between assertiveness and aggressiveness so that when they step forward to get their needs met they do not go overboard and step on everyone else.

Assertive behavior is the happy median between gross aggressiveness and absolute passivity. An assertive person

understands the needs and is able to express and communicate feelings effectively in a very normal conversational tone, without ever disregarding the opinions of others or becoming overbearing or sounding accusatory. Assertive communications means typically saying, "I disagree" rather than saying, "You're wrong". In other words, Assertiveness means standing up for one's own viewpoint and defending one's rights, with politeness combined with firmness, but without walking over, other people, causing injury, destruction, or arguments. It is better to be assertive by exercising higher levels of consideration of others viewpoint, in tune to the individual nature, by developing a genuine desire for patient listening.



**The assertive person by being a professional, firm but polite, improves one's self-esteem, earns the respect, and cooperation of others much faster with more commitment, than an aggressive person does. Assertive people are better to state an opinion, claim a right, establish authority, and look at the big picture. When we are assertive, we understand better, can maintain eye contact without glaring or intimidating, improving self-esteem, and creating mutually respectful relationships by demonstrating a willingness to resolve all impending conflicts.**

Diplomatic behavioral style, improves communication and decision-making skills, thereby creating a win-win situation. Some research even suggests that being assertive can help people cope with mental health problems, such as depression, anorexia, bulimia, social anxiety disorder, and schizophrenia. Aggressive personal behavior is indicative of extreme stress. A "Behavioral Neuroscience" study suggests that the same hormones that respond to stress may also play a role in aggressive behavior. Only our reaction to a person's aggressive behavior will decide the situation from escalating out of control. Sometimes it is better not to overreact, avoid confrontation, by remaining calm and reasonable, thereby giving the person some space to think rationally again after an opportunity to calm down. Many a time empathizing and giving attention to the angry person is sufficient to alleviate anger and control the situation.

A person's communication style develops over a lifetime and he or she may not be even aware that they are aggressive. If people seem to dread or fear to interact with us, or if we are quick to become judgmental blaming others for problems and mistakes, then we are aggressive. It is time to recognize these signs and work for a solution by toning down the style to begin conversations positively with empathy recognizing the other person's feelings, making a conscious effort to recognize one's own anger or frustration and keeping our aggressive behavior under control.

**An assertive response is obviously the most desired one. Some people are naturally assertive, and learning it oneself takes time and practice. It will not happen overnight.** In the face of high-flying emotions, that are difficult to control and respond, just being aware of the different ways we can approach a difficult situation, is by itself the first step to a positive outcome, and bring the impending change.

क्रोधो मूलमनर्थानां क्रोधः संसारबन्धनम् ।  
धर्मक्षयकरः क्रोधस्तस्मात् क्रोधं विवर्जयेत् ॥

**Golden Words of Yore**

**ANGER is the root cause of all that is undesirable. It enslaves one to the world and destroys one's PIETY. Hence, give up ANGER.**

You will not be punished for your anger; you will be punished by your anger! – **Gautam Buddha**



अमीर: मोदीजी, मेरी बीवी का कहना है की देश सुरक्षित नहीं है, क्या ये सही है ?

मोदी: पहले मैंने भी यही सोचा था मेरे दोस्त, इसलिये कभी ऑस्ट्रेलिया, कभी जापान, कभी चीन, कभी अमेरिका, कभी कनाडा, कभी नेपाल, कभी सिंगापुर, और न जाने कौन कौन से देश होके आया, हिंदुस्तान से अच्छा और सुरक्षित देश कोई नहीं है, इसलिये अगर बदलना हि है, तो मेरी सलाहा मनो, और एक बार बीवी बदलो, देश नहीं ॥

