

Understand Yourself Better

Workshop IV

Assertiveness

Assertiveness - I

Assertiveness is the ability to protect your rights and interests without being dominated or intimidated by others, and without being aggressive or intimidating to others.

It is about trying to establish a win-win situation, so everyone comes away feeling good about the outcome.

People struggling with mental health problems often find it difficult to be assertive.

Assertiveness - II

There are important links between *self-esteem*, *self-confidence*, *self-efficacy* and assertiveness.

Self-esteem – how we feel about ourselves, including our sense of deservedness, worthiness and value in the world.

Self-confidence – the extent to which we feel able to engage in particular activities.

Self-efficacy – the extent to which we believe that we will be successful in undertaking a particular activity.

Assertiveness - III

The following slide shows the inter-relationships between these elements.

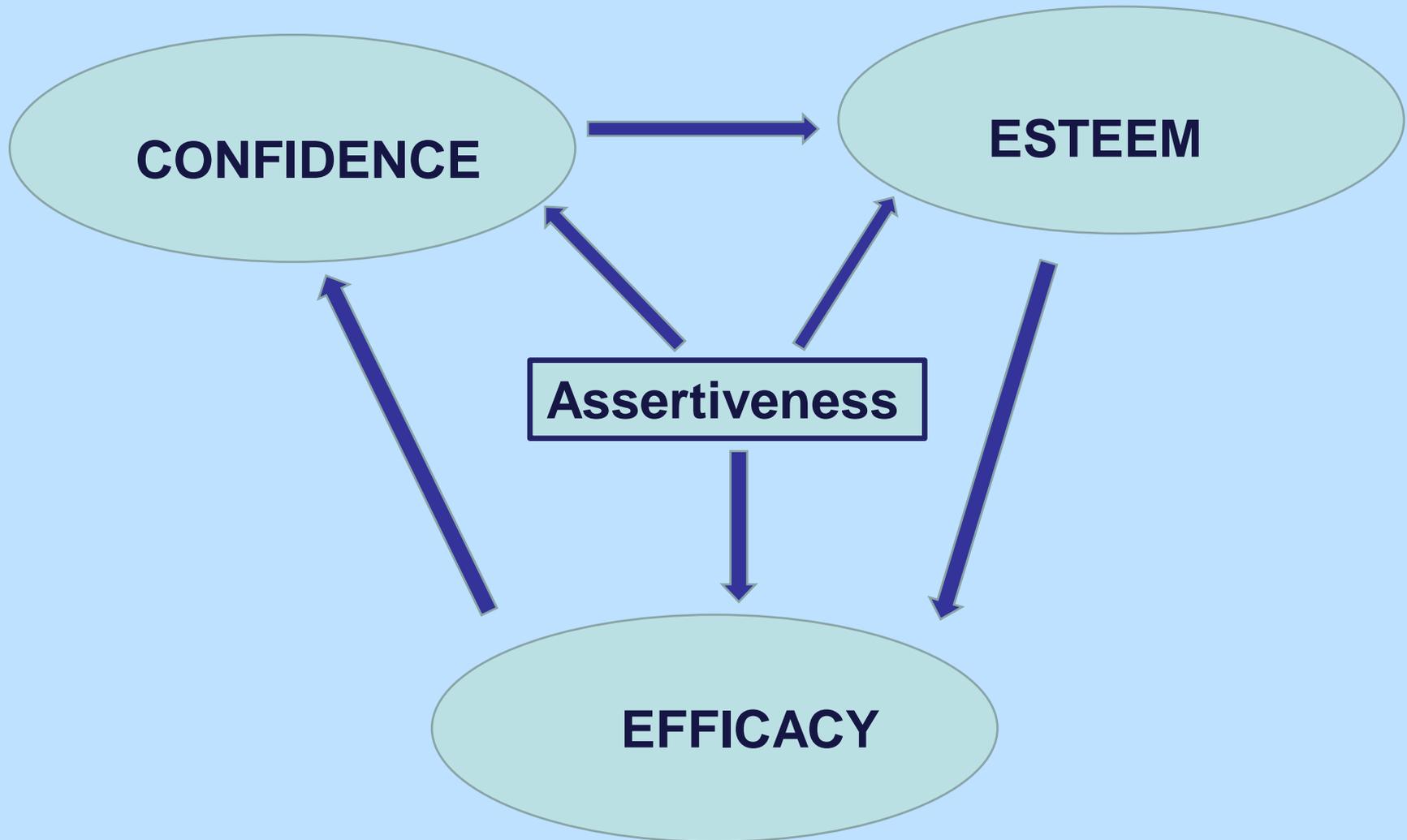
The arrows work in both directions. Effects can be negative as well as positive, but we are focused on combating what is negative for you now (e.g., low self-confidence).

The main message is that changing one element has an impact on the others.

For example, feeling better about yourself will help you become more assertive, just as becoming more assertive will make you feel better about yourself.

You are in the best position to judge where you would like to start making changes.

Assertiveness - IV



Aspects of Assertiveness

Behaving assertively

- Body language
- Choice of words
- Tone of voice
- Behaving not avoiding [*Confidence*]

Thinking assertively

- Predict successful outcome [*Efficacy*]
- Remind self of own worth and importance [*Esteem*]

Feeling assertive

- Calm and in control
- No room for guilt [*You are asserting your rights*]

Opportunities to be Assertive

- Returning something to a shop
- Making a complaint about poor service
- Haggling to get a good price for goods or services
- Refusing a request to do something for someone
- Refusing a request to give or lend something to someone

Some people find it easier to be assertive in some situations rather than in others. Dealing with family members and friends can be particularly challenging.

Difficulties arise where there is a power imbalance - in the workplace or when dealing with authority.

Choosing Your Words - I

How do you feel when someone tells you not to do something?

I imagine most of us would feel irritated or defensive.

Rather than just focusing on the person's behaviour, it is better to explain how their behaviour makes you feel.

“Oh, you're so messy and untidy! Start to smarten yourself up!”

Compared with:

“It makes me feel taken for granted when you leave your clothes lying around. It would really help if you could remember to put them in the laundry basket.”

Choosing Your Words - II

The important messages are...

- Communicate how you feel
- Separate the person from the behaviour, rather than labelling them as *useless*, *untidy*, *thoughtless...*
- Explain how you would like them to behave differently

Broken Record

This is an assertiveness technique to help get your message across without being side-tracked into trying to justify your position.

Imagine a friend wants you to do them a favour and you really don't want to do it. It would be easy to make up lots of excuses, but the chances are the other person will be able to find ways around those excuses.

The solution is to repeat over and over again the same message:

“No, I’m sorry. I can’t help you with that....No, I’m sorry, I can’t help you with that...”

Systemic Issues

Our interactions with those around us form a system.

These relationships have a history that is reflected in the power balance between the participants.

By becoming more assertive than usual, you are creating a challenge to the system. People may have got used to you saying “yes” all the time and will feel threatened.

For you, apart from your feelings of guilt that they may try to intensify, there is the fear that the relationship will end or be damaged in some way.

You need to ask yourself if a relationship in which you are always giving and nothing is coming back is right for you.