



HIGH RELIABILITY  
Educator Series  
**PERIOP**

**ASSERTIVE  
BEHAVIOR**

**S T U D E N T**  
W O R K B O O K



Student Workbook:

# ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR

## About This Workbook

This workbook will help you maximize learning during the Assertive Behavior class. In this introduction you will understand what the class is about, and learn recommended tips and techniques for getting the most out of it. Read this introduction carefully and completely before class begins.

After this introduction is a copy of each of the slides presented by your instructor, as well as plenty of space to take notes next to the slides. Use this workbook during class to keep pace with the instructor.

Your instructor will hand out other materials during class—including a presentation summary and the 12-page booklet “Assertive Behavior in Healthcare.” You will be able to take these with you for future reference. To help keep everything together, place the materials inside this workbook before you leave.

Additional copies of this guide can be ordered from Safer Healthcare. Safer Healthcare products are available at special quantity discounts for training and educational purposes. To learn more about this or other training products, contact our program and product specialists:

phone/ 303.298.8083

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## About The Assertive Behavior Class

### Purpose and Organization:

This class may be an in-service program that's either mandatory or recommended by your supervisor, department or organization. Attendance and a passing grade on the Quiz may be required to receive in-service credit.

### This class is divided into three parts:

1. A lecture with discussion questions;
2. Activities at certain points during the class, which may include scenario-based group discussions, a role-playing exercise, a questionnaire, and/or other activities; and
3. A 10-question Quiz on information covered in the class. (Note: The Quiz may be graded so that you can receive credit.)

The class usually lasts between 30 and 75 minutes, or it may run longer as designated by the instructor. By signing the attendance sheet, you agree to remain for the duration.

You may also need to complete and submit a training evaluation form at the end of class. Feedback from the evaluation form helps us improve instruction for future students.

## Learning Objectives

After completing this class, you will be able to:

- Define assertive behavior and distinguish it from aggressive and passive behaviors
- Describe why assertive behavior is important for respecting yourself, your colleagues and other staff, and your patients
- Provide three real-world examples of how assertive behavior can be used in your work
- Discuss each step of the Five-Step Assertion Model
- Give two examples of effective "I statements"
- Describe and demonstrate proper body language when you speak assertively

## Preview of Instruction

This class discusses basic information about assertive behavior as it is currently being practiced in healthcare. Assertive behavior is an important skill to improve communication and teamwork and to increase patient safety.

## Important Terms

**Assertiveness:** speaking up to call attention to a problem you see, providing information that team members need, or communicating an opinion when it is in the best interests of the patient.

**Five-step Assertion Model:** a proven technique for speaking assertively to address a problem. The five steps are: making an opening statement, expressing a concern, stating the problem, proposing action or a solution, and reaching a decision.

**High Reliability:** An organizational culture that strives to reach error-free performance and safety in every procedure, every time. High Reliability Healthcare Organizations™ use techniques and skills, including assertive behavior, that improve teamwork and communications.

**"I statement":** a statement that addresses a situation assertively by phrasing it from your perspective and beginning it with "I." An effective "I statement" contains four parts: taking responsibility for your feelings, stating the problem behavior, stating why you object, and offering a preferred alternative.

## Main Topics

The following topics are covered in the instructor's lecture, as well as in reference materials you will receive before or during class:

- the definition of "assertive behavior"
- the difference between assertive, aggressive and passive
- the benefits of assertive behavior in healthcare
- the Five-Step Assertion Model
- the four parts of an effective "I statement"
- the proper use of body language and voice when speaking assertively

## Selected Key Points

- Being assertive shows that you respect yourself and your patients and can achieve respect from other people.
- Speaking up for yourself reduces stress and fatigue and helps you become a more valued member of your team.
- Whenever you are in doubt, ask questions. Don't assume that you will eventually understand what others are talking about.
- Use statements that begin with "I" instead of "you" when directly addressing another person's opinions, decisions or actions.
- Be as assertive with your body language as you are with your words, such as maintaining eye contact and remaining conversational in your gestures

## Best Practices for This Class

Here are some tips, techniques and reminders to consider as you take this class.

