

PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



A Publication of Chicago Christian Counseling Center

Jan | Feb 2014

Assertiveness | a Biblical way to communicate

■ by Jessica Parks, MSW, LCSW



People of all ages struggle to communicate effectively, often resulting in broken relationships, poor self-esteem, power struggles, and shame. Assertive communication is a way of speaking with others that clearly shares expectations, needs, and desires. It is based on mutual respect, and insists on the rights of all parties involved. This form of communication promotes healing and mutual benefit.

Most people are not taught to communicate assertively, and thus it is often misunderstood.



Assertiveness is NOT:

- Aggressive communication, which seeks to "win" rather than come to mutually-desired outcomes. Aggressive communication ignores the rights of others, and is often selfish. It promotes fear and anger rather than respect and understanding. Aggressive communication assumes your needs are more important than the needs of others.
- Passive communication, which seeks to avoid conflict over obtaining productive outcomes. Passive communication often leads to internal conflict, overcommitment, resentment, and feelings of victimization. Passive

communication assumes others' needs are more important than your own.

- Passive-aggressive communication, which is dishonest about desires, seeks to "get back" at others while avoiding directly addressing the problem.

Communicating assertively insists that the rights of every party involved are honored.

Inherent in this style of communicating is the idea that all people are entitled to respect, and all people have a right to hold and communicate opinion. Assertiveness promotes respect and shows consideration to all involved. It can reduce overcommitment if a

~ continued on page 2 ~

Page 2

Assertiveness (cont'd)
New Staff

Page 3

Don't Wait | Save your Marriage NOW

Page 4

Building a STRONG Marriage - Premarital Program
5 Week Anger Management Classes

Assertiveness

■ by Jessica Parks, MSW, LCSW

~ continued from page 1 ~

person struggles with saying “no.” It increases self-esteem and understanding of the wants and needs of self and others.

Assertive communication increases satisfaction and likelihood of achieving goals.

By using assertive communication techniques, you are more likely to achieve a desired outcome because your wants and needs are more clearly understood. In addition, people are more likely to listen attentively and respond positively if they feel their needs and desires are also being respected, which is a product of assertive communication.

Communicating assertively can be difficult, and usually takes practice. In general, the following steps should be followed:

1. State the specific situation to which you are referring. Stick to facts (e.g. - “You came home at 9:00pm when you said you would be home at 5:00pm)
2. State your emotional response, or feelings, associated with the situation. (e.g. - “I feel scared when I do not know where you are.”) Nobody can argue with your feelings, because they are your own.
3. Clearly state what you need. Do not assume others know this. Be as specific as possible. (e.g. - “I would like for you

to call when you will be late coming home.”) Note: this step can request something, or it can refuse something. In both cases, you are stating what you need.

4. State what the benefit will be for both parties if your needs are met. (e.g. - “It is important to me that we communicate. We can both feel more secure in a relationship where we have consistent communication.”)

There are several tricks to communicating in an assertive way.

It is helpful to use “I” statements (e.g. - “I feel scared when I don’t hear from you when you will be late coming home.”) so that the other absorbs the information rather than feeling attacked (e.g. - “You made me worry.”) Consistency and staying firm are key. Do not apologize. You have a right to request something or refuse something. You may need to repeat yourself, but you are not required to elaborate if you do not feel comfortable doing so.

Communication is made up of both verbal and nonverbal cues. Assertive communication is best done using direct eye contact. Do not look at the floor or the ceiling. It is helpful not to fidget, which makes you look nervous. Do not stick your hands in your pockets or cross your arms. These postures indicate poor self-confidence.



If possible, plan what you will say ahead of time. Do not give in to pressure to change your response. Let your “no” mean “no.” If needed, give yourself time to form a response. If somebody asks you to commit to doing something, and you are unsure, you can say something like, “I need some time to consider that. I will get back to you by the end of the day.” This shows the person that you respect their request and gives you an opportunity to enter into commitments thoughtfully.

Assertive communication is a Biblical way to communicate. It encourages us to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19 ESV).

When honestly and respectfully communicating with others, deeper understanding and love abound. Assertive communication promotes honesty, respectful language, trust, and mutual edification. Rather than tear down, it equips us to perform healing and reconciliatory work as a community of believers. Like all spiritual disciplines, effective communication requires time to cultivate. Practicing the skills outlined above will be a good place to start.

**Begin today.
Begin with prayer.**



Jessica Parks is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. She enjoys working with individuals, couples and families in our Lombard & Orland Park locations.

New staff...



Caitlin Dickinson, MA, LAMFT
Licensed Associate Marriage & Family Therapist
Office hours in Chicago & Lombard, IL locations
Child, Adolescent & Adult | Individual, Couple & Family Therapy

Caitlin enjoys working with couples, families, adults and adolescents. She specializes in working with a variety of issues including depression, anxiety, loss, parenting and relationship issues. Caitlin has experience working with individuals from diverse backgrounds and all walks of life. She believes in a comprehensive therapeutic approach integrating faith-based counsel to promote healthy living that includes physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. Caitlin is also PREPARE-ENRICH certified to provide premarital and couples counseling. Caitlin's professional interests include bipolar disorder, eating disorders, grief and loss and emotionally focused couples therapy.

