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Chapter 3 Shaping up Assertiveness

MWO 3 Roster

- 3-1 Do I Operate from Weakness or Strength
- 3-2 A Marital Assertiveness Behaviors Exercise
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Prologue

• • • Lois could never bring herself to tell Josh how she felt about things. She was often fearful of being put down or ignored. Joshua felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the responsibilities of being the sole bread winner of the family. Yet he was unable to explain to Lois why he seemed to always be under stress. In their own ways the Durite couple suffered the loss of their individual rights for the last eighteen years • • •

This chapter of **Marriage Work-Out** provides you both with a manifesto to secure individual rights in marriage and yet give tile relationship life and vitality. Being a victim is a sure fire way to give up one's rights. Being aggressive, on the other hand, is a way to rob others of their rights.

In handling assertiveness wisely in marriage, a couple can balance each other's needs and rights and yet succeed in accomplishing the goals of the couple system. Maintaining a balance of partners' rights is the goal of the exercises in this chapter.

3-1 Do I Operate from Weakness or Strength?

Do you typically behave from a position of weakness or strength? The very first guideline for being assertive is: Never operate from weakness. This questionnaire will assess whether you regularly operate from weakness or strength.

Yes No [1] Do I find myself just "going along" with what my partner wants to do, and resenting it?

Yes No [2] Am I the person designated by my partner to be chauffeur, "pick up after others," or generally run my life on "their" schedule?

Yes No [3] Do I find it difficult to say NO to my partner and to express my feelings about it?

Yes No [4] Am I often afraid to tell my partner that I don't want to do something without making up excuses?

Yes No [5] Do I avoid asking my partner for favors and presenting strong cases for my requests?

Yes No [6] Do I shun confronting my partner when I have differences of opinions with her/him?

Yes No [7] Do I find myself doing menial tasks at home and disliking this role?

Yes No [8] Do I often do chores at home when requested, even when it interferes with something important in my business or leisure plans?

Yes No [9] Is it difficult for me to tell my partner that I want her/his opinion?

Yes No [10] Do I find myself just going along with my partner, even when I believe I know that there is a better way?

Yes No [11] Is it difficult for me to tell my partner how I feel when s/he has let me down?

Yes No [12] Do I just accept unspoken reinforcement from my partner even if I feel I deserve something better?

Yes No [13] Do I end up waiting for my partner when I have been ready to go thirty minutes before our scheduled departure?

Yes No [14] Do I avoid confronting my partner when I feel I have been abused or neglected by her/him?

Yes No [15] Do I avoid confronting my partner when I know s/he is giving me doubletalk and being evasive?

Yes No [16] Do I do as I am told when my partner tells me that I have to obey her/his household rules?

Yes No [17] Is it hard for me to tell my partner to her/his face, that I am feeling used in this relationship?

Yes No [18] Do I find myself accepting poor communication from my partner and not asking for better?

Yes No [19] Do I find myself giving in easily to all of my partner's requests?

Yes No [20] Do I find myself asking my partner for permission to speak or to do things?

If you have answered yes to two or more of the above items it indicates that you operate out of a position of weakness rather than from one of strength. It also indicates that you probably would benefit from working on this section on Shaping Up Assertiveness in marriage. A productive marital relationship requires that a couple approaches each other as equals. If one partner defines her or himself as inferior to the other partner then there will be a resulting lack of assertiveness in the marriage by the inferior feeling partner. To be assertive a partner must feel strong enough about her or himself to stand up for her or his rights. Successful Marriage Workout results when partners operate out of strength rather than from weakness.

Suggested Discussion Topics

Before proceeding to the next exercise, compare your results on this exercise with your partner and discuss the following questions.

1. Why is it, that one or both of us feels so weak?
2. How does it feel when someone is aggressive with you?
3. What payoffs do you get from being weak in our relationship?
4. How aggressive am I in this relationship?
5. What effect does my lack of assertiveness have in this relationship?
6. Why do I feel like a victim in our relationship at times?
7. How do we handle the need for control in our relationship and in each of our own personal lives?
8. What are my feelings about being ignored in this relationship?
9. Why am I afraid to speak up in this relationship?
10. Why are you afraid of me improving my assertive behaviors?

In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise

3-2 A Marital Assertiveness Behaviors Exercise

Fill out this form individually from your partner.

