



SELF-ADVOCACY

For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Second Edition

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LESSON 7

Expressing My Needs Effectively

PURPOSE OF LESSON 7

This lesson encourages students to consider different ways to express one's needs and to determine the effectiveness of each approach. Students will also learn how to take assertive steps to clarify communication when misunderstandings occur because of hearing loss.

EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

1. Learners will describe differences between three approaches that express personal needs and the likely reactions each approach would generate.
2. Learners will demonstrate three strategies that can "repair" communication breakdowns.

Instructional Activities	Performance Activities	Materials
1. Warm-up activity: "Three Ways to Order Lunch"	Students perform, evaluate skits	Index cards, Worksheet 7a
2. Core material	Students take notes	Worksheet 7b
3. Learning activity: When misunderstandings occur	Student discussion	Worksheet 7c
4. Summary, homework	Review notes	Worksheet 7d

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL/ PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1. Review main points of Lesson 6: Last time, we talked about how to identify goals and how to conduct a needs analysis to figure out the steps you need to take to reach those goals. We worked on a proposed group project, and in your homework assignment you identified a personal goal and considered what you need to achieve that goal. [Note to instructor: If time allows, ask students to discuss their homework with a study partner or with the class.]

2. State today's goal: Today you will learn how to express your needs clearly so that others will understand what you want and will **also** react in a positive way to your requests.

3. As a warm-up activity, ask students to present three very brief skits, with dialogue printed on index cards. Before starting, introduce the concept of "different ways of doing things" as follows. As we know, there are different ways to do things; for example, you may read all the instructions for a new video game before starting, or you may play the game first and refer to instructions only when you don't understand something. Some people read a recipe first and then buy all the ingredients, while other people buy the freshest food at the store and then decide how to cook it. (Other examples: eating slowly or fast; exercising on a regular or random schedule.)

Sometimes how you do something doesn't matter, but sometimes it can make a big difference. For example, let's look at three different ways a person might order lunch. [Ask for three volunteers to read/act out the following scenarios jotted down or cut/pasted to index cards, after which other students record their reactions and thoughts on Worksheet 7a.] In each scenario, the student approaches an imaginary counter at

a fast food restaurant and orders a meal.

Scenario 1. "I want a cheeseburger, and I want it now! Don't make me wait like you always do. Last time you forgot to give me fries, so don't forget this time. I can't believe how bad the service is here, and the food is terrible too! [Receives order.] Hey, you forgot to give me a drink. Well, even if I didn't ask, you should know I want one. This place is pathetic."

Scenario 2. "Excuse me, when you have a minute, can I order? I'd like a cheeseburger, no onions, and fries. [Receives order.] Wait, this hamburger doesn't have any cheese, and it's loaded with onions. I can't eat this; the onions will make me sick. And I paid for the fries, but there aren't any here. Never mind, don't trouble yourself; I'll just eat what you gave me. Have a good day."

Scenario 3. "Hi, I'd like a cheeseburger, no onions, and fries, please. [Receives order.] Excuse me, but there's been a mistake: There is no cheese on my hamburger, and it has onions. Please exchange this for the type of hamburger I ordered. Also, my order of fries is missing. Thank you for taking care of the problem."

4. Present Lesson 7 Core Material while students complete Worksheet 7b. What kind of real-life situations have they observed where problems were managed with aggression, passivity, or calm assertiveness?

5. Provide practice with new information: Ask students to demonstrate the three approaches to requests (aggressive, passive, and assertive) by acting out strategies from Worksheet 7c to repair communication breakdowns.

6. Summarize: Today we learned about three approaches to expressing your needs and how some approaches work better than others. We also learned that a person with a hearing loss can be assertive in repairing communication breakdowns.

Tonight's homework assignment is to write a short story about being assertive. You can consider it confidential, to go into your personal file.

7. State topic of next meeting: Next time we meet, we will talk about what to do when a disagreement occurs, not because of hearing loss but because of a difference of opinion.

LESSON 7 CORE MATERIAL

Last time we were together, we looked at how you could identify your needs to help you meet your post-high school goals. Setting a goal and identifying needs are *personal* skills, which you apply to yourself. Today we will talk about some *interpersonal* skills, which affect how you interact with others. Specifically, today we will look at how to express your needs, with two purposes: (a) to be understood by others and (b) to obtain their cooperation and support.

The first scenario we just saw is meant to depict an *aggressive* approach: one that insists on one's own rights but disregards others' rights (in this case, the counter help's right to be treated courteously). An aggressive person is belligerent or rude, insensitive to others, and assumes no responsibility if there is a misunderstanding. Instead, an aggressive person may expect others to be mind readers, and blame them when they are not. An aggressive approach may initially help a person get what he or she wants, but because other people's rights are not considered, it is not an approach that will inspire any cooperation or support in the future.

