A step-by-step guide to communication skills training

Based on the latest edition of the bestselling

LISTEN TO ME LISTEN TO YOU

Mandy Kotzman & Anne Kotzman

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ACER Press

To Di Bretherton

Our dear friend and mentor

With gratitude for your inspiration, support and encouragement …

And for all of us striving
to make the world a better place
by promoting effective communication
based on mutual respect and understanding.

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Introduction

The New Expanded Edition of *Listen to Me, Listen to You* (Penguin, 2007) is a successful publication designed to help people improve their sense of self and ability to communicate with other people. However, some people prefer experiential learning to 'book learning', and group experience can deepen the learning process. We wrote this step-by-step guide for teachers, trainers, facilitators and others who are inspired to lead communication skills training based on *Listen to Me, Listen to You*.

Focus of the training

The focus of this training is on how to get along better with oneself and other people. It offers opportunities to discover how what we say, and how we say it, can change our lives, and the lives of the people with whom we interact. We believe this program is suitable for a variety of audiences and a range of different settings, such as community workshops, schools, special interest groups, personal development and corporate training. Throughout the manual, we refer to the person conducting the training simply as 'the leader', to emphasise that, although the educational process can be stimulated and guided by another person, the ultimate responsibility for learning rests with the learner.

Getting started

After the **Orientation**, this guide follows the same sequence of topics as *Listen to Me, Listen to You* (hereafter referred to simply as 'LTM')—**Self-esteem, Self-awareness and self-knowledge, Effective listening, Self-assertion** and **Managing conflict**, concluding with **Reflection and closure**. As with the book, each of the five main sections contains elements of, and connections with, the other sections. For example, collaborative conflict management involves self-awareness, listening, assertion and other skills. If you are limited to a brief session on one topic, you will need to be careful to refer to the broader context of communication skills in which it sits, and encourage participants to explore the connected topics.

Designing your own program

We have designed and organised the information and activities to allow flexibility so you can select particular subsections according to the focus and scope of your program and the time you have available. Using this guide will enable you to lead a one-hour lunchtime session on a particular topic, half or full-day workshops, a comprehensive weekend program, a four-session adult education class, a ten-week course over a school term or some other format of your own design.

That said, we strongly recommend that, when possible, you elect to present the material as a complete, integrated program because of the inherent interconnectedness of the various components of communication.

Using this guide

We believe it is really important for you to read and fully understand the information contained in LTM. This guide includes specific references to relevant sections of the LTM for broader and more complete coverage than contained here. Ideally, each participant will also have access to LTM.

For convenience, we have divided each of the main topics into three separate sections:

1. **Leader's Guide**: step-by-step instructions for you, the leader, with three strands:

   (i)   Normal text: useful information for you.

   (ii) **Highlighted text**: ideas for you to 'speak to' as you introduce theoretical and practical aspects of a topic. In order to make it easy for you to present this material authentically and with heart, modelling the concepts and skills as you share them, you will need sufficient familiarity with this material to make it your own.

   (iii) Text preceded by 🏃: step-by-step descriptions of activities. **Short-hand terms in bold text** at the beginning of each step indicate what to do, and with whom (see below).

2. **Worksheets**: for participants to record their experiences. We suggest that you reproduce these and hand them out at the beginning of each session, with an eye to actively engaging participants and assisting their learning and subsequent recall. The exception to this is Feedback Sheets, which should be returned to the leader, and Certificates, which you might want to distribute at the conclusion of your program.

3. **Notes**: brief summaries of each topic, which you can reproduce and give to participants. We have found it works best to distribute these at the end of each session, as this reduces the likelihood of participants becoming disengaged or sidetracked.

At the end of the guide, you will find **Appendices** containing additional resources for particular activities. 'Class sets' of these could be re-used multiple times.

In combination, the **Worksheets** and **Notes** should provide participants with a structured, personalised account of their learning experience for future recall and reflection. To avoid any ambiguity, we give *explicit permission* for the **Worksheets, Notes, Feedback Sheet, Sample certificate** and **Appendices** to be copied for educational purposes, provided that normal copyright regulations are followed.

Explanation of short-hand terms: We begin each step of each activity with short-hand terms to help you quickly and easily identify what to do and with whom:

- **Board** = record information or draw tables on a whiteboard, blackboard or flip chart.
- **Brainstorm** = think creatively about a topic and list experiences, ideas, strategies etc.
- **Discuss** = lead discussion of the topic, questions or experiences that arise from activities.
- **Group/2 Groups/3 Groups** = involving the entire group/the group split in half/ the group split into three.
- **Individual** = participants work on this activity on their own.
- **Invite** = invite participants to share, respond, do or consider something.
- **Pairs** = ask participants to form pairs. Encourage them to get to know one another by choosing different partners.
- **Question** = ask for specific ideas, information or experiences.
- **Share** = ask for the sharing of ideas or experiences.
- **Small group** = ask participants to form small groups of about four to eight.
- **Task** = the leader does something, or has the group or participants do something.
- **Triads** = ask participants to form groups of three.
- **Worksheet** = ask participants to write notes for a particular activity in the spaces provided on their worksheets.

