

Relationships



Chapter 6




Please think back on the past week, and rate your weekly average on this scale of 0-10.

- 10 - Highest anxiety/distress you have ever felt, unable to function
- 9 - Extremely anxious/distressed, highly affecting performance
- 8 - Very anxious/distressed, significantly impacting performance
- 7 - Quite anxious/distressed, moderately impacting performance
- 6 - Elevated anxiety/distress, some impact with performance
- 5 - Moderate anxiety/distress, uncomfortable, can still perform well
- 4 - Mild/moderate anxiety/distress, hard to ignore, fairly uncomfortable
- 3 - Mild anxiety/distress, no interference with performance
- 2 - Minimal anxiety/distress
- 1 - Alert and awake, concentrating well
- 0 - Totally relaxed

Check-in:

How did managing moments of anxiety go this week?

How was practicing the What-Went-Well Exercise, worry exposure, or mindful worry free zones?



In our final session of CALM, we'll focus on enhancing communication and effectiveness in relationships. This helps reduce anxiety and increase opportunities for connection, self-care, and movement toward your goals.

Assertive communication involves the balance of expressing your feelings, needs, wants, and rights...without violating the rights of others. It also involves considering the other person's feelings and needs, and being a good listener.

Activity: Where do you see yourself on this spectrum?



Wherever you find yourself on this spectrum, consider "How Can I Move Closer to the Middle?" Consider people and areas of your life where you are more or less assertive, such as: family, friends, classmates, coworkers, employers, professors, strangers, or dating relationships.

Want to set a goal?

One area of my life (or person) I want to practice being more assertive with is:

Dr. David Burns is a professor of psychiatry with Stanford University and world-famous author of books on topics like anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. In his book, “When Panic Attacks” (2006), he explains

his model contends that “...niceness is the cause of all anxiety.” Specifically, this perspective sees “nice people” suppressing emotions, which leads to anxiety issues. People who suppress emotions tend to be overly people-pleasing, and avoidant of “negative” emotions and interpersonal conflict.

From this perspective, feelings such as anger are suppressed quickly and automatically. This leads to overly focusing on others’ needs, and having feelings like anger resurface in disguise as anxiety.

Anxiety is relieved once the hidden emotions are acknowledged and expressed in a healthy way.

“When you’re anxious, you’re almost always avoiding a problem that’s bothering you, but you’re not aware of it”

– David Burns

Can you see any ways “hidden emotions” or being “too nice” may be playing a role in your anxiety?

Passive-aggressive behavior is an expression of anger and hostility through indirect ways. Although we have all acted passive-aggressively at times, it’s not effective for healthy communication.

A few common examples of Passive-Aggressive behavior include:

Agreeing to do what someone asks, then intentionally “forgetting” to do this, or doing it poorly

Saying you are not upset, but then using “the silent treatment,” or “cold shoulder”

Using disguised insults or microaggressions like, “You’re a lot smarter than I thought!”

Our cultural context always shapes the meaning of our interactions. For example, some assertiveness trainings say you need to have “good eye contact.”

What does that really mean though? Whose values determine if the eye contact is “good?”

In many cultures frequent eye contact is seen as being attentive and displaying self-confidence, while at the same time, this is seen as defiance and disrespect in some others. Remember to consider how culture shapes the way we each communicate.

Expanding cultural awareness, like other forms of awareness, serves us well in understanding and relating to ourselves, others, and the world. Also, being mindful of judgments as they arise can help us overcome this obstacle to greater understanding and connection.

What are ways your culture(s) influences how you express yourself?

One of the core skills of assertiveness, which you may be familiar with, is called “I” Statements.

How to use “I” statements to express your feelings

I felt [emotion] when [what happened]. Next time [specific request].

I felt _____ when _____. Next time _____.

“I felt let down and worried when you missed our study session.”

“I need you to call me ahead of time if you can’t make it.”

is typically much more effective than other ways of communicating that provoke defensiveness, like “Why are you so disrespectful!” or “Stop being so inconsiderate!”

Situation: One of your group members who has not contributed much agreed to work together on the project yesterday. He did not show up or return your call after you waited 30 minutes.

Practice: In pairs, take turns and practice using an “I” statement to assert yourself.

Active listening involves focusing on what the person is communicating and showing that you understand what's being expressed. It works best when we can suspend judgment and focus on understanding. This skill can increase understanding, as well as opportunities to resolve disagreement and strengthen relationships.

summarizing back what you just heard, without interrupting
“It sounds like you’ve tried several things and feel really stuck right now.”

Do you find yourself putting other’s needs above your own, time and time again?

Many feel pulled to constantly say “yes” to whatever is asked due to fears of letting people down, conflict, or losing friends.

It’s not just these fears that stop us from turning down requests, we may simply be caring, empathic, and driven to help others as well!

Have you ever considered this idea?

By saying “yes,” let’s say to driving your friend to the airport

Assertiveness has 2 parts

1. Recognize and validate the other person's needs, wants, beliefs, and/or situation
 2. Re-Assert your needs and wants as well.
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Getting Your Goals Met

Questions to ask:

- “What results do I want in this situation?”
- “What is the best approach to reach my goal?”





Dr. Fred Luskin, co-founder of the Stanford Forgiveness Project, has spent his life's work uncovering benefits of practicing forgiveness, and pioneering strategies to do so.

In his book, "Forgive for Good" he shares findings that forgiveness reduces depression, stress, and anger. Forgiveness also improves physical health and emotional well-being such as increased: hopefulness, spiritual connection, self-confidence, and healing in relationships.



Let's have compassion for how difficult being self-compassionate can be, as well as the challenge of sending positive wishes toward someone that hasn't treated you well. Give yourself permission to feel a struggle or challenge at points during the meditation.

Also, consider for a moment someone in your life you can try to extend well wishes too. First, consider someone you can easily extend this to, and then someone who brings up some feelings of frustration or annoyance. It's usually best to not start with the most difficult person.

Let's Practice a Loving Kindness Meditation

Group Check-Out:

How was your experience in CALM?

What did you find most helpful or challenging?

What skills and concepts do you want to continue applying to your life?

Thank you for being a part of CALM and completing the program!

To get the most out of this experience, consider practicing the skills and techniques you found most helpful on a regular basis. Please review the checklist and decide what you want to make a regular part of your mindfulness practice.

Finally, please complete the "Anxiety Flare-ups: Early Warning Signs" and "Anxiety Action Plan" to be prepared to manage future anxiety flare-ups skillfully and effectively.

Chapter 4



Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Assertiveness Spectrum

“Niceness” and Anxiety

Culture, Judgment & Assertiveness

“I” Statements

Active Listening Skills

Saying “No!”

When you say “Yes” you also say “No”

Empathic Assertion

Boundary Setting

3 Types of Effectiveness- Objective, relational, and self-respect

Forgiveness

Loving Kindness Meditation

Handouts and skills below are included in appendix

Being Effective- Interpersonal effectiveness worksheet

Anxiety Flare-ups - My early warning signs

Anxiety Action Plan

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Medford, N., Sierra, M., Stringaris, A., Giampietro, V., Brammer, M., & David, A (2016).