



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S. Parent's Guide Lesson 11 Assertiveness

This week's lesson is on *ASSERTIVENESS* (standing up for yourself in an appropriate way). The purpose of this lesson is to look at 3 typical and different response styles people use: passive, aggressive and assertive. By appropriately using an **assertive "No" response** to offers of drugs, vandalism, dishonesty, theft, and violence confidence is built in oneself.

The P.L.U.S. officer explains that each of us has personal rights. Those personal rights can vary depending on to whom we are talking and the type of situation in which we are involved. For example: With *friends* I have the personal right to say "No" to offers of things I don't want to do. I also have the responsibility to accept it when my friends say "No" to me. However, that is not the case with *parents*. I **do not** have the right to say "no" to them because I don't want to do something, like my chores. It is important for us to believe in the personal rights we all have, and at the same time respect the personal rights of others.

Research indicates that people with low self-image are more likely to accept offers to use drugs. One response style, which is an indication of poor self-image, is the "*Passive*" style. We describe a person who communicates in this manner as *one who holds back his/her true feelings and goes along with the crowd*. This person is often afraid to speak up; has poor posture; looks nervous; avoids eye contact with others; is willing to follow the crowd; and is easily pressured into doing the wrong things. A second response style is "*Aggressive*." We describe this person as *one who inappropriately takes charge over situations and expresses his/her opinions, beliefs, and values with no regard for others*. This person's style is to speak in a loud, angry tone; have stiff posture, leaning forward into other's space; glare at you; intimidates through his/her actions; and demand things rather than ask for them. Often times people who act aggressively have lower self-image than the passive person.

The third response style, "*Assertive*," is representative of those who have a more positive self-image. People who communicate using this style *carefully express their feelings so they don't disrespect others while allowing their wants, needs and feelings to be known*. This person's style is to speak clearly and loud enough to be heard without yelling, while appearing confident, calm, and maintaining good posture. Assertive people are enjoyable to be around and fun to do things with.

Using an *assertive* style lets the person's personal rights be known in a way that does not interfere with other people's rights. When others look at the *assertive* person, a clear message is being sent. That message is "I respect myself, and I am sure of who I am, so don't even ask me to do something that you and I both know is wrong."

An *aggressive* style shows that one thinks his/her personal rights are more important than those around them. This person often loses the respect of others. The aggressive person is often looked on as a person with a "reputation" to maintain, so when offers of things like drugs occur or when inappropriate behavior would satisfy the "reputation" then these behaviors are lived up to.

Use of a *passive* style is an indication that the person believes his/her personal rights are less important than others. Other people often take advantage of this person. This person will also lose the respect of others.

The officer presents a process called “*Communicating with Assertive Statements*” through role plays with the students. The four steps are: 1) Determine what about the situation needs to be changed. 2) What is my statement of rights? 3) What am I trying to achieve? (wants, needs, feelings) and 4) What would be appropriate body language? Here is an example. A kid in your class has a notebook and it looks like yours. You lost your notebook two days ago, and it has some important notes in it for a test on Friday. Step 1: The situation is: you need to see if it is your notebook. Step 2: You can ask to see the notebook or ask the person to look for your name on it. Step 3: You can try to get the notebook without accusing the person or getting violent. Step 4: Your body language would be; have good eye contact, speak calmly and not too loud, and try to have a questioning facial expression.

The officer discusses being assertive in various situations such as: a kid keeps bugging you by pushing your book bag off your shoulder; you are asked to bring beers to a party; you are asked to steal something to join a club; you are asked to vandalize a neighbors garden; and/or you are asked to be a lookout while some other kids smoke. When we say “No” properly, fights and arguments are avoided because our personal rights are mutually respected. We know that not all situations can be resolved by simply being assertive and that there are times when we **need the help of an adult**. But, being assertive and saying “No” like you mean it can safely get us out of many situations.

One last thing we talk with the students about is **being assertive at appropriate times**. It is **not** appropriate to say “No” to parents when they ask us to do something like chores, be home by ..., to get off the phone, etc. no matter how assertive (respectful) we are. Furthermore it is **not** appropriate to say “No” to a teacher or adult who is in a position of authority when they ask us to do something that we should be doing. Assertiveness does not give us the right to be disobedient or disrespectful.

Student/Parent Homework (Week 11): Assertive Communication

The worksheet titled “Assertive Communication” can have different answers depending on an individual viewpoint. Please don’t get concerned with having more than one answer to a question. Use the worksheet “Characteristics of...” and “Communicate with Assertive Statements” as a study guide. We ask that you speak with your child about what they remember from their class notes. Discussing your views and opinions regarding the importance of being assertive is important for the children.

P.L.U.S. Final Paper

Today we assigned the “Final Paper” to the students. This paper is a requirement to graduate from P.L.U.S. The due date is written on the worksheet. The students enjoy writing this paper because they can talk about what they have learned in P.L.U.S. Please help your child brainstorm some ideas, following the format given them on the worksheet, which they could write about.