

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

Total Talent Management

Assertiveness – Obstacles to Our Goals

BE BOUNDLESS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- TABLE OF CONTENTS 1
- Obstacles to Our Goals 1
 - Types of Negative Thinking 1
- Case Study 2
- Suggested Activity 3
 - Stand Up! 4
 - Possible Answers 6
- Personal Application 8
- Further Study 8

Obstacles to Our Goals



Obstacles are encountered every day of our lives, but what we do and how we react during these events will determine the outcomes of such events. Our reactions to these obstacles will determine if the situation becomes a minor annoyance to a major event. Over reacting to a small annoyance can magnify the issue and make larger than it actually is. These are the types of reactions that should be kept in check, what is an appropriate response to each obstacle that we encounter? Like many things the obstacle will determine the response.

Types of Negative Thinking



Negative thinking is the process of thinking negative rather than positive thoughts. Seemingly, positive thinking requires effort while negative thinking is uninvited and happens easily.

A person who has been brought up in a happy and positive atmosphere, where people value success and self-improvement will have a much easier time thinking positively. One who was brought up in a poor or difficult situation will probably continue to expect difficulties and failure.

Negative thoughts center on the individual, others, and the future. Negative thinking causes problems such as depression, pessimism, and anxiety. Typical types of negative thinking are described below.

Type of Thinking	As the thinker, you:
Overgeneralization	Make a general universal rule from one isolated event
Global labeling	Automatically use disparaging labels to describe yourself
Filtering	Pay attention selectively to the negative, disregarding the positive
Polarized thinking	Group things into absolute, black and white categories, assuming that you must be perfect or you are worthless
Self-blame	Persistently blame yourself for things that may not be your fault
Personalization	Assume that everything has something to do with you, negatively comparing yourself to everyone else
Mind reading	Feel that people don't like you or are angry with you, without any real evidence
Control fallacies	Feel that you have total responsibility for everybody and everything, or that you have no control as a helpless victim

Emotional reasoning	Believe that things are the way you feel about them
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Case Study

The following case study will help participants analyze obstacles to a person's ability to reach a goal.



Joe Smith has been a lawyer at Big City Law Firm for six years. He is a high performer, and has been told that he will be up for partner at the firm within the next twelve months.

Sue Smith has worked for five years as a financial analyst at Neighboring Town Manufacturing Company, receiving excellent performance reviews. She is well thought of by her peers and has willingly taken on some sticky special projects in the past two years.

Joe and Sue have two children, a boy in fifth grade at the local elementary school, and an eighth grade daughter at Magnet Junior High School in Big City. Sue has the major responsibility for the children's transportation, extracurricular activities, and medical appointments.

When the accounting manager recently announced he was leaving the company to live a green life in Colorado, Sue was encouraged by the Chief Financial Officer to submit a job bid for the manager's position.

Excited about the opportunity, Sue shared the news that evening with Joe. He said to her: "How do you know you can perform that job with your experience?"

"Who will look after the kids while you're stuck at work late into the evening solving last-minute accounting problems?"

"Don't I make enough money to support this family without you having to be away from home, the kids, and me even more?"

Sue knows that Joe is the breadwinner, and she is reluctant to assert herself. Help Sue out by writing some assertive statements that she can make to Joe in support of her goal of gaining a promotion to manager.

Suggested Activity

Consider completing the following activity alone, or with your team.

Estimated Time	10 minutes
Topic Objective	To develop assertive responses to non-assertive interpersonal communication
Topic Summary	Stand Up for Yourself! Two interpersonal scenarios are provided along with communication from the other person that is not necessarily assertive. The participants' task is to write assertive responses appropriate to the situation. Some participants may prefer to create their own scenario. A blank format is provided for that.
Materials Required	Worksheet Three: Stand Up! (below)
Planning Checklist	None
Recommended Activity	<p>Distribute the worksheet to participants, who will work individually on this assignment.</p> <p>Explain that 2 situations are provided, or participants can choose to write their own third situation based on their unique life experiences.</p> <p>Ask him to read the situation, review the statements made by the other party, and write assertive responses.</p> <p>In debrief, ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel another person trying to deflect or subvert your goals? • How did writing assertive responses make you feel empowered with respect to your own rights?
Review Questions	How can you find ways to practice assertive communication as you go through day to day living?