A. Initiation Behaviors

How much do I express myself in the marriage? Circle the appropriate response as to the frequency for you in your marriage:

	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
1. Do I give compliments to my spouse?			
2. Do I easily receive compliments from my spouse?			
3. Do I make requests of my spouse?			
4. Do I express liking, love and affection to my spouse?			
5. Do I initiate and maintain conversations with my spouse?			
6. Do I stand up for my legitimate rights with my spouse?			
7. Do I refuse requests from my spouse?			
8. Do I express personal opinions including disagreements to my spouse?			
9. Do I express justified annoyance and displeasure to my spouse?			
10. Do I express justified anger to my spouse?			

Look at the ten items and find the ones where you answered with the words Seldom and Sometimes. Are there one or more behaviors (e.g., making requests) for which you have given Seldom and Sometime answers? If there are, circle the number of the item. It is these behaviors you need to pay special attention to in your Work-Out.

B. Expressive Behaviors

To assess whether you experience any discomfort or undue anxiety when you express yourself, answer Yes or No to the following questions:

	Yes	No
1. When I give compliments to my spouse do I become unduly anxious?		
2. When I receive compliments from my spouse do I become very nervous or unduly anxious?		
3. When I make requests of my spouse do I become very nervous or unduly anxious?		
4. When I express liking, love and affection to my spouse, do I		

become nervous or unduly anxious?		
5. When I initiate and maintain conversations with my spouse do I become very nervous or unduly anxious?		
6. When I stand up for my legitimate rights with my spouse do I become nervous or unduly anxious?		
7. When I refuse requests from my spouse do I become nervous or unduly anxious?		
8. When I express personal opinion including disagreement to my spouse, do I become nervous or unduly anxious?		
9. When I express justified annoyance and displeasure to my spouse, do I become nervous or unduly anxious?		
10. When I express justified anger to my spouse, do I become nervous or unduly anxious?		

Look at the ten items and find the ones you answered YES to. Circle the number of the behaviors for which you answered YES. These behaviors need your special attention in your Work-Out.

C. Aggressive Behaviors

Aggression can be expressed directly and include such behaviors as threats, hostile remarks, name calling, and ridicule, or it can be expressed indirectly and include such behaviors as sarcasm and snide remarks. To determine whether you behave aggressively, at times, answer Yes or No to the following questions:

	Yes	No
1. Am I aggressive when I give compliments to my spouse?		
2. Am I aggressive when I receive compliments from my spouse?		
3. Am I aggressive when I make requests of my spouse?		
4. Am I aggressive when I express liking, love and affection for my spouse?		
5. Am I aggressive when I initiate and maintain conversations with my spouse?		
6. Am I aggressive when I stand up for my legitimate rights with my spouse?		
7. Am I aggressive when I refuse requests from my spouse?		
8. Am I aggressive when I express personal opinion including disagreements with my spouse?		
9. Am I aggressive when I express justified annoyance and displeasure to my spouse?		
10. Am I aggressive when I express justified anger to my spouse?		

Look over the ten items and find the ones you answered YES to. Circle the number of the behaviors for which you answered YES. These behaviors need your special attention in this Work-Out.

D. Summary of Target Behaviors

Once you have completed the above three activities, compare your results with those of your spouse. List below the behaviors you and your spouse identified as Sometimes or Seldom expressed or making them nervous or unduly anxious or are aggressive when expressed.

My Spouses Target Behaviors:

- 1.
- 2,
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

My Target Behaviors:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

You and your spouse have now identified assertive behaviors which you need to focus on in your Marriage Work-Out Exercises.

In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise

3-3 Ten Assertive Rights in Marriage

Read these ten rights, then discuss with your partner the questions at the end of this exercise.

1. I have the right to judge my own behavior, thoughts and emotions, and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon myself.

The behavior of my spouse may have an impact upon me, but I determine how I choose to react and/or deal with each situation. Only I have the power to judge and modify my thoughts, feelings and behaviors. My spouse may influence my decision, but the final choice is in my hands.

2. I have the right to offer no reasons or excuses to justify my behavior.

I need not rely upon my spouse to judge whether my actions are proper or correct. My spouse may state disagreement or disapproval, but I have the option to disregard her/his preferences, or work out a compromise or I may choose to respect her/his preferences and consequently modify my behavior. What is important is that it is my choice. My spouse may try to manipulate my behavior and feelings by demanding reasons for them and by trying to persuade me that I am wrong, but I know that I am the ultimate judge.

