

4 Managing conflict

- ▶ assertive, aggressive or passive
- ▶ assertiveness techniques
- ▶ roleplay: conflict situations in the workplace

4.4 Management skills Assertiveness

Your **assertive** rights in the workplace

- The right to hold your own opinions.
- The right to a fair hearing for those opinions.
- The right to need and want things that may differ from other people's needs and wants.
- The right to ask (not demand) that others respond to your needs and wants.
- The right to refuse a request without feeling guilty or selfish.
- The right to have feelings and to express them assertively if you want to.
- The right to be wrong sometimes.
- The right to have others respect your rights.

from Assertiveness at Work, by Ken and Kate Back

Discussion

1 Work with a partner. Discuss which of your assertive rights are contravened by these comments.

- 1 'When I want your opinion, I'll ask for it!'
- 2 'What do you mean, you can't work late tonight? Don't you have any sense of loyalty?'
- 3 'I don't care how you feel about it, just get on with the job!'
- 4 'I will not tolerate mistakes, do you hear me?'


2 Which answers would you choose?

- 1 a) Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you.
b) I think exchanging views will help us move forward.
c) You're so opinionated, why don't you ever listen to me?
- 2 a) Oh, all right then, I'll do it.
b) Yes, I do, but unfortunately I've got family commitments tonight. I'm happy to reschedule the work though.
c) You should've planned ahead, I knew this would happen!
- 3 a) Never mind, it doesn't matter.
b) I realize you're worried that it's urgent, but as I said, I feel there are more important jobs I should be doing.
c) Why don't you do some work for a change?
- 4 a) It won't happen again.
b) That seems a bit unfair to me.
c) Calm down, it's no big deal.

3 Work with a partner. Answer the questions.

- 1 Which of the answers above are aggressive, non-assertive/passive, assertive?
- 2 What kind of body language would you associate with each type of behaviour?
- 3 What kind of outcomes are aggression and non-assertiveness likely to lead to?
- 4 How do perceptions of what constitutes aggressive or passive behaviour vary between countries and cultures?

Listening

4  1:64–1:67 Linda is a supervisor in an open-space office in a merchant bank. Listen to her handling four difficult situations. For each case, identify the problem and tick (✓) the assertiveness techniques Linda uses to resolve it.

Assertiveness techniques

- 1 Acknowledge the other person's position, but make sure your views are heard.
- 2 Ask for more time to respond.
- 3 Just say no – don't apologize or justify yourself.
- 4 Offer an acceptable compromise.
- 5 Use I statements to express your feelings: avoid arguments and blaming with you statements.
- 6 Use the 'broken record' technique – repeat your position as many times as necessary.

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have a bone to pick with somebody hearing