**Module 3 – Appreciative Communication**

**M3.WS3 – Assertive Communication**

There are 3 ways how to deal with difficult people:

**ASSERTIVE**

 **PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE**

**ASSERTIVE:** assertiveness is a skill in its own right and it can be learnt. By being assertive, you push for your own ideas by seeking cooperation, not manipulation, and you try to achieve a win-win situation for all parties involved. Therefore, assertive people do not only look at their own rights but also at the rights of others;

**PASSIVE:** passive responses are avoiding and conceding, and you would be ignoring your own needs.

**AGGRESSIVE:** by using aggression, people tend to get it their way by being demanding and forceful, and in doing so they would only be taking their own needs into account whilst ignoring the needs of the others.

Advantages of adopting an assertive approach:

* Assertive people are not pushed around as others know where you stand;
* Assertive people experience less stress as they are not carried away by emotions;
* Assertive people are often more in control of the situations around them;
* Assertive people are more trusted as they tend to be more objective and factual;
* Assertive people seek the truth;
* Assertive people say what they think and do not have hidden agendas, and they do so in a non-offensive way;
* Assertive people appear more knowledgeable and therefore they are more credible;
* Assertive people have a sense of direction and seek solutions – they are problem solvers;
* Assertive people are results focused.

How to communicate as an assertive person using the 4 steps of assertiveness:

1. Describe the experience and explain the facts. Stay objective and state the facts only without expressing an opinion or being offensive.

*e.g. yesterday you did not clean up the work space after you finished, and when I came in this morning I found a disorganised office and I couldn’t find the documents I needed to work on.*

1. State how the experience made you feel and what was the impact of that behaviour on you personally. In doing so, do not point fingers at the other person. It is important that you own the feeling by starting the sentence with “I feel” rather than using “you made me feel”.

*e.g. I felt very disappointed that you did not clean up after you finished working, and I was frustrated as I couldn’t proceed with my work.*

1. State expectations clearly. You need to communicate what is the desired behaviour that you are you expecting from the other person, and in doing so you need to be specific and clear rather than being vague.

*e.g*. *I need you to clean up the work space after every shift and put all documents into place.*

1. Explain how your expectations would benefit everyone, and also explain the consequences if things won’t change.

*e.g. having a clean office helps us work better together as we would be more organised and work as a team. Apart from that, an organised office reflects a positive image of our company. If I continue to find a disorganised office when I come in from work, then I won’t be able to start in time and this will cause delays which will affect both of us as a team.*

Role play exercises in the group:

1. Each participant in the group has to think of a recent situation within their organisation where they had to deal with a challenging situation with another person;
2. Each participant describes the situation to the group and how they actually handled it;
3. Then, each participant with the help of the group, addresses the same situation again but using the 4 steps of assertiveness above;
4. It is important for participants to give feedback to each other and say what they would do or say differently, because this skill is best learnt by observing and learning from each other.

*Note: As any other new skill that is learnt, assertiveness has to be practiced over and over again until it is understood and mastered. At first, individuals would find it robotic to go through the 4 steps of assertiveness, but with practice this would eventually become second-nature behaviour.*