3. I have the right to judge whether I am responsible for finding solutions to my spouse's problems.

I am ultimately responsible solely for my own psychological well-being and happiness. I may feel concern and compassion and wish good will for my spouse, but I am not responsible nor do I have the ability to create mental stability and happiness for her/him. Perhaps my actions have indirectly caused my spouse's problem. However, it is still his/ her responsibility to come to terms with the problems and to learn to cope on her/ his own. If I fail to recognize this assertive right, my spouse may choose to manipulate my thoughts and feelings by placing the blame for her/his problems upon me.

4. I have the right to change my mind.

As a human being, nothing in my life is necessarily constant or rigid. My interests and needs may well change with the passage of time. The possibility of changing my mind is normal, healthy and conducive to self-growth. My spouse may try to manipulate my choice by asking that I admit error, or by stating that I am irresponsible, but it is nevertheless unnecessary for me to justify my decision.

5. I have the right to say, "I don't know."

I have the right to make decisions without being one hundred percent certain of all the answers regarding these choices. If I were to evaluate every possible outcome of all decisions I made, then, chances are I would accomplish very little in my lifetime. No

one can be expected to know all the outcomes of any particular behavior, therefore, I must make personal judgments as I see fit.

6. I have the right to make mistakes and be responsible for them.

To err is part of the human condition. My spouse may try to manipulate me, having me believe that my errors are wrong and unforgivable, and that furthermore, I must make amends for my wrong doings by now engaging in a proper behavior. If I allow this, my future behaviors will be colored or influenced by my past mistakes and my decisions will be controlled by the opinions of my spouse.

7. I have the right to be independent of the good will of my spouse before coping with her/him.

Within my marriage it would be unrealistic for me to expect the approval of my spouse for all my actions, regardless of their merit. If I were to assume that I required my spouse's goodwill before I could effectively cope with her/him, then I would leave myself open to manipulation by her/him. It is unlikely that I require the goodwill and/or cooperation of my spouse in order to survive. A relationship does not require one hundred percent agreement. It is inevitable that my spouse at times will be hurt or offended by my behavior. I am responsible only to myself and I can deal with periodic disapproval from my spouse.

8. I have the right to be illogical in making decisions.

I sometimes employ logic as a reasoning process to assist me in making judgments. However, logic cannot predict what will happen in every situation. Logic is not much help in dealing with wants, motivations and feelings. Logic generally deals with black or white, "all or none," or "yes or no" issues. Logic and reasoning work poorly when dealing with the gray area of the human condition.

9. I have the right to say, "I don't understand."

One aspect of being human is being unable to fully understand all that occurs around me. I learn through experience, but experience also teaches that I cannot always understand what my spouse means or wants. I cannot read minds, although my spouse may choose to manipulate by providing hints or making subtle implications. I cannot always anticipate and be sensitive to the feelings, needs and wants of my spouse, if unstated.

10. I have the right to say, "I don't care."

Being human, I am not perfect. It is a fallacy to assume that I must always strive to improve myself. My spouse may use this to manipulate me, saying that I am obliged to alter my behavior in a more positive direction; otherwise, I am lazy, worthless and degenerate, and unworthy of respect. If I aspire for goals of perfection, I undoubtedly will be frustrated and disappointed. Therefore, I have the right to say that I don't care to be perfect. The only sure way to prevent manipulation is to ask myself whether I

personally am satisfied with myself or my performance, and then, I can more objectively make my own judgment as to what I wish to change my behavior.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

After reading the Ten Assertive Rights in Marriage, discuss these questions with your spouse.