Discuss, Invite, Question, Brainstorm and **Share** simply suggest different ways of engaging participants.

Combinations, such as **Small group/Discuss** would involve *discussion* within a *small group*, while **Group/Discuss/Board/Worksheet**, means you lead *the whole group* in *discussion*, make notes from the discussion on the *board* and ask participants to make notes on their *worksheets*.

How people learn

These days, there is a great emphasis on 'efficiency'—achieving the maximum outcome for the minimum input (usually measured in time or money, or both). Against this backdrop, it can be tempting to drift towards a quicker, more 'lecturing' style of presentation, with the 'expert' presenter providing verbal and written synopses of key information for the learners to 'absorb'. While communication skills may appear to be simple in theory, and participants may believe they know it all even before they start, in our experience, it takes a great deal of repetition, practice and reflection to achieve a reasonable level of mastery.

Most experienced personal development trainers know that, in order to do justice to their material, it is invaluable to share it experientially. Real learning happens when new information is integrated with existing knowledge and new skills are practised sufficiently to be incorporated into the learner's repertoire. With lectures, this mostly happens *after* the training event, and then only *if* the learner has time, energy, motivation and opportunity to do the follow-up work that makes it happen. In contrast, presentations that are experiential encourage learners to assimilate and incorporate new information and to practise new proficiencies with guidance, support, feedback, repetition and reflection *during* the training event. We cannot emphasise too strongly that the more people *do*, *experience*, *reflect* and *link* new information and skills with what they already know, the better they will learn. In dealing with changes in attitudes and behaviour, it is essential that students really *experience* the effects of these ways of interacting, and *integrate* their learning into their own personal style.

Many people receive messages more effectively through one sensory mode than the others—visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. You can make your messages more accessible by trying to cover all of these modalities. For example by asking 'Do you *see* what I mean?', 'Does that *sound* right?' or 'Does that *make* sense?', as well as providing *written* and pictorial materials, engaging in *discussion* and undertaking *activities*.

Guidelines for group leaders

Those of you who are not used to running experiential groups, and even those of you who are, will find it valuable to consider the following:

Leadership style: As a leader, the kind of person you are, and the way you interact, will set the emotional tone of the group and make all the difference in the way the

participants feel about their experience. We all learn best when we are enjoying ourselves and are relatively free from anxiety. You can have fun and still take a topic seriously, laughing and learning *with* the group, so long as you are not 'grandstanding', putting anyone down (except yourself) or hi-jacking the learning process. Aim to achieve a balance, combining seriousness with light-heartedness. Be mindful that some topics may seem innocuous and yet can 'press buttons' for some people. If this happens, you will need to respond with sensitivity and understanding; for example, by inviting the person to let you know what kind of support they need from you or others in the group.

Effective teaching: Remember that people have a limited attention span and you will need to change pace and mix activities to maintain energy, involvement and alertness. If eyes are 'glazing over', you are wasting your time trying to 'just finish' a topic. The learning process involves not only listening and participating, but also making meaning from the experience by linking new knowledge to existing knowledge—this takes time and mental space. You need to accommodate this or risk losing their attention. In general, think of engaged participants as being in 'receiving mode' only about 25 per cent of the time; otherwise, they are 'making meaning' or 'resting'.

Housekeeping: These issues always need to be addressed at the outset. They may include general rules and information about eating, smoking, mobile phone use, access to toilets, the timetable for the day or the program, arrangements for tea/coffee and meal breaks, starting and finishing times, parking, and so on.

Expectations: You will need to clarify your expectations about the behaviour of group members. Explain that you expect each person to take responsibility for caring for themselves and making themselves comfortable, but you also expect them to care for one another by, for example, treating disclosures with respect and complete confidentiality, listening with acceptance and understanding without interrupting, and contributing to the sense of trust in the group, so that participants can feel safe and enjoy themselves. Invite people to raise any concerns, questions or comments, and respond to them appropriately.

Getting acquainted: If you have not already been introduced, participants may like to know a little bit about who you are and why you are leading this training.

When meeting with any group for the first time, leaders are advised to undertake activities that enable group members to get to know each other, to build trust and cohesion in the group, and to introduce the topics. The scale of this process should match the scale of the training you are offering—brief for a one-hour seminar, longer and with greater depth for a multi-week program.

Linking sessions: If your program involves multiple sessions, begin each session with a brief 'icebreaker' or warm-up activity to encourage involvement and gain attention and focus. This might be an introductory activity (see **Orientation**), a joke, a brief story, a game or something unexpected that you have planned. Keep it short and be sure it's appropriate for your group. It's important to start off on a sound

footing. Make sure you briefly recap what has already been covered in the previous session— preferably by asking participants for this information—or you could assign this task to someone in the previous session.

Conclusion and closure: Make sure you allow time for 'Winding up' at the end of each session and **Reflection and closure** at the end of multi-session programs—even if it means cutting short other activities. This is an important opportunity to consolidate learning through recall and reflection, and to link new ideas with existing knowledge and experience, as well as to debrief or attend to any issues that might have arisen for participants.

If you are leading an extended program or course, it is important, in the final session, to provide participants with the opportunity to say goodbye and thank each other. Depending on how you plan to make closure, you may need to plan ahead, especially if it involves something such as taking photos, gathering comments or arranging for food.

