

Test Your Assertiveness Level

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An Extract from Dr. Paulette Dale's new book

Did You Say Something, Susan? Successfully changing the way you communicate takes effort. Becoming verbally fit is no different than becoming physically fit. It takes commitment, and it takes exercise. Please don't feel discouraged or overwhelmed by this prospect of transformation. You don't need to change instantly or completely. Your goal is improvement. Improving your ability to communicate assertively is best done gradually. Take the time to complete the various exercises throughout the book. They will help you better Understand and become comfortable with the various techniques. Remember, in order to become verbally fit, you need to exercise. The various activities will help you practice the techniques necessary to express yourself easily and confidently. Did You Say Something, Susan? presents a ten-step program to help you develop respect and self-confidence with assertive communication. However, it is not necessary to learn the techniques all at once. Nor is it necessary to follow them in a set sequence. The program is designed to be flexible. Where you begin will depend largely upon your responses to this self-assessment. A variety of exercises are here to help you practice. Select the ones you are most comfortable trying and which suit your personality. Don't feel overwhelmed. Change comes little by little. It's not necessary to take large leaps to communicate more assertively -- unless you really want to. Smaller, gradual steps will work just fine. Take situations as they pop up in your life. Did You Say Something, Susan? will help you work through them one at a time. Assess Yourself The following self-assessment test will help you to more specifically analyze your ability to communicate assertively in a variety of situations. Once you analyze the results, you'll be directed to the sections of the book that will benefit you the most.

- Consider the following statements and circle the number that describes you the best. "1" means usually, "2" means often; "3" means sometimes; and "4" means never.
1. Others find it easy to take advantage of me.
1 2 3 4
 2. There are a few people who make jokes at my expense or put me down repeatedly.
1 2 3 4
 3. I hesitate to speak up for fear others might consider me aggressive rather than assertive.
1 2 3 4
 4. Others say I misunderstand what they tell me.
1 2 3 4
 5. I sound like I'm asking a question when I'm making a statement.
1 2 3 4
 6. I tend to look down at the floor or fold my arms across my chest when speaking to others.
1 2 3 4
 7. I tend to preface my comments with disclaimers such as "I may be wrong" or "This might be a stupid question but..."
1 2 3 4
 8. I tend to say too much and give too many details when I explain something.
1 2 3 4
 9. I tend to downplay compliments when I receive them. 1 2 3 4
 10. I avoid expressing my displeasure for fear that others will tell me that I'm too sensitive, or else criticize me in some other way.
1 2 3 4
 11. I tend to bit my tongue to keep the peace.
1 2 3 4
 12. Others make me feel guilty when I say no to their requests.
1 2 3 4
 13. I feel the need to invent excuses when I say no.
1 2 3 4
 14. I tend to provide numerous reasons rather than a brief justification when I say no.
1 2 3 4
 15. I tend to say yes when I want to say no.
1 2 3 4
 16. I feel guilty when I say no.
1 2 3 4
 17. I make promises which I later regret.
1 2 3 4
 18. I allow myself to be pressured into making snap decisions.
1 2 3 4
 19. I tend to respond impetuously rather than carefully choosing my words.
1 2 3 4
 20. I feel compelled to follow through with decisions I've made even when I don't feel good about them.
1 2 3 4
 21. I accept what I'm offered even when it's not what I wanted or expected.
1 2 3 4
 22. I tend to remain silent when treated unfairly.
1 2 3 4
 23. I allow myself to be inconvenienced in order to avoid conflicts.
1 2 3 4
 24. I tend to beat around the bush rather than express my feelings directly.
1 2 3 4
 25. I ask friends of family members to speak for me when I'm reluctant to speak up for myself.
1 2 3 4
 26. I feel that prefacing my own opinions with "My husband (boyfriend, father) says..." or "My boss says..." gives my words more credibility.
1 2 3 4
 27. I tend to kick myself for what I should have said.
1 2 3 4
 28. I tend to respond defensively when unfairly criticized.
1 2 3 4
 29. On the spur-of-the-moment, I can never think of clever comebacks to rude remarks.
1 2 3 4
 30. I tend to suffer in silence when unfairly criticized or insulted.
1 2 3 4
 31. I feel uncomfortable taking credit for my own accomplishments.
1 2 3 4
 32. I'm more reluctant to speak up on the job than in other situations.
1 2 3 4
 33. I'm reluctant to say no when my supervisor makes unfair or inconvenient requests.
1 2 3 4
 34. I lose my courage at the last moment and don't say what I planned to say when faced with an awkward or threatening situation.
1 2 3 4
 35. When I'm nervous about an upcoming event or situation, I have doubts about my ability to handle it as successfully as I'd like.
1 2 3 4
- ***** OK, now that you've completed the assessment, you're ready to analyze your responses. There are no numbers to add up! There's

no good or bad score! The statements are designed to help you identify the areas for you to focus on in Did You Say Something, Susan? For example, if you responded "Usually", "Often" or even "Sometimes" to statements 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9, the information in chapter 2 will really help you. Other answers correspond to other chapters in the book. Once you identify which assertive communication skills to practice, why not get started right away! I recommend beginning by perfecting those areas to which you responded "3 (Sometimes)". Those will be the easiest for you to improve. Then, analyze the statements to which you responded 2 (Often), and work on the corresponding chapters. Once you're really confident in the skill areas to which you responded 2 and 3, you'll be ready to tackle the chapters corresponding to the statements to which you responded 1 (Usually). These will challenge you the most. After you've worked on the various assertive communication skills, take the self-assessment again. I bet you'll be pleasantly surprised to find that you've circled more 3's and 4's than before. Keep practicing the skills taught and you'll soon be communicating confidently and effectively in most situations!

About the Author

Paulette Winless Dale, Ph. D. has been a professor of Speech Communication at Miami Dade Community College for the past 23 years. She is also a Fulbright Scholar, internationally renowned author, lecturer and consultant, and has conducted workshops worldwide on effective speech and communication. DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, SUSAN? - How Any Woman Can Gain Confidence with Assertive Communication Is available wherever books are sold, or directly from the publisher at 1-800-447-BOOK. Published by Carol Publishing.

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