

## ASSERTIVENESS: SELF DECLARATION

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### Week 1:

Assertiveness is an issue that is almost strictly a problem for women. The reason is because we've spent years in which we have consciously, or unconsciously, tried to conform to the patterns society has laid out for us: to be passive, not to make waves, to keep the peace, not to speak out, to be accepting of things as they are.

Are you a passive woman? Were there times when you wished you had spoken out but didn't? Are there things you wish to say but bite your tongue and not say them?

**Group discussion.**

### Week 2:

The result of our passivity forces us to bury our true feelings. We push down, deep into ourselves, those things we wish we had said but didn't say. And, very often, this makes us angry. Then we try to bury the anger and this often becomes depression.

Not expressing what we want to say by repressing it creates other problems for us.

Can we relate those repressed, angry feelings with our drinking?

**Group discussion.**

### Week 3:

Assertiveness is the ability to express our feelings without anger. It is a way of telling others how we feel but telling in a way that does not defy or challenge others.

Assertiveness is giving expression to our wants, our needs, our feelings, and acting upon them.

Women have problems with learning -- and expressing -- assertive behavior, because our society does not expect it of us. We are conditioned to be accepting of situations, while males, as children, are encouraged to speak up and take charge and they are expected to fight for what they want.

Women have been taught to handle life as it comes. But the women's movement of the 1960s focused on these negatives in women's lives and made us aware of our need to speak out, our need to stand up for our rights as human beings.

Do you believe yourself to be an assertive woman? Do you make your wishes and desires known without anger?

### **Group discussion.**

#### **Week 4:**

The basics of assertiveness behavior are our ability to express ourselves and to do so without anger.

Some examples of where we may wish to try out assertive behavior:

Are you able to remind someone who has borrowed something from you that they have had it too long and you'd like it returned?

If a waitress tries to seat you at a table you don't like, are you able to tell her so?

While you are standing in line and a smoking person stands in front of you while the smoke drifts to you and annoys you, are you able to tell that person reasonably?

If someone in your family has a very annoying habit that has been driving you crazy for a long time, are you able to tell them so without anger?

### **Group discussion.**

#### **Week 5:**

During the week, we should spend time each morning thinking about our self-expression.

If we wish to check ourselves, we may wish to examine a special situation, such as a visit to the doctor's office.

If you are forced to wait a long period of time past your appointment, will you register your dissatisfaction and without anger?

If your doctor calls you by your first name, yet he insists on being called 'doctor,' and this annoys you, are you able to tell him to call you by your full name?

If you don't understand what he is treating you for, will you question him at length until you do have a satisfactory answer?

If you have questions about your medication, will you ask?

**Group discussion.**

### **Week 6:**

Over these weeks we have tried to learn assertive behavior. Even though the few examples we have tried are rather simple compared to our being assertive with members of our families and our friends. These exercises have tried to show us how assertive behavior works and how we can begin practicing it on rather less important areas.

Still having trouble expressing yourself?

Make a list of **the reasons** why you are unable to say exactly what you mean to say, what you want to say.

Do you fear -- reasonably or unreasonably -- consequences of speaking out? Do you feel you would be rejected?

What have you learned about yourself over these weeks? Write an essay about yourself and what you have learned.

**Group discussion.**