Caitlin earned her BS in Psychology from Florida State University in Tallahassee, FL and her MA in Marriage and Family Counseling from the Adler School of Professional Psychology in Chicago, IL.

Don't Wait | Save your Marriage NOW

■ by Steve Augustus, MA, LCPC



When we think of our spouse or see them and we feel good or have good thoughts, it's called the *Positive Perspective*.

This is the result of three functions of the relationship:

- How well we know and feel known by them
- How well we express fondness and admiration to each other
- How well we respond to each other when we reach out for connection

In the beginning of a romantic relationship these three functions work well. Stressors are typically low and interactions are positive. If the relationship works well enough, we get married, get a home together and often begin having children.

Being parents can be stressful, as much of our time and emotional focus is on the children, and we may sacrifice our marital relationship in the process. We may stop learning about our spouses' inner world, stop practicing affection and not notice their attempts to connect. The fondness diminishes and the flaws become more apparent. The Positive Perspective shifts.

Consequences of "shelving" our issues.

Marital issues that come up again and again are called Perpetual Issues. These issues may be shelved for the sake of "peace" or just not discussed to avoid fighting around the children. Too much of that type of shelving or sacrifice and we may begin getting more meaning in our lives from the children and the practical concerns of the bills and logistics of family management than we do from the marriage itself. In fact, the two most common times for divorce are around the birth of the first child and the launching of older children getting ready to move out of the house.

Most of my client-couples are parents of teens in high school. By this time the children are relatively self-maintaining and the parents are more able to notice that they haven't felt emotionally connected to each other as husband and wife in years. The Positive Perspective has slowly turned into a Negative Perspective that gets harder to reverse the longer it's been allowed to become a habit of thought.

Don't Wait.

Couples waiting until they are almost ready to divorce to come in for couples therapy is as reasonable as waiting to make your first trip to a physician just

before a tumor kills you. But many do just that because they don't think about getting help or believe they are too busy. Coming in after your thoughts of your spouse are already dominated by righteous indignation makes trust and intimacy that much harder to repair. There are real and practical ways to save a troubled marriage. Strengthening and fire proofing your marriage is far more effective BEFORE the Position Perspective has turned negative.

Seek help when you notice dissatisfactions but you STILL LIKE your partner.



Couples learn the practical behaviors that help them be a team and the skills to attune to each other emotionally much more readily when they still feel fond of each other. These skills become felt habits much more easily when there isn't a mountain of old resentments that have already buried one's heart.

DON'T WAIT.

You can grow as a couple AND role model for the children NOW so they can have a road map for their own relationships as well.



Steve Augustus is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. He enjoys working with individuals, couples and families in our Orland Park & South Holland locations.



Toll Free: 800.361.6880

Email: info@chicagochristiancounseling.org

Illinois Offices:

Arlington Heights
Chicago (3 locations)
Evergreen Park
Frankfort
Lombard
New Lenox
Orland Park
Plainfield
Shorewood
South Holland
Tinley Park

Indiana Offices:

DeMotte
Schererville

Visit us or donate online at
www.chicagochristiancounseling.org

Don't miss helpful info & recommendations
about YOUR mental health on our Facebook Page!
facebook.com/ChicagoChristianCounseling



All past newsletters/articles can be viewed on our website.
<http://www.chicagochristiancounseling.org/newsletters.html>



Text CCCC to 22828 to join our email list or
Send your email address to info@chicagochristiancounseling.org.

Our Mission Statement

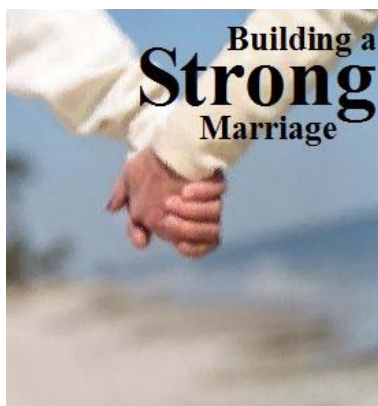
Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling,
consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

Register by Feb 24!

Building a Strong Marriage Pre-marital Program

Fee: \$335 includes

- :: 2 online relationship assessments**
- :: all-day group program Sat, March 1**
- :: separately scheduled one-hour couple session**



program offered each spring
held at Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church
facilitated by Joy Bocanegra, MA, LCPC

Register online or call 708.845.5500 x 106

Need Help Managing Anger?

5 Week Anger Management Classes

Adolescents & Adults | Court, Employer, or School Referrals
Program approved & endorsed by NAMA
Facilitated by Certified Anger Management Specialist

When: Saturdays, 9:30am - 11:00am
Where: 15127 S 73rd Avenue, Suite G
Orland Park, IL 60462
Fee: \$250 (includes materials; discounts may apply)

Sponsored by Elite Youth & Family Services, Inc. in cooperation
with Chicago Christian Counseling Center.

Call (708) 586-9608 for start of next class