General preparation for all sessions

Things you will need to do, or to have available:

- Read the relevant section(s) of LTM. To see how well you have read and understood the information, you might like to imagine trying to explain it to a make-believe audience.
- Read the relevant section(s) of this Guide—making all necessary preparations (for example, generating or recalling your own stories or examples to enrich learning and stimulate participation).
- Familiarise yourself with and copy or print the **Worksheets** and **Notes** for yourself and all participants.
- Prepare group sets of materials from the **Appendices** as needed.
- Have a supply of nametags and marker pens.
- Arrange for a whiteboard or something similar, plus whiteboard markers and an eraser.
- Flip charts can be useful if you wish to keep information over an extended training course.
- Ensure that all participants will have access to writing materials and something to write on.
- Formulate your 'rules of engagement'.
- Re-check, and carry out, suggested **Preparation**.

Orientation

General introduction for the leader

As they say, 'You only get one chance to make a first impression!' The way you begin with a group of people will set the tone for what is to follow. Regardless of whether you are planning to cover one or more selected topics, or are leading a series of workshops covering the entire program, this is your opportunity to draw the group together, engage participants and focus their attention on the task at hand.

The discussion and activities in the **Orientation** provide opportunities to: generate interest in the topic—'Why should I care?', 'What's in it for me?'; develop relationships in the group that promote learning; and establish group cohesion, culture and trust.

Aims

- To introduce participants to one another and to initiate group cohesion and trust.
- To inspire interest in developing self-awareness, communication skills and/or proficiency in managing conflict effectively.
- To explore participants' goals and expectations.
- To examine the relationship between internal and external brain-mediated communication processes.
- To have participants consider their current communication styles.

Preparation

- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p. 6.
- Nametags (self-adhesive labels work well) and a thick pen.
- Flip chart (to record group aspirations for future reference and/or to keep you on track) (optional).
- Your own example of a genie-granted wish and how it might serve your needs/values for **Activity 1**.
- Your own story about communication that didn't work—and *how* it didn't—for **Activity 2**.

Getting started

Welcome the group and introduce yourself. Give a brief outline of the proposed course of training, pointing out that plans are flexible and that, where possible, the material can be customised to the specific needs of the group as these unfold.

Address any important housekeeping issues (see **Guidelines for group leaders**, p.4). Make sure that everyone has a suitable nametag.

Pairs/Task/Group/Share: Initiate introductions—there are many ways to do this. One way is to ask people to seek out someone they don't already know, and then to talk to each other about some aspects of themselves that they would be comfortable sharing with the whole group; for example, who they are, what they do, something they really enjoy. After both people have had a turn, invite each person to introduce their new acquaintance to the whole group. Make sure that names are included. Give explicit permission for the person being introduced to make any necessary corrections.

Individual/Task: A shorter version is to have each person introduce themself, including some information that they choose to share, such as special interests, what they do, or even their favourite kind of breakfast. While this may be quicker, it lacks the 'how I listened to my partner' experience that the pairs exercise involves.

It is important to find out what will have value and meaning to the participants, so that you can make sure the training is relevant to them. This is an opportunity for you, as the leader, to model openness and listening skills, as well as to gain insights into individual aspirations, moods etc.

Group/Invite/Board: Ask 'What is the best thing that could happen for you as a result of attending this program/class/seminar/workshop?' or 'What are you hoping to get from this experience?' List these hopes on the board (or better still, on a flip chart so you can to refer to them later on and be sure that you have addressed them). You could also ask, 'What questions, worries or doubts do you have about it?' You will need to be prepared to accept and normalise the feelings expressed, as well as to provide information. If appropriate, you might

ask participants to place themselves on an imaginary line, indicating how much they wish to be present at this training session (0–100 per cent) and ask them to explain their positions.

These activities are intended to give participants an opportunity to meet one another, experience their own communication styles, share aspirations/fears/feelings and get into a state of readiness to move on. You may need to make this link for them with comments such as, 'Now we are all more aware of our goals, let's move on to …' or simply 'Are we all ready and willing to move on now?'

About this training course

Every part of our life—what we think, how we feel and what we do—is affected by the way we communicate, with ourselves and with other people. The *way* we communicate has a major influence on whether life is rich and wonderful, or frustrating and miserable. What you say and how you say it really can change your life.

For something so important, it is perhaps surprising that many of us receive no real guidance or training in communication. Instead, we muddle through life emulating role models, some good and some less so, and learning by trial and error. Unfortunately, by the time we are mature enough to recognise the ineffectiveness of some of our ways of communicating, they may have become fixed, familiar, well-practised, hard-to-change habits.

As social beings, living involves both personal and interpersonal processes—a kind of dance between the 'within' and the 'between'. The 'within' processes include knowing who you are, what is important to you, what you need or want, and being mindful and connected to the present. It's about developing self-awareness and self-knowledge. The interpersonal or 'between' processes have two main aspects:

- Receiving and filtering 'inputs' through our senses, interpreting them and transforming them into meaning.
- Our own 'outputs', both verbal and non-verbal, which become 'inputs' for other people.