Stand Up!

Situation 1

At lunch, your salad arrives with blue cheese. You ordered French dressing. Your server has returned.

Server:	Is everything OK?
You:	
Server:	I distinctly remember that you ordered blue cheese dressing.
You:	
Server:	It's written right here on my order pad; blue cheese.
You:	
Server:	I'll be back in a few minutes with your salad with salad with French.

Reminder: to not allow yourself to get sidetracked arguing about who is right. You are not attacking the server's confidence; just repeat your order.

Situation 2

Despite success with your diet, your friend insists you try some of everything at her dinner party.

Friend:	Have some of this.
You:	
Friend:	Oh, diets don't count on Saturday night.
You:	
Friend:	But you've lost so much weight. A little bite won't hurt.
You:	
Friend:	This is my special cheesecake. It takes two hours and a pound of cream cheese.
You:	
Friend:	Try my homemade bread. It's worth every calorie.
You:	
Friend:	I guess you are pretty serious about your diet. I'm glad that you did come tonight even if you can't try my desserts.

Reminder: You are not obligated to eat everything. You did not tell your friend to stay home all day and cook. You are not responsible for how your friend uses her time. You should not be made to feel guilty should you choose not to taste anything.

Your Personal Situation

My Situation: _____

Other person:	
You:	
Other person:	
You:	
Other person:	
You:	
Other person:	
You:	
Other person:	
You:	
Other person:	
You:	
Other person:	
You:	

Possible Answers

Situation 1

At lunch, your salad arrives with blue cheese. You ordered French dressing. Your server has returned.

Server:	Is everything OK?
You:	I'm sorry, but I had ordered French dressing with my salad.
Server:	I distinctly remember that you ordered blue cheese dressing.
You:	I am confident that I had ordered French. I do not like blue cheese, so it is very unlikely I would order it.
Server:	It's written right here on my order pad; blue cheese.
You:	My colleague ordered blue cheese for their salad; maybe that is where the mix up occurred?

Server:	I'll be back in a few minutes with your salad with salad with French.

Reminder: to not allow yourself to get sidetracked arguing about who is right. You are not attacking the server's confidence; just repeat your order.

Situation 2

Despite success with your diet, your friend insists you try some of everything at her dinner party.

Friend:	Have some of this.
You:	No, thank you for the offer.
Friend:	Oh, diets don't count on Saturday night.
You:	I appreciate the offer, but no thank you.
Friend:	But you've lost so much weight. A little bite won't hurt.
You:	Thank you for noticing. Hard work and sticking to my diet has worked great for me. A little likely won't hurt, but a little sacrifice will help me reach my goal.
Friend:	This is my special cheesecake. It takes two hours and a pound of cream cheese.
You:	It looks wonderful and I look forward to trying it once I reach my goal. My spouse says it is very delicious.
Friend:	Try my homemade bread. It's worth every calorie.
You:	It looks and smells great. Thank you for the offer, and I will try the bread as it fits into my diet regimen.
Friend:	I guess you are pretty serious about your diet. I'm glad that you did come tonight even if you can't try my desserts.

Reminder: You are not obligated to eat everything. You did not tell your friend to stay home all day and cook. You are not responsible for how your friend uses her time. You should not be made to feel guilty should you choose not to taste anything.

Personal Application



We all have situations in our personal lives where the ability to be assertive helps us achieve our goals. Now we'll each practice the opportunity to develop assertive responses. Standing up for yourself will translate into success throughout your personal and professional lives. It will help grow a person's self-confidence, and make the challenges that we encounter every day that much more easily to overcome.

Further Study

To learn more about assertiveness, consider our in-person offerings such as, [Developing Assertiveness Skills](#). Further trainings to develop Individual Excellence will be shared here in the Leadership Café, on all of the competencies found in our [Competency Guide](#). Subscribe now to [The Learning Lab](#), an online platform featuring Business Skills & Productivity, Leadership Development, and Office 365, powered by Skillsoft Percipio and customized for UW learners.