The second scenario depicts a *passive* approach. A passive person allows others to infringe on his or her rights because the person is too concerned about being liked by others. A passive person uses a meek or timid tone of voice or signing style, is oversensitive to what others think,

and assumes full responsibility when there is a misunderstanding. A passive approach may result in being liked, but it will also result in not getting what one wants or needs.

The third scenario depicts an *assertive* approach. An assertive person knows that he or she has the right to express personal preferences or needs but also respects other people's rights. An assertive person uses a pleasant tone of voice or signing style, makes eye contact, and presents reasonable and specific requests. An assertive person assumes that clear communication is a shared or mutual responsibility and is willing to clear up the misunderstanding with courtesy but also firmness. An assertive approach helps people get their needs met because the approach is clear and reasonable. Because it is also respectful of others' rights, an assertive approach also lays the groundwork for positive interactions with others in the future.

Some people know how to be assertive without thinking about it; it comes naturally to them, or they have noticed how it works for others and they have taught themselves how to use this approach. Your homework assignment will help you decide which approach you use most often. If you find your approach is more naturally aggressive or passive, you can learn how to be assertive in upcoming lessons.

About Misunderstandings

Even if one is respectful and assertive in expressing one's needs, misunderstandings happen all the time. We said before that an assertive person does not try to blame anyone for the misunderstanding but will try to work with others to clear up the problem.

One reason a misunderstanding may occur is because a hearing loss interfered with the communication. One of the most

common ways people try to repair a communication problem is to say, "What?" Although it is a logical approach, it may not work very well; the other person will probably repeat exactly what he or she said before, providing no clarification of the misunderstanding. Other times, a person may just pretend to understand and hope to figure it out later; or a person may just give up on the conversation and start thinking about other things.

A more effective and assertive way to repair communication problems is to assume part of the responsibility of the communication. For example, instead of saying, "What?" it can be more helpful to say, "I heard you say you want to meet me after school to study, but *where* do you want to meet?" With this approach, you repeat the parts that you did understand and let the person know the part that you did not understand – you are sharing the responsibility of the communication.

Other variables that can interfere with your communication can be controlled as well. [Note to instructor: Seek out students' suggestions first, since they may already be practicing them]:

1. Pay attention to the noise around you, and either turn down the volume of the noise or move away from it.
2. Shorten the distance between you

and others so that you can speechread them better.

3. Remind people to look at you so that you can speechread, and their voice gets directed to your hearing aids or implants.

It is important to remember that most persons who do not have a hearing loss usually know nothing about it. Even when they learn these strategies are helpful, they tend to forget. As a self-advocate, it helps to be generous about people's forgetfulness and "assume good will" (as psychologist Carl Rogers would say).

A final word about assertiveness: many people with experience in managing misunderstandings often recommend, "*Pick your battles.*" What does that actually mean? [Note to instructor: determine student understanding about this concept and then expand/clarify any misconceptions.] Do we always need to be assertive about every issue? Or can we let some things go?

Of course, not all misunderstandings are caused by a hearing loss. Sometimes, after presenting your needs in an assertive and reasonable manner, you may still not be well understood. This may be because of a genuine difference of opinion between you and the person you are working with. When that is the case, you need some skills in negotiating, which will be the topic for our next meeting.

WORKSHEET 7a

Three Approaches to a Goal: Ordering Lunch

1	2	3
How did the customer act?	How did the customer act?	How did the customer act?
How will the counter person probably react?	How will the counter person probably react?	How will the counter person probably react?
Will the counter person want to help me next time?	Will the counter person want to help me next time?	Will the counter person want to help me next time?

WORKSHEET 7b

Setting a goal and identifying needs are _____ skills.

An _____ skill affects how I interact with others.

There are two purposes in clearly stating what I need:

1. _____
2. _____

The approach used in Hamburger Order #1 is called _____

Describe: _____

The approach used in Hamburger Order #2 is called _____

Describe: _____

The approach used in Hamburger Order #3 is called _____

Describe: _____

What does it mean to “pick your battles?”

Example: _____

WORKSHEET 7c

Sometimes misunderstandings occur because of a hearing loss. There are a variety of communication repair strategies.

Three strategies that are not very helpful:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three strategies that may be more helpful:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How would people react if these strategies were presented aggressively, passively or assertively?

WORKSHEET 7d

Summary

1. We try to express our needs as clearly as we can in order to get others to understand us **and** to obtain their cooperation and support.
2. We can express our needs in aggressive, passive, or assertive ways. Aggressive and passive people can be difficult to work with; assertive people try to be both reasonable and firm.
3. Misunderstandings may be the result of a hearing loss. There are ways to repair the misunderstanding that show your partner that you are working with him or her to resolve the problem.

Homework

“A Short Story About Me”

Describe a time when you faced a difficult situation:

Situation: _____

What I did: _____

How other people reacted: _____

I would describe my approach to this situation as (check and answer one):

Aggressive. Next time I would try: _____

Passive. Next time I would try: _____

Assertive. Do I need more practice? _____
