

## Improving Flexibility – Non-Verbal Communication

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Non-Verbal Communication, commonly described as body language, is an important aspect of increasing 'assertiveness'.

Those who are too passive may have slumped shoulders, look down more and have increased stress indicators, such as fidgeting or rubbing hands.

Those who are aggressive will tend to have tensed muscles, more 'finger pointing' and may have a change in the skin colour.

Using and being assertive will be marked by more 'open' Non-verbal Communication. Key aspects of good Non-verbal Communication include:

- Open posture
- Arms and hands open (not crossed)
- Facing the other person or, if appropriate, facing the same direction as them
- Good eye contact (not staring)
- Firm handshake
- When seated, discussing an issue, facing them leaning slightly forward
- No rubbing hands

## Improving Flexibility – Making Requests

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When making requests, they should be:

- In an open manner
- Don't apologise for asking (unless it is genuinely caused by your mistake)
- Be direct. Do not ramble.
- Keep it short
- Give a reason for the request, if appropriate
- Do not raise or lower your voice

Examples:

*"Martin, my car is in for a service tomorrow. Could you give me a lift?"*

*"Hilary, I need the monthly report by next Tuesday. Can that be done?"*

## Improving Flexibility – Asking for a Behaviour Change

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The **D.E.S.C.** script helps us with this area. It consists of:

Describe the behaviour you want changed.

**“When you ...”**

Explain the effect the behaviour has on you.

**“I feel ...”**

State the behaviour you would prefer.

**“What I’d prefer is ...”**

Consequences of not changing behaviour should be given in a non-threatening way.

**“Otherwise ...”**

Example:

*“When you ask me to work late without notice (Describe) I feel irritated because I miss my train home (Explain). I’d prefer a day’s notice (State). Otherwise I will not usually be able to work late (Consequences).”*

## Improving Flexibility – Saying 'No'

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For many people it is very difficult to say 'No'. The reasons for not saying 'No' include:

- We don't want to be/appear uncaring
- We don't want to be/appear selfish
- We don't want to be/appear rude
- We don't want to hurt someone's feelings
- We are afraid they will be aggressive or take some action we dislike
- We feel we want customer care and to say 'No' is wrong

If you say 'Yes' when the correct answer is 'No' then the outcome depending on the situation will be any/all of the following:

- Resentment
- Will not do a good job that we have said 'Yes' to (perhaps because we don't want to do it or have not got the time)
- Will affect the quality of other work

## Saying NO with Style and Grace

Saying 'No' can be done in a number of ways that are assertive and not at all aggressive. You can say no in three ways:

1. Extract yourself clearly from the situation:

*'No, I don't want to come out with you tonight'.*

*'No, I can't do that for you by tomorrow'.*

2. Be very clear and give a reason why you are saying no. The reason must be real and not merely because you don't fancy doing something. This kind of situation perhaps applies most when you are talking to your boss. Once again, be clear:

*"Martin, I can't do that because I don't have time to do it properly."*

3. Say 'No' with understanding and an explanation.

*"I can see why you ..." "Clearly you need ..." "I'm complimented that you have asked me."*

There is always a reason why we have to say 'No'. At this stage we **explain** the reason. *"The situation is "...* Do not start with *"But"* or *"However"* as the other person will know the answer is 'No' and may stop listening before you explain.

Remember that 'company policy' or 'rules' are not good reasons. Rules and policies are created for good reasons, give the underlying reasons. If you don't know – find out. It could be illuminating.

From one human to another, we call on them to **understand** our position.

*"So you can see the difficulty your request gives me."*

*"I think you can see the position I'm in."*

*"I'm not able to help you - this time"*

## Improving Flexibility – Disagreeing

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To disagree productively, the following 'rules' may help.

Empathy – recognise the other person's point of view.

"I can see why ..."

"I understand ..."

Explain reasons for disagreement – briefly.

"because ..."

"My experience is ..."

"I have found ..."

State the part you disagree with clearly.

"So I disagree with ..."

The statement should be clear, concise and in a level (not raised or lowered) tone.

Example:

*"I can see why you would like more information. I find too much information can cause confusion and take an unnecessary length of time. So I disagree with the need to obtain information from everyone before we go ahead."*

## Asking for a Behaviour Change

The **D.E.S.C.** script helps us with asking for a behaviour change. It consists of:

Describe the behaviour you want changed.

**“When you ...”**

Explain the effect the behaviour has on you.

**“I feel ...”**

State the behaviour you would prefer.

**“What I’d prefer is ...”**

Consequences of not changing behaviour should be given in a non-threatening way.

**“Otherwise ...”**

Example:

*“When you ask me to work late without notice (Describe) I feel irritated because I miss my train home (Explain). I’d prefer a day’s notice (State). Otherwise I will not usually be able to work late (Consequences).”*

Example:

*“When you ask me for feedback about the GPs’ viewpoints (Describe), I feel a bit stuck in the middle (Explain). I’d prefer it if we could discuss this as a group (State). Otherwise I prefer not to divulge confidences. (Consequences)”*

Example:

Your turn! Write out the above scenario with all the different responses you can think of.....try it out in front of a mirror, out loud.....then try it out on a “safe” situation. How do you feel? Nervous? Tense? Afterwards, how do you feel?

## My DESC Script

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E -

S -

C -