1. How can we keep each other from being too judgmental of one another? Why is it so easy to judge the other? How does the fear of your judgment reduce the assertiveness in our relationship?
2. Why do we always demand a reason for one another's behaviors? How does constant rationalizing and defending one's behaviors affect our relationship?
3. How do we feel about being blamed for one another's problems? How fair is this? What is the usual outcome of such blaming?
4. How comfortable are we with allowing one another to have a change of mind? Why is it so important for our partner to be predictable? What is the worst thing that could happen if I changed my mind midstream in an argument?
5. How comfortable are we living in an ambiguous situation in which the outcome is unknown? Why do we have such a great need for certainty in our decision making? How comfortable are we at taking risks where the outcomes are unknown?
6. Why is it so hard to admit to making a mistake? How well do we accept each other's admission of making a mistake? What is the benefit of allowing each other to make mistakes?
7. How easy do we find expressing disapproval to one another? How easily do we become devastated by such expressions of disappointment? Why does prior approval by my partner have to be a prerequisite before I take action?
8. What part does logic play in our life? Why does logic become so important in our arguments? How comfortable are we with the "grays" in life?
9. How important is mind reading in our life? How has unclear communication and jumping to wrong conclusions affected us in the past? How freely do we admit we don't understand one another?
10. Why is perfection so important to us? How can we learn to live with one another's imperfections? Why does it bother me to say "I don't care?"

In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise

3-4 Common Roadblocks and Myths Concerning Assertiveness In Marital Relationships

Read the Roadblocks and Myths separately, then discuss the questions at the end of this exercise with your partner.

A. Roadblocks to Assertiveness

Road Blocks	Assertive Counterpart
If I assert myself in my marital relationship, my spouse will get mad at me.	If I assert myself the results may be positive, negative or neutral; however; since assertion involves legitimate rights, the odds are in my favor to have positive results.
If I do assert myself in my marital relationship, and my spouse does become angry with me, it will be awful; I will be devastated.	Even if my spouse does become angry, I am capable of handling it without falling apart. If I assert myself when it is appropriate, I don't have to feel responsible for my spouse's feelings. It may be her/his own problem.
Although I prefer my spouse to be straightforward with me, I am afraid that if I am open with her/him and say "No" I will hurt him/her.	If I am assertive, my spouse may or may not feel hurt. My spouse is not more fragile than I am. I prefer to be dealt with directly, quite likely s/he will too.
If my assertion hurts my spouse, I am responsible for her/his feelings.	Even if my spouse is hurt by my assertive behavior, I can let her/him know I care for her/him while also being direct about what I want or need. Although at times, s/he will be taken back by my assertive behavior, s/he is not so vulnerable and fragile that s/he will be shattered by it.
It is wrong to turn down legitimate requests. My spouse will think I am terrible and won't like me.	Even legitimate requests can be refused assertively. It is acceptable to consider my own needs sometimes before my spouse's. I can't please my spouse all of the time.
At all costs I must avoid making statements or asking questions that might make me look ignorant or stupid.	It is okay to lack information or make a mistake; it just shows that I am human.
Assertive people are cold and uncaring. If I am assertive I'll be so un-pleasant that my spouse won't like me.	Assertive people are direct and honest and behave appropriately. They show a genuine concern for other people's rights and feelings as well as their own. Their assertiveness enriches their relationships

with their spouses.

B. Myths of Non-Assertiveness in Marriage

1. Anxiety

Some married people believe that overt signs of tenseness or anxiety indicate weakness or inadequacy. These individuals assume that if they were to exhibit anxiety, they would be ridiculed, rejected or taken advantage of by their spouses. This is self-defeating, for the harder a person attempts to camouflage such feelings, the more difficulty s/he will discover in concealing the accompanying symptoms (i.e. trembling, sweating, flushing, etc.). One method of reducing such anxiety is to acknowledge that these feelings are present. (One may discover that a spouse experiences similar feelings in certain circumstances). If a spouse can disclose these feelings of discomfort safely, s/he will, find that it is not necessary to expend so much energy disguising them; therefore, the anxiety no longer interferes with the task at hand or impairs the marriage,

2. Modesty

This myth consists of three parts: (1) the inability to acknowledge or say positive things about oneself, (2) the inability to accept compliments from a spouse and (3) the inability to give compliments to a spouse. Some married people fear that positive self-statements may seem egocentric. They fail to discriminate between accurate representation of accomplishments and over-exaggeration. Additionally, they may fear that once asserting themselves in this manner, they will have to live-up to these expectations 100% of the time. Inability to self-disclose positively may hinder their opportunities - if they don't believe in themselves, it is unrealistic to expect a spouse to believe in them. The spouse who is unable to receive compliments is damaging her/his self-respect indirectly because the spouse giving the genuine compliment, after several attempts will probably hesitate giving future positive feedback. Thus, the recipient of this praise, no longer hearing this positive feedback will undoubtedly begin to question her/his self-worth. Sometimes a spouse may use insincere praise as a manipulative tool (e.g. You are such a great worker, by the way, could you mow the lawn). However, to assume that all positive feedback is insincere, manipulative or misleading is to hinder the development of a healthy marital relationship as well as one's positive self-concept. Positive feedback is a powerful tool in this sense. Some partners are unable to provide the other spouse with positive feedback. They may be unaware of the potential positive effects. e.g., greater rapport or marital satisfaction. Sometimes spouses discover difficulty in delivering praise, because they fear making themselves vulnerable. They may be unable to elicit feelings easily and openly. Perhaps this is an alien behavior because they have never received positive feedback themselves. Or, maybe, there is a risk involved in developing more honest, open relationships. For whatever reasons, modesty does not enhance a mutually satisfying, spontaneous marital relationship.