Understanding and managing these processes well is a prerequisite for effective communication, and this can be developed and refined with practice.

It is often both enlightening and empowering to take a step back and examine with some objectivity our habitual ways of communicating: What are we actually saying and doing? When does this work for us and when is it less effective? What could we do differently? What would it take to make changes? What rewards might this bring?

In spite of our best intentions and skills, communication can break down or conflicts can arise. Knowing how best to handle these situations for positive outcomes can greatly enhance our effectiveness and our quality of life.

This course is designed to help people get along better with themselves and others. By strengthening self-esteem, enhancing self-awareness and self-knowledge, and developing communication skills, we can have more choice about how we live and interact.

Board/Flip chart: Write the following phrase as a kind of mantra for this training—you will be referring to it frequently.

*It is often not **what** we say, but **how** we say it that makes all the difference.*

Activity 1—Wish for change

Use the following exercise to uncover a way in which participants might like their lives to be different, and to examine in greater depth what needs and values this would nourish. It's about tapping into participants' motivation for change.

Individual/Question/Worksheet: Suppose a genie grants you one wish to change your life.

- What would you wish for?
- Why would you choose this?
- How would it really make life better?

You may need to offer an example to give them an idea of what you mean.

Group/Share: Encourage participants to share their fantasies—share your own, too, especially if there are no volunteers. Tease out how this wish would really make life better; what needs might it serve? Summarise by saying something like 'It can be hard to get what you want if you aren't really clear about what it is' or 'If you don't know where you are going, it's hard to get there.'

Communication involves skills

Learning how to communicate effectively is about developing a range of skills. With these at our fingertips, we can choose how to achieve our intentions in a wide variety of situations. Different styles of communicating have surprisingly different, but somewhat predictable, outcomes. Unfortunately, it's easy to be unaware of the role we play in social interactions, and often we may fail to recognise or exercise our potential to be agents for positive change.

Communication, like any other set of skills, can be learned, and needs to be practised in order to achieve proficiency or mastery. It requires a readiness to develop greater awareness, try new things, review the outcomes and try again based on what you learnt—it is an iterative process.

Reflect on your willingness to learn some new skills by trying the following exercise. It might be interesting to return to this activity when you have completed this course and learned some new ways of communicating.

Activity 2—Communication challenge

Individual/Worksheet: Recall and describe a significant situation involving difficult communication with another person.

Group/Share: Recall some difficult communication situations (leader: share your own to stimulate discussion if necessary). What was difficult about it? Maybe the other party didn't seem to understand you, perhaps you couldn't achieve the outcome you sought, you parted with one or both parties feeling bad, or something similar or different. Who would like to have handled things differently?

By developing awareness and skills, you may well be able to choose to handle a similar situation more satisfactorily in the future.

Activity 3—Why do we communicate?

Group/Invite/Board/Worksheet: Ideas about the purpose of communication. The list should include:
- to exchange information
- to establish, maintain or modify relationships.

Communication—A two-way process

Communication with other people involves two main, complementary, often simultaneous processes:
- Speaking and expressing oneself.
- Listening and responding to the other person.

Speaking involves *sending* a message. For example, an assertive message says to the other person: 'I am telling you about me, how I feel, what I need, or what I want, think or believe.'

Listening involves both *receiving* messages from others and *responding* to them. Regardless of how you listen, you *send* some sort of message back to the speaker. Effective listening and responding generate and convey our understanding (or sometimes our misunderstanding) of the speaker's message. An effective listener's message is: 'I'm interested in learning about you, how you feel, what you need and what you want, think or believe, and this is what I understood you to have said.'

The separation of speaking and listening is a somewhat arbitrary one, made to facilitate the learning of two sets of skills. In real life, communication involves both the speaker and

the listener expressing themselves, listening to the other, responding, and responding to responses. Therefore, listening and speaking are really part of an ongoing, complex, reciprocal and interactive process.

Both the sending and receiving components of communication involve specific skills, many of which we already have and use all the time, with varying degrees of success. However, we can benefit from refining them or learning and practising new and better ways to use them.

Misunderstandings can occur in a number of ways, both in the way we send a message and in how it is received. We have all had the experience of wondering how another person could have so completely misinterpreted what we thought we had conveyed. We may also be unaware of the extent to which internal processes, such as mood, past experiences and memories, mediate how we create meaning from the messages we receive.

Within each of us, our thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected. What we think affects how we feel and what we choose to do. How we feel shapes our thoughts and our behaviour, and what we do affects our feelings and thoughts. Furthermore, because we are conscious beings, we can actually think about our thoughts as we have them. The more conscious we become of our own internal processes, the more we can choose to modify them if we wish. Other people's internal processes are unknown to us and can be problematic, but ours are more or less under our control.

This is particularly relevant when communications misfire. We clearly need strategies for checking whether we have understood one another correctly, and the ability to create opportunities to remedy any misunderstandings that may have occurred. The skills involved in effective listening are key to this process.

Activity 4—Internal and external communication processes

The purpose of the following activity is to provide the participants with a list of words connected with communication and, through discussion, have them generate clarity about the relationship between internal mental processes, external processes and the interfaces between them. Try to represent this understanding in a diagram such as the one on the next page. It may look rather complicated, but in practice it's actually not so bad. It is a way of pulling together people's thinking. If you end up with something like this, give yourself a pat on the back!