### Before class begins:

- If you haven't already done so, find a seat in the training room where you are best able to see and hear the instructor's presentation.
- Sign the attendance sheet.
- If required, silence any personal electronic devices you bring to the training room.

### During class:

- Follow the instructor's presentation by referring to the slides in this workbook. Use the space next to each slide to take notes
- Be assertive by raising your hand if you have questions or comments, and speak loudly when recognized.

### During small group activities:

- The more you participate, the more you learn.
- Move to another part of the room when breaking into groups. This way, you may be able to join others with backgrounds and insights that are different from those you usually work with. This increases learning.
- After receiving the activity instructions and scenario, think and organize what you want to say in the group.
- Designate a representative beforehand to summarize the discussion or activity results. Volunteer for this task if possible

### Taking the Quiz:

- You will answer 10 multiple-choice and true/false questions that are based on the instruction. Read each question carefully and select the best answer from the list of choices. Answers are not always "all of the above" or a multiple of choices.
- The Quiz may be collected at the end of class to determine your grade. If so, make sure your name is at the top of the page.

### After the class:

- As directed, return your Quiz and class evaluation form to the instructor. If the attendance sheet is near your seat, hand it in as well.
- Help return the training room to its original condition by cleaning your immediate area: take all materials and belongings with you and dispose of any trash.





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Assertive  
Behavior

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What **Assertive Behavior** IS

- Speaking up to a problem you see
- Stating your opinion in the best interests of the patient
- Accepting that others can give their opinions
- Offering information with appropriate persistence until there's a clear resolution (situational awareness)
- An important part of high reliability practices





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## What **Assertive Behavior** is NOT

- Aggressive, hostile or insensitive
- Uncaring about impact of actions or words
- Blaming, attacking or complaining
- Confrontational, ambiguous or ridiculing
- Passive or noncommittal
- Open to abuse and manipulation
- Unwilling to risk influencing anyone



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## Why **Assertive Behavior** is Important

- You show respect yourself and your patients
- You become an advocate for patients
- You respect the personal boundaries of others
- You overcome your fear of speaking out and influencing others and defending yourself
- You give others an opportunity to change negative behavior and actions
- You participate in team briefings and debriefings



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## Real-World **Example**

- You are a nurse in the OR, and the procedure is drawing to a close. But the sponge count is off. The surgeon says to his assistant, "Start sewing; I'm sure we'll find it later."
- No one says anything, and the patient suffers years of GI distress, or worse, because a sponge was left in his abdomen.



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## Real-World **Example**

- A patient in PACU has become non-responsive. You ask your supervisor if you should consult a doctor. She says, "Do you want us to get yelled at? Let's handle this ourselves."
- You say, "Nancy, I'm concerned. I think we need help, especially if we have to intubate the patient."



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## Practice the Five-Step Assertion Model



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## Begin your Statements with "I"

- Use "I" so you don't put the listener on the defensive
- Understand the four parts of the effective "I" statement:

**Take responsibility**

*"I feel it is a problem..."*

**State the problem**

*"...to begin without a briefing."*

**State the reason**

*"Because it's proven to be safer."*

**Offer an alternative**

*"I'd appreciate it if we brief now."*

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## Additional **Tips**

- Maintain eye contact and facial expression
- Pay attention to your posture
- Keep a normal distance from the listener
- Use relaxed, conversational gestures
- Use a factual tone of voice
- Pick the best time and place



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## Be **Assertive** to be **Sure**

- Assume nothing
- Ask whenever in doubt
- Question unclear instructions
- Question uncertainty



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## Benefits of Assertive Behavior

- Become a more valued member of the team
- Reduce stress, fatigue and burnout
- Increase respect and help manage conflicts better
- Help others make better decisions
- Increase patient safety
- Improve communication and teamwork



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## Review Assertive Behavior

- Assertive Behavior = respectful behavior and communication
- Assertive ≠ aggressive or passive
- Assertiveness respects personal boundaries
- Practice the five-step assertion model
- Use “I” statements
- Maintain eye contact and conversational body language
- Assume nothing; be assertive and ask questions

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