3. Good Friends

This myth assumes that my spouse can read my mind based upon our marital relationship e.g.: "She should have known how I felt." or, "My husband should have known how hard I have been working and have given me Saturday morning free." Lack of good, facilitative communication is apparent here. One must remember that all people do not respond similarly to the same situation, nor does even one individual respond always in the same manner to the same situation. Setting these types of expectations will undoubtedly lead to guilt, resentment, hurt feelings and misunderstanding within a marriage.

4. Obligation

This myth indicates that some spouses disregard their own personal needs and rights due to the belief of personal obligation to their partners. These spouses put the other ahead of themselves. Obviously one's needs cannot always be met; however, one who routinely doesn't express her/his needs and rights, and who finds her/himself imposed upon quite frequently, is being restrained by this belief or myth of obligation. Such an individual may even be unable to make requests of a spouse because through projection s/he believes the spouse may also feel obligated to meet her/his needs. This myth, along with the others, does not facilitate self-respect, nor the development of open and healthy marital relationships.

5. Sexual Roles Stereotypes

Sometime spouses erroneously behave in one particular manner due to various gender role expectations. Traditionally, this has been especially true for wives. The belief may be that it is no feminine to be assertive or outspoken. The myth of obligation fits in this category. Due to outside expectations, many wives, in particular, are unable to refuse even unreasonable requests. This may be true regardless of whether this request would interfere with or impose upon one's needs and rights. Husbands traditionally have been encouraged to act upon their needs and rights aggressively to fill the "macho" or "controlling" role in the relationship. Gender role expectations then color their behaviors, often in the opposite extreme. This is not to say that some husbands are inappropriately not passive, but the social pressure leans more in the opposite direction. Gender role expectations severely limit one's options for acting appropriately upon one's beliefs, needs and rights. They close the door to spontaneous, sincere interpersonal interactions within a marriage.

6. Strength of an Issue

It is risky sometimes to take a stand, even on an issue about which one might feel quite strongly. It may be interpreted as pressuring a partner to accept one's beliefs, especially if one is discussing a particularly controversial issue. A spouse may not choose to take the risk of potentially alienating her/himself from a partner. A spouse who cannot assertively discuss her/his beliefs is closing the door to honestly expressing oneself, and the opportunity for a potentially stimulating exchange which may afford him/her the opportunity for personal self-growth within the marriage.

Suggested Discussion Questions

After reading the Roadblocks and Myths of Assertiveness discuss the following questions with your partner.

- 1 How many of the 7 Roadblocks and the 6 Myths to assertiveness are present in our marital relationship? How do they happen for us? What steps can we take to reduce these roadblocks in the future?
2. What makes us afraid to show our anxiety, tenseness or uncertainty to each other? What can we do to change this?
3. What role does humility have in the lack of mutual assertiveness in our relationship? What can we do to change this?
4. How often do we assume how the other is feeling? What problems have occurred from such assumptions? What steps should we take to avoid this from occurring in the future?
5. What is it that makes us feel so obligated to act or be a certain way for each other? What verbal or non-verbal messages do we send to one another to encourage this sense of obligation?
6. How are we caught in "sex roles" stereotype behaviors in our relationship? How do these stereotype behaviors hinder our assertive behaviors?
7. How do we handle one another when we hold firmly onto a belief with which the other disagrees? Does this handling of such a situation douse the flame of assertiveness? How can we change this?
8. How often do we hide behind roadblocks and myths as a rationale not to be assertive in our relationship? Why is it important for us both to be open and assertive with one another?
9. How do the roadblocks and myths of assertiveness affect the way in which we deal with our children, parents and relatives? What type of role models for assertion were our parents?
10. What steps can we take to allow each other to overcome the roadblock and myths of assertiveness in our marriage? How will this enhance our relationship? What precautions must we follow to ensure that our attempts at being more assertive are constructive to our marriage?

