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Life Would Be Easy...Series Part 3

The Assertive Personality: Open, Honest & Direct

By Connie Podesta

Ahhhh...Assertive. If you've got a chance to choose up sides in the "which personality is best contest" – put your money on this one--it is the only healthy way to get your needs met. Assertive people get what they want – with respect, care, honesty and compassion. They don't have to bully or belittle – and they don't make their problems everyone else's. These are terrific customers to work with and a great trait to have yourself if you're interested in moving up, expanding your network and attracting more like-minded people to you! They are also the people you want to marry, have as friends and the absolute best way to model healthy communication to your kids.

If you're tired of playing games, dealing with manipulative behaviors and finally realize that those difficult people in your life are not going to change just because you want them to be different, then making the very real choice to be assertive is your best ever move!

Look, healthy communication starts with the ability to let others know your needs, concerns, and feelings in an open and honest way without gimmicks, threats, manipulation, or hidden agendas. Let's take a look at what makes this personality type tick:

The Assertive Personality- Open, Honest, and Direct

When we are assertive we choose to handle ourselves, our reactions, our relationships, and stressful situations in a healthy, responsible, and non-manipulative manner. We understand that we have choices. Here's a tip: you will be treated exactly as you feel you deserve to be treated.

Communication is a learned skill. For parents, you must model assertive communication to your children so they can learn to handle conflict and sustain healthy relationships. Assertive people ask questions, seek answers, look at all points of view, and engage in meaningful, open-ended dialogue without anger, hurt feelings, or defensiveness.

We see examples of non-assertive communication everyday (media, talk shows, news, politics, etc.). In fact, most problem-solving models are not effective in the long run. For example, if two employees cannot seem to work together, they're rescheduled or reassigned to different shifts, floors, or departments to avoid having them work together. The message is clear: do not confront, mediate, or learn to communicate; simply separate and avoid the problem. Hello? Is it any wonder that the divorce rate is so high?

And there's another thing -- Our children are encouraged to be passive. When children ask "Why?" they're often given the pat response, "Because I'm your parent (or teacher) and I said so!" There are times when a child needs to immediately follow direct instructions, but there are many missed opportunities for our children to learn to respectfully participate in discussions that affect their lives.

Take Charge!

Here's what I want you to know -- Regardless of our diverse histories, each of us is responsible for our present behavior. If we want to neutralize difficult people, we must commit to communicating assertively. Warning! Difficult people will not like being treated assertively -- at first.

Difficult people only respect people who have the confidence to stand up for themselves. Assertiveness is their biggest enemy. It signals that you have figured them out and will no longer be swayed by their manipulations. So keep that in mind - things may get worse before they get better!

Be prepared for some trying times with the difficult person when you first become assertive. For instance, asserting yourself with an employer who is used to your working overtime, missing lunch, accepting angry criticism and attacks, may earn you the label of an insubordinate. Likewise, asserting yourself with a parent who has become comfortable with your total compliance and willingness to let guilt cause you to give in may cause them to declare, "You don't love me anymore." Unfortunately, there is no "quick fix."

It's up to you...

Self-respect is the true key to developing and maintaining healthy relationships. Our relationships with others mirror our relationship with ourselves. Self-esteem develops when we consistently strive to make healthy, fair, and ethical choices.

It is true that if you command respect and become more assertive some relationships will change, become more distant or even end. But, having the courage and self-respect to sever an abusive, addictive, or manipulative relationship is not quitting. Sometimes being assertive is about knowing when to heal and repair a relationship and when to disengage.

Assertiveness is more than just words. You must have a belief in yourself that radiates through your voice, gestures, tone, attitude, and body language that says, "I am a worthy person and I will be treated respectfully."

Self-respect is where assertiveness begins and manipulation ends.

Here's your homework...Take Action!

Look closely at the times your family or friends are assertive. How do you react? Doesn't it feel good to be with someone who is upfront, honest, and cooperative? How do you ACT and REACT when someone is not being assertive with you? Can you model assertiveness and help change the dynamics in that relationship?

Think about the times when you are not assertive. What other communication style(s) do you most often use? Does it work? Are you rewarded for your non-assertive behavior? Remember, non-assertive communication attracts non-assertive people--so you are setting yourself up for unhealthy relationships. Assertive, on the other hand, attracts respectful, open and supportive people. A better choice, right?

Try to be assertive at the times you might use another communication style. Do others react more positively toward you?

Want to learn more techniques and strategies for dealing with DIFFICULT people? Visit my site at www.conniepodesta.com today!