



MAKING CHANGES

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: TOPICS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Effective Communication

The ability to communicate effectively can have far-reaching effects on relationships and quality of daily life. A basic requirement in any relationship is the need to understand and to be understood. Participants will have the opportunity to examine their existing communication skills and the effect they have on others. In addition they gain an understanding of the behaviour of others and learn new skills that pave the way for effective and positive relationships outside the group.

Week 1 - Orientation

Orientation provides us with the opportunity to learn about the program, the leader and get to know other participants. We begin group building by developing guidelines to create a safe, comfortable environment for learning, and begin to set goals for the growth and development of the group and individuals.

Week 2 - Importance of Using “I” Language

When we use “I” messages, we share with others our feelings and thoughts, we speak only for ourselves and take ownership and personal responsibility for ourselves and our communication. We practice using “I” language and experience the increase in personal power and effectiveness.

Week 3 - Sending Clear Messages

Communication is an important life skill. Becoming more aware of our underlying messages, the different ways we communicate, filters that get in the way and learning a process to help us think before we speak help us communicate more clearly and effectively. We also learn about the concept of congruency; where body language, tone of voice, words and feelings are consistent with the intended message.

Week 4 - Listening Actively and Effectively

Becoming a better listener requires time, patience and practice. Becoming aware of our current listening habits and their impact on relationships is one step. The benefits of acquiring better listening skills are greater understanding, closer relationships and increased efficiency in day-to-day tasks.

Week 5 - Benefits of Assertiveness

Assertiveness involves the development of communication skills enabling us to act in our own best interest, to stand up for ourselves without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably and to exercise personal rights without denying or violating the rights of others. We look at the differences between passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour and discover our personal style.

Week 6 - Barriers to Assertiveness

Women tend to sabotage themselves with internal messages that prevent them from being assertive. This session identifies four blocks to assertion and ways to overcome them.

Week 7 – Skills for Asserting Oneself

In order to develop new skills it is important to practice. In this session we look at various methods to assertively defuse and deal with criticism, to initiate and open up conversations as well as ways to deal with difficult people. We then take time to practice the assertiveness skills we have been developing.

Week 8 - Learning to Say “NO”

Saying NO to requests is often difficult and it is a common tendency to over explain to justify saying NO or to feel guilty afterwards. In this session we look at situations and people we have difficulty with and learn and practice different ways to say NO and mean it.

Week 9 - Making Requests – Asking for what you need

We sometimes hesitate to ask for favours or make requests because we exaggerate the negative consequences. It is part of being assertive to make reasonable requests, to look after ourselves and ask for what we need. We will examine and challenge barriers that prevent us from making requests or asking for help and look at healthy boundaries around making and responding to requests.

Week 10 – Closure

The closure session allows an opportunity to acknowledge the mixture of conflicting emotions participants often experience; appreciations of new skills, knowledge and friendships as well as sadness and let down that group is ending. We also take time to acknowledge goal achievement and to evaluate personal learning and the effectiveness of the group process.