In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise

3-5 Self-Assertiveness Training Exercise

FIRST: Individually read the material in Chapter 3-3 and Chapter 3-4 and in Step 1 on behaviors and strategies involved in self-assertive training.

SECOND: Jointly read the Five Sample Situations and determine if the three responses given are Aggressive or Non-assertive or Assertive. This exercise should prepare you both for the next step.

THIRD: Jointly read the Ten Role Playing Situations arid role play the various Self-Assertive Techniques with your spouse. Give yourself plenty of time to complete step 3.

Step 1:

Learn to identify these 3 Behaviors: Responses or reactions generally associated with assertion training:

Non-assertion: The act of withdrawing from a situation. A passive approach to a situation (life) resulting in:

- Denial of one's feelings/opinions;
- Allowing others to choose for you;
- Guilt, anger

Examples of Non-Assertion:

- Oh, it's nothing.
- Oh, that's all right: I did not want it anymore.
- Why don't you go ahead and do it; my ideas aren't very good anyway.

Aggression: The act of emotionally over-reacting to a situation. A self-enhancing, egotistical approach to a situation (life) resulting in:

- Put down feelings on the receiver's part.
- Not allowing others to choose for themselves, but rather choosing for them.
- Hostility, defensiveness on the aggressor's part and hurt, humiliation on the receiver's part.

Examples of Aggression:

- You are a no good S.O.B.
- Do it my way!
- You make me sick.
- That is just about enough out of you.
- Others: sarcasm, name calling, threatening, blaming, insulting.

Aggression can also take the form of a lie or a misrepresentation of the facts.

Self-Assertiveness: The act of declaring this is who I am, what I think and feel, and what I want. It is a non-egotistical, active, rather than passive, approach to a situation (life) resulting in:

- Open, direct self-expression of what you think and feel.
- Allowing others to choose for themselves.
- Mutual satisfaction at achieving a desired goal.

Examples of Assertion:

- I am ...
- I think we ...
- I feel bad when ...
- That seems unfair to me.
- Can you help me with this?
- I appreciate your help.

Self-Assertive Strategies

1. Make known your desires and feelings and not be side-tracked by your spouse.
 - Make a short, clear, assertive statement of your goal, taking into account what your spouse is saying by persistently repeating your goal: Yes I understand [spouse's response] but I still want [state your goal].
2. Express feelings about a situation without threatening your spouse.
 - Identify the situation: "When you put me down ..."
 - Identify how you feel about it: "... I feel bad ..."
 - Identify what you want: "When you put me down, I feel bad. I want you to know that and to stop it."
3. Make a non-assertive partner open up.
 - The topic should be pursued in a gentle, probing manner: "You know honey, I just don't understand why you are so uptight; do you?"

Body Language as Related to Assertive Behaviors

Eye contact and facial expression: maintain direct eye contact, but do not appear angry by frowning, etc.

Posture: Stand erect, possibly leaning forward slightly

Distance and contact: Stand or sit at a normal conversational distance with your spouse

Gestures: use relaxed, conversational gestures.

Voice: use a factual, not emotional tone of voice. Sound determined and full of conviction, but not over-bearing.

Timing: if possible, chose the right time and place for the conversation.

Final Tips on Assertiveness

Assertive responses are characterized by the use of "I" instead of "You." . . .
 Assertive responses are usually effective in getting your spouse to change or reinforce behavior.

Assertive responses run a low risk of hurting a marriage

Assertive responses do not attack your spouse's self-esteem or put her/him on the defensive

Assertive responses prevent "gunny sacking," i.e. saving up a lot of bad feelings.

Step 2

Identify if responses are non-assertive, aggressive or assertive.

Five Sample Situations

Do this task jointly with your partner. Identify if the responses are aggressive, assertive or non-assertive. The answer key is at the end of this step.

