

# ***Becoming a Resilient Scientist***

## **SERIES**

# **Workbook IV: Self-Advocacy & Assertiveness**

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**This workbook is intended to accompany  
*Becoming A Resilient Scientist Series IV: Self-Advocacy & Assertiveness.***

**It is most effective when it is used after attending/watching the workshop lecture. The exercises in this workbook are to help you process and solidify what you've learned in the lecture and to provide you with additional resources. Although it is encouraged that you complete the exercises, it is not required.**



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# A QUESTION TO START WITH

Writing without any interruptions, think about your undergraduate/graduate school or postdoc experience. Do you think there is...

- Something **holding you back** or bothering you enough to be a major distraction?
- Something **getting in the way** of your success?
- Someone you **need to talk** with?
- Something you could benefit from by **changing**?



It is likely that some of the things holding us back are:

- Things we need to work on to change **about and for ourselves**
- Things we need to **express to others** so we can work to **improve a situation**

# ASSERTIVENESS

**Assertiveness** is the ability to:

- **Express** one's feelings and **assert** one's rights and needs while respecting the feelings, rights and needs of others.
- Use communication that is **direct, open and honest** to address situations that concern you.
- Set **appropriate boundaries** that feel right given the context and situation.



# IMPORTANCE OF SETTING BOUNDARIES

When we **set boundaries**, we determine:

- Which **actions, statements** and **behaviors** we will accept from others and what we will not.
- What we **will share and not share** with others.



Setting boundaries help us **avoid**:

- **Over-working** ourselves
- Taking on **someone else's** emotions/thoughts
- Violating personal/professional **ethics**
- Input that is **incorrect and unwarranted**
- Doing things we **do not want to do**



## IMPORTANCE OF SETTING BOUNDARIES (CONTINUED)

Boundaries are learned in **childhood**, from our **families, culture, and prior experiences.**



Three things that get in the way of our ability to set boundaries are:

1. Cognitive **distortions**  
(refer to *lecture #2* and/or *Workbook #2*)
2. **Shame** and a feeling of “**less than**”
3. **Lack of** assertiveness skills



# JOURNALING EXERCISE I

## IMPACT OF FAMILY & CULTURE ON SETTING BOUNDARIES

What did I learn about boundaries from my **family and culture**?

- What did I learn that is **helpful** to me now?
- What did I learn that is **not helpful** to me now?

# JOURNALING EXERCISE II

## BOUNDARIES: SAYING "YES" & "NO"

What boundaries would help me handle the **current situation(s)** I find myself in?

- What would I love to **say no to** right now?
- What would I love to **say yes to** right now?

# JOURNALING EXERCISE III

## BOUNDARIES: TAKING ACTION

What **actions do I need to take** to begin putting helpful boundaries into place now?



# JOURNALING EXERCISE IV

## IMPACT OF FAMILY & CULTURE ON ASSERTION

1. What did you learn about **being assertive** and **having difficult conversations** from your families and cultures?
2. Which messages are **generally helpful** to you now and **which are not**?

### KEY CONCEPT

*Letting go of maladaptive behaviors takes commitment and practice, but it can absolutely be done!*

# JOURNALING EXERCISE V

## IMPACT OF FAMILY & CULTURE ON ASSERTION

1. Think about an **important relationship** at work or at home. Consider a time when you **struggled to be assertive** and **communicate your needs** effectively. Focus on what happened, why it happened, how it made you feel and anything you wish had gone differently.

2. Now focus on a time you were **assertive and communicated your needs** effectively. Focus on what happened, why it happened, how it made you feel and anything you might wish it had gone differently.

# ASSERTIVENESS TOOLKIT

## DECISION-MAKING QUESTIONS

What are the **options** available to me?

What is the **best** possible outcome for me?

What is the **worst** possible outcome for me?

Are there some **middle** outcomes I can be happy with?

Are there things I can **offer to mitigate** the concerns and address the needs of another party?

**Who** can help me prepare?

And when necessary.... who can add to my **safety**?



# ASSERTIVENESS TOOLKIT (CONTINUED)

## STRATEGIES FOR ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

- **"I"-Statements:** Taking responsibility for your feelings, wants, and needs AND expressing them clearly.
- **Empathic Listening:** Periodically summarizing what we think the communicator thinks, feels, means and needs without necessarily agreeing.
- **Fogging:** Calmly responding with a minimal response focusing on any truth in the statement without being defensive or argumentative.
- **Stuck Record:** Repeating what you want, time and time again, without raising the tone of your voice, becoming angry, irritated, or distracted by side issues.
- **Negative/Positive Inquiry:** Using questions to probe the meaning of feedback when you want/need more information to facilitate your learning.



# KEEPING YOURSELF IN MIND

## PRACTICING "I"-STATEMENTS

- **"I"-Statements:** Taking responsibility for your feelings, wants, and needs AND expressing them clearly (from pg 11)

"I"-Statement structure:

- "I feel..."
- "When \_\_\_\_\_, I..."
- "Because of \_\_\_\_\_, I..."
- "I would like..."

*(You may not always use all four parts)*

Reflect on a current situation where you need to be assertive.

In the box below, craft your "I"-statement(s) and practice:

# DECIDING WHEN TO SAY "NO"

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Will it help me reach one of my **important goals**?
- Will it **advance my career**?
- Will it provide some **intangible benefit** important to me right now?
- Does it have a **deadline** (do I need to do it now)?
- What **else** is going on? Where does this **rank** in my priorities?
- Is it a request from someone I **cannot ignore**?
- Is it a request from someone I **really care about**?
- Will it matter a **week/month/year** from now?
- Will it matter if I **don't do it**?



# "NO"

## PRACTICING SAYING "NO"

- When saying "no", **do not over-apologize** and do not say "ask again" unless you mean it.

Some effective ways to say "no":

- "I have a lot going on and really can't take on anything new right now."
- "My current situation makes it difficult for me to..."
- "I can't participate in this. Maybe another time."
- "I would like to help you with \_\_\_\_\_, but this is a very busy time for me. Let's schedule a time to meet and talk about it."

Reflect on a current situation where you **need to say "No"**.

In the box below, craft your No-Statement and practice:

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## BOOKS

Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. (1995). Your perfect right. Impact Publishers.

Paterson, R.J., 2000. The assertiveness workbook: How to express your ideas and stand up for yourself at work and in relationships. New Harbinger Publications.

Smith, M. J. (2008). When I say no, I feel guilty. Pacifica Tape Library.

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

Furnham, A. (1979). Assertiveness in three cultures: Multidimensionality and cultural differences. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 35(3), 522-527.

Volkema, R. J., & Bergmann, T. J. (1995). Conflict styles as indicators of behavioral patterns in interpersonal conflicts. The Journal of Social Psychology, 135(1), 5-15.

## HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/communication.htm>

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/assertiveness-techniques.html#ixzz4GAPdadCi>