Board: Draw the diagram outline that the participants have on their **Worksheet**, and write the words: needs, thoughts, words and gestures, feelings, actions, receive, send, respond, sights and sounds, etc. (some of these words will need to be used more than once).

Group/Discuss: Generate a flow diagram of actions and thoughts involved in a communication between two people, using the words from the list and arrows to connect them. For example:

Two-person communication flow diagram
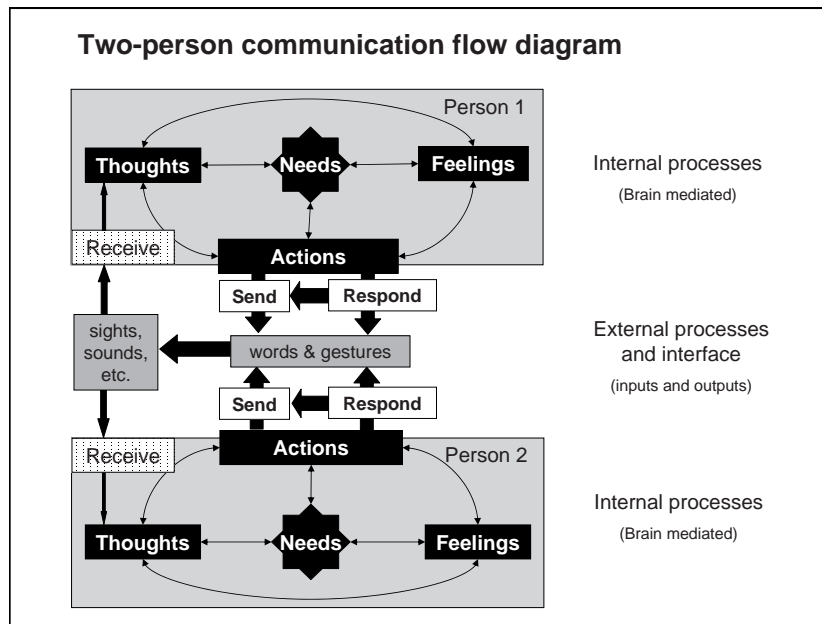
Internal processes are important in determining what and how we send and receive messages, and how our own 'internal stuff' is, to some degree, under our control.

Key points include:

- Thoughts, feelings and actions are interdependent. Consciously modifying any one of these will have an effect on the others.
- When we respond, we are sending messages (both verbal and non-verbal).
- Sometimes we may not deliver the message we intended to send.
- Our sensory and mental processes filter incoming messages—so what one person intends, says or does, may not be what the other person hears, sees or understands.

Learning new communication skills is about enhancing choices; it's not about dictating how anyone *should* communicate.

What to communicate

Figuring out *what* you really want to communicate is not as simple as it sounds. It requires having a clear idea of who you are and what you really need or want, what you are trying to achieve—your real intentions. Before you can interact effectively with other people, you need to be in touch with yourself.

Part of this connection with our 'self' comes from an almost constant internal conversation through which we describe our experiences, make judgements, generate emotions, consider options, assign meaning, create generalisations, and so on—in essence, narrating our lives. Because our brains mediate all our perceptions and experiences, in this sense our lives are 'all in the mind'.

Regardless of whether or not we are conscious of it, this 'self talk' is ongoing. Learning to 'tune in' on this process—self-awareness or mindfulness—provides us with an opportunity to choose how we live our lives, rather than blundering along mindlessly, living life as a series of knee-jerk reactions, sometimes feeling powerless or out-of-control. From a state of heightened self-awareness, we are equipped to know what it is that we are trying to communicate, what our intentions really are.

Knowing who we are and what we want provides important foundations for effective communication.

How to communicate

How often do you hear someone say, 'It's not *what* happened … it's the *way* it happened …'?

Activity 5—The way you say it

Group/Brainstorm: Use the following messages (or generate your own), to explore the range of possible ways to deliver each message, by choosing different words and gestures. For example:

- Get your feet off the table.
- I've made dinner; it's time to come and eat.
- I don't agree with you.
- You made a mistake, do it this way.

Group/Question: What generalisations could be made about the style—the how—of delivery? For example, choice of words, tone of voice, underlying intentions, gestures etc.

Winding up

Each of us has our own motivations for wanting to communicate better. Reflecting on when and how we are most and least effective in communicating provides a personal focus on where we might want to make changes. The greater our awareness and skills, the greater our choice about how we get along with ourselves and other people.

Activity 6—Reflecting on communication

Individual/Question/Worksheet: Consider the learning from this unit.

Task: Distribute **Notes—Orientation**.

WORKSHEET—ORIENTATION

Activity 1—Wish for change

A genie grants you one wish to change your life. What would you wish for and why would you choose this? What needs would it meet?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 2—Communication challenge

Reflect on a personal experience with communication difficulties:
Who was involved?

_____

_____

What was the situation?

_____

_____

What was said?

_____

_____

What was the outcome?

_____

_____

Activity 3—Why communicate?

Why do we communicate?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 4—Internal and external communication processes

Summarise the connections between internal and external processes, using the outline below and the words: needs, thoughts, words and gestures, feelings, actions, receive, send, respond, sights and sounds, etc. You may need to use some of these words more than once.

Two-person communication flow diagram

Person 1

Internal processes
(Brain mediated)

External processes
and interface
(inputs and outputs)

Person 2

Internal processes
(Brain mediated)
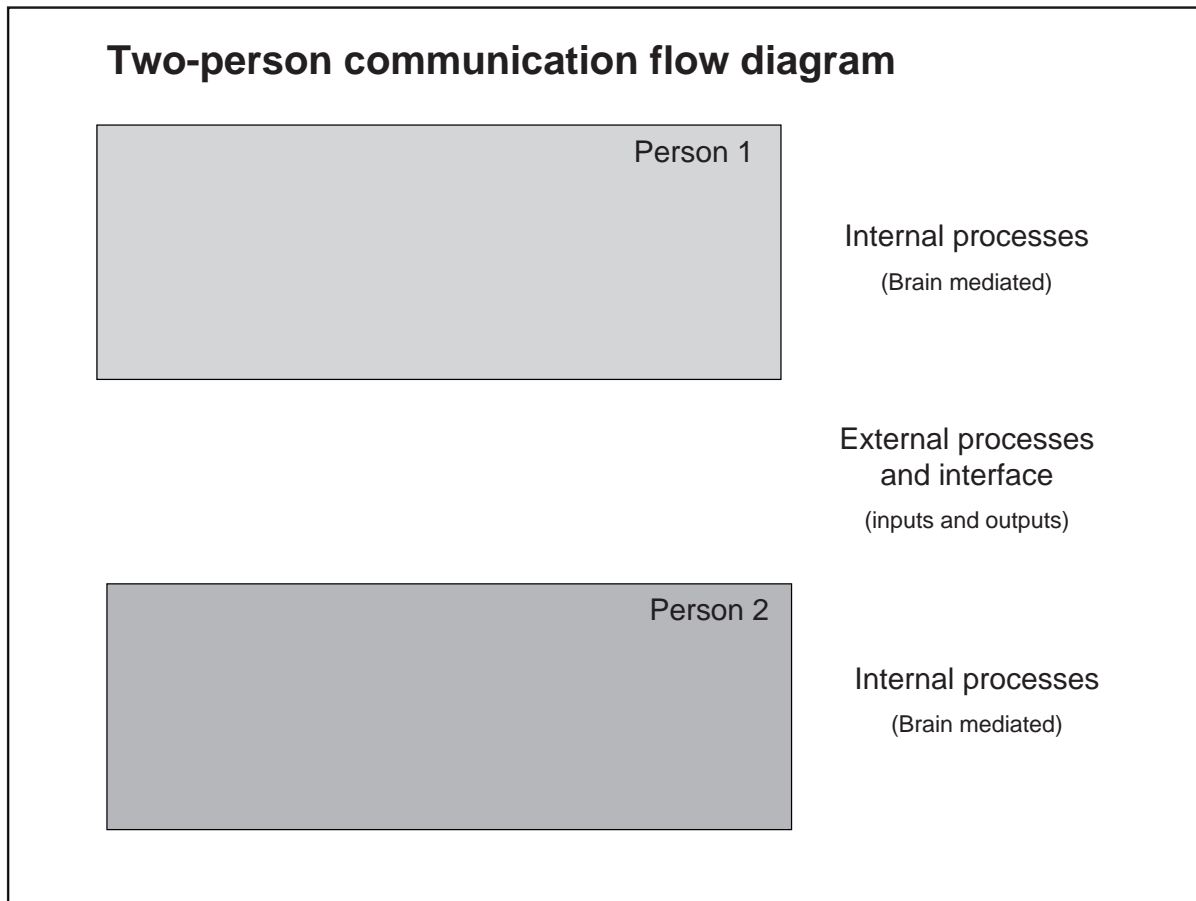
The key elements to notice are:

- Thoughts, feelings and actions are interdependent, which enables deliberate, conscious modifications to each and all of these.
- When we respond, we are sending messages.

- Sometimes we may not deliver the message we intended to send.
- Our sensory and mental processes filter incoming messages—so what one person intends and says or does may not be what the other person hears, sees or understands.

Activity 6—Reflecting on communication

Think about what you have learned about communication, and record your ideas.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Over the next week, think more about how you communicate—how you do it, what works, what doesn't, what you might like to change.

NOTES—ORIENTATION

- Communication is about:
  - Exchanging information.
  - Making, breaking, maintaining or modifying relationships.
- Motivation to communicate arises from needs, intentions and goals.
- Communication is largely unavoidable, but *what* and *how* you communicate is a matter of choice (LTM, pp.77–78).
- What you say, to yourself and others, shapes your life and theirs (LTM, pp.29–30).
- Knowing who you are, and what you need and value, is the beginning of communicating authentically and effectively.
- Increasing both *awareness* and *skills* enhances choice in how you live and interact (LTM, p.37).