A. Cousin Jessie, with whom you prefer not to spend much time, is on the phone. She says that she is planning to spend the next three weeks with you,'

	Aggressive	Non-Assertive	Assertive
1. We'd love to have you come and stay as long as you like.			
2. We'd be glad to have you come for the weekend, but we cannot invite you for longer. A short visit will be very nice for all of us, and we'll want to see each other again after that.			
3. The weather down here has been terrible. (not true) So you'd better plan on going elsewhere.			

B. You have bought a toaster at a national chain store and it doesn't work properly.

	Aggressive	Non-Assertive	Assertive
1. I bought this toaster and it doesn't work and I would like my money back.			
2. What right do you have selling me junk like this?			
3. You put it in the closet and buy another one			

C. One of your children has been coming in late consistently for the last three or four days.

	Aggressive	Non-Assertive	Assertive
1. I have noticed that for the last few days you have been a little late and I am concerned about that.			
2. The next time you are late, you are moving out.			
3. You mumble to yourself and hope s/he			

will be on time tomorrow.			
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D. You are at the dinner table and your spouse starts smoking, which offends you.

	Aggressive	Non-Assertive	Assertive
1. Hey that smoke is terrible.			
2. You suffer the smoke in silence.			
3. I would appreciate it if you wouldn't smoke here. I am bothered by it.			

E. You are across the room and your spouse is talking to you but not loud enough for you to hear.

	Aggressive	Non-Assertive	Assertive
1. You continue straining to hear and end up daydreaming.			
2. You yell out, Speak up! I can't hear you if you talk to yourself.			
3. You stop him/her and get his/her attention - Would you mind speaking a little louder, please?			

Step 2 Answer Key

A.

- 1. Non-Assertive
- 2. Assertive
- 3. Aggressive

B

- 1. Assertive
- 2. Aggressive
- 3. Non-Assertive

C.

- 1. Assertive
- 2. Aggressive
- 3. Non-Assertive

D.

- 1. Aggressive
- 2. Non-Assertive
- 3. Assertive

E.

- 1. Non-Assertive
- 2. Aggressive
- 3. Assertive

Step 3 Ten Role Playing Situations for Self-Assertiveness Training

Each of these role play situations involve a need for assertive behaviors. Role play each of these situations with your spouse. Be sure to spend at least 5 minutes on each role play.

1. You just got home from work and your spouse wants to go to the movies but you would rather not.
2. Your spouse has begun smoking in the house but it bothers you.
3. You always run out of cash by Thursday. You are embarrassed about this and need to get more money from your partner who "controls" the family finances.
4. You are at a restaurant and you ordered a \$35 steak which is tough and your spouse is encouraging you to return it, but you don't like being pressured into doing such things.
5. You and your spouse are going to your parent's home town for a vacation. Your spouse has booked the flight for you. However, when you get to the airport you discover that you two aren't booked and that there are no seats available. You then find out that your spouse had forgotten to book the flight.
6. You have made a mistake in balancing the checkbook. Your spouse finds it and starts telling you off in front of your children (or neighbor).
7. It is your turn to do the dishes and before you can even get up from the table your spouse begins to tell you that the last time you did the dishes they were still dirty and crusty and the kitchen was a mess when you got done.
8. You have been home for over an hour and you notice that your spouse has been unusually quiet and distant with you.
9. You and your spouse are discussing religion and your spouse says something with which you strongly disagree.
10. You are trying to watch an intense and absorbing movie on cable TV but your spouse is talking very loudly on the telephone to your Aunt Jenny and you are having trouble hearing the TV.

In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise

3-6 Follow-Work-Out Plans for Mutual Assertiveness in Our Marriage

As a result of our exercises, discussions, and efforts in this chapter of our Marriage Work-Out we have come up with this action plan to continue and follow up the health enhancing we have just completed.

1. Assertiveness Needs

The following are needs which we still have to address to achieve full health in the use of Assertiveness in our marital relationship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2. Strategic Steps toward Growth in the Use of Assertiveness in Our Marriage

The following are specific steps we will take to address our needs to improve the use of Assertiveness with one another:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

3. Personal Responsibility Taking

The following are the things each of us will specifically do to ensure that we as a couple continue to grow in using Assertiveness with one another

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

4. Evaluation of Action Planning for Assertiveness

We will know we have achieved our goal to grow in the use of Assertiveness in our relationship by the following measurable behavioral changes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

We agree to the above Marriage Work-Out Plan for the use of Assertiveness in our marriage.

My signature

My partner's signature

Date

Date