Motivation to change the way you communicate often arises when things aren't going well—you may feel misunderstood, isolated or judged, or have trouble getting what you want or need, saying 'no' or handling criticism or conflict. Perhaps you don't know how to help others when you'd like to, or your attempts to help have been rejected or ridiculed and you wonder why. Whatever your particular motivation, developing new levels of awareness and new skills can turn things around (LTM, pp.204, 208–212, 225–245).

Communication is a simultaneous, two-part process involving speaking and listening—even when you are talking to yourself:

- The speaker *sends* a message about something they wish to share. For example, 'This is what I know; what I have experienced; how I feel; what I need, what I want, think or believe.'
- The listener not only *receives* a message from the speaker (processing it and making meaning from it), but also *responds* to it, thereby becoming a sender at the same time. Listening/responding conveys understanding (or sometimes misunderstanding); for example, 'I'm interested (or not) in you, what you experience or know, how you feel, what you need, or what you want, think or believe, and this is what I understood.' (LTM, pp.77–81)

In real life, communication involves both the listener and the speaker expressing themselves, listening to the other, responding, and responding to responses. Listening and speaking are part of an ongoing and complex interactive process, involving awareness and skills that, to be proficient, we may need to develop and practise (LTM, p.2).

Learning how to communicate effectively is about developing a range of skills from which we can choose in order to achieve our goals or intentions. Different communication styles have surprisingly predictable outcomes. We often use them without being aware of what we are really doing. Consider the link between internal processes and what we say and do (LTM, p.81):

- Needs, thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected (LTM, p.16).
- Our internal state affects how we receive and send messages.
- With the exception of needs, we can change any of these, if we so choose.

Like any other skill, communication can be learnt. Learning requires a readiness to try new things, review the outcomes and try again. Since communication is a complex process involving the vagaries of human nature, you'll never 'get it right' all the time, but you can certainly enhance your versatility and proficiency (LTM, p.73).

SELF-ESTEEM

General introduction for the leader

- Read LTM, **Part One: Self-esteem**, pp.7–34.

Much of this training course focuses on skills for effective *inter*-personal communication, including the importance of attitudes such as genuineness, acceptance and empathy. However, *intra*-personal processes—the ways in which we perceive, interpret, define and interact with ourselves—shape the way we interact with other people and, hence, our overall quality of life. We will begin by looking at the role of self-esteem and the importance of being a respectful and a caring friend to oneself.

It is not unusual for some participants to believe that this topic is not an important issue for them, and indeed it may not be. However, understanding that it may be important for other people with whom they interact can serve as motivation to engage with this topic.

Building and maintaining self-esteem

Aims

- To recognise how perception of 'self' colours our perception of the world.
- To discover how the way we communicate with ourselves affects our self-esteem.

- To notice and appreciate personal strengths.
- To practise giving and receiving authentic and positive feedback.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.7–34.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Recall a personal experience to share, about when low-self-esteem got in the way for **Why bother with self-esteem?**.
- Obtain sheets of scrap paper and writing materials for all participants, and a box, basket or similar receptacle for **Activity 9**.
- Create a list of examples of self-deprecating statements for reframing in **Activity 10**.

Why bother with self-esteem?

You may be wondering why self-esteem is important.

In recent years, there has been much debate about the importance of high self-esteem—some people believe it to be over-rated, while others suggest that it is more about self-respect. They argue that there is too much emphasis on 'me' and not enough on others, and that if we behave badly we *shouldn't* feel good about ourselves. However, the negative impacts of low self-esteem on relationships, happiness and life satisfaction have been well documented. Furthermore, having high self-esteem doesn't mean being selfish or thinking that everything you do, think or feel is perfect. It is really more about self-valuing and self-respect, a state in which you can be comfortable in your own skin, 'warts and all', objectively evaluating your life and being appropriately accountable.

Think about how we respond to other people when we are feeling bad about ourselves. For example, when we judge ourselves to be inadequate, we may feel resentful and hostile, or depressed and sad. We may behave in negative, dominant or aggressive ways, we may be self-effacing or withdrawn, or we may flip from one state to the other. When our self-esteem is low, it is difficult to step back from ourselves in order to listen clearly and with understanding to other people. Our own feelings are likely to get in the way. Low self-esteem can prevent us from functioning the way we want to in our personal and professional lives, which further reinforces a sense of inadequacy and can set up a vicious circle.

Group/Share: Examples of times when low self-esteem got in the way—for them or someone they know (Leader: Have a story of your own to share to stimulate discussion if necessary).

Most people experience low self-esteem from time to time. For others, because of the way they have been taught to view themselves from an early age, or because of the negative social and emotional environment in which they have continued to live, low self-esteem is a serious and chronic problem that colours everything.

Imagine that your boss and co-workers only noticed and remarked on your mistakes or limitations, and did so at every opportunity. They were constantly critical and demeaning, mistakenly assigning praise for any of your achievements to someone else, or dismissing or ignoring them. After a while, you might start to believe this distorted view and feel awful.

Group/Question: What kind of devaluing messages do you give yourself?

For people with low self-esteem, this is the sort of environment they may have experienced, and often one they continue to perpetuate internally by the way they talk to themselves.

A poor self-image doesn't mean that you are no good, but rather that you have learned to view yourself in a negative way, focusing on your mistakes or faults and trivialising your successes and strengths. You can choose to see this simply as a bad habit. The good news is that because the thoughts, feelings and actions that make up a habit are only learnt responses, you can choose to replace them. Most people find that this requires considerable effort, but habits certainly can be modified.

To some degree we are all stuck with our basic temperament. However, we can transform our self-esteem by taking control of the way we think, feel or behave in relation to our 'self'.

Task/Board: Draw this circular model on the board:
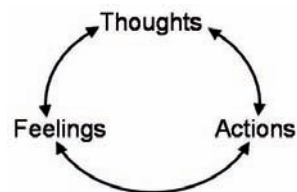
Adding a time dimension to this model turns it into a spiral (draw a spiral to illustrate this). By choosing to change any element in the cycle, depending on what suits you best, you can turn a negative, downward spiral into a positive, upward spiral. The choice is yours. Let's see how this works using thoughts as an example.

Activity 7—Using circular models

Task: Provide one situation for all participants to work on. For example, 'You made a mistake', or 'You forgot an appointment', or you could get an example from the group.

2 Groups/Task: Divide the group in half. Group 1 is to respond as though they have low self-esteem, Group 2 is to respond as though they have high self-esteem.

Group/Brainstorm/Board: What thoughts might accompany this situation given the level of self-esteem they were assigned? Ask what they might be saying to themselves about this? Record their responses in two columns:

Group 1 – Low self-esteem	Group 2 – High self-esteem

Draw attention to the *differences* in the thoughts that accompanied the situation associated with the level of self-esteem. Make the following links:

- When we deliberately notice our negative thoughts (ways of talking to ourselves) that perpetuate low self-esteem, we can exchange them for more positive ones. This can turn a negative spiral that maintains low self-esteem into a more positive spiral that fosters higher self-esteem. This process is known as *reframing*.
- Since what we think determines what we feel and do, what we do affects what we think and feel, and what we feel changes our thoughts and actions, we can deliberately interrupt the cycle wherever it suits us to bring about change.

Activity 8—What's good about you?

In some circles, celebrating our own strengths and achievements is frowned upon and discouraged. It may be seen as boasting, bragging, inappropriate, impolite or even unlovable. It is apparently acceptable for others to praise us, but if we do this for ourselves, we may be rejected or ridiculed. Little wonder then, that many people learn to devalue themselves or downplay their strengths and achievements.

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Write down five things they like about themselves.

Sometimes people find this difficult to do. If so, explain that it does not mean that they are short on personal attributes, but possibly that they are not in the habit of acknowledging and appreciating themselves. Continue adding to your list over the next few weeks.

Pairs/Discuss: Share some of the positive qualities on their list and their feelings about this activity. Was it easy to make the list? Were they embarrassed sharing good things about themselves with another person, especially someone they didn't know well? If so, why?

Group/Discuss: Was it hard to think of five positive things? Would it be easier to list five things they didn't like about themselves? Why might this have been easier? What sort of social taboos are there about acknowledging positive attributes? Are these taboos useful?

Group/Discuss: The value of positive feedback in enhancing self-esteem.

Group/Invite/Share: Ways they typically react to a compliment. Do they usually accept the compliment with thanks and feel enhanced? Or, do they laugh it off with embarrassment, deflect it, or refuse to acknowledge it in some other way? If so, why? And what effect does this have on their self-esteem?

Activity 9—Discarding the negative

Task: Place the box or basket on a table or on the floor, and ask participants to arrange themselves around it in a circle.

Individual/Task: Think about characteristics they don't like about themselves and choose one they would like to discard, which they would be willing to share anonymously with the group. Write this attribute on a slip of paper and symbolically discard it by tossing it into the box provided. Encourage doing this with enthusiasm and flare; even melodramatically!

Group/Task/Discuss: Randomly retrieve each of these, one by one, and read them out. Challenge the group to come up with as many positive aspects of these discarded characteristics that they can imagine, being as creative as possible. For example, shyness may be something that a person dislikes, but it may be linked to sensitivity, which can be a positive attribute. Being overweight might be uncomfortable, but could be an advantage in lean times. Having bad breath might drive people away, but this could reduce the likelihood of getting sick!

Many apparently negative characteristics have a positive side. Recognising this can enable us to view and use these attributes positively and to be kinder and more accepting of ourselves. This may be a first step to being kinder and more accepting of others as well.

The value of objectivity

For most of us, generalisations and moralistic judgements that imply rightness/wrongness or goodness/badness seem to come easily and with little thought. But remember, they are only our opinions. When this kind of language contains putdowns, insults, blame, criticisms or negative comparisons, it undermines self-esteem. The ability to make specific, objective observations, uncontaminated by value judgements can be considered the highest form of human consciousness. Although it can be really challenging, it is an invaluable skill to cultivate for getting along better with ourselves and others.

Activity 10—Observations versus evaluations

Group/Task/Worksheet: Think of something about themselves about which they tend to be judgemental and which they would feel comfortable to disclose. For example, their body, their behaviour, their temperament or their style – 'I'm too fat,' or 'I'm always losing things'.

Small Group/Task/Worksheet: Translate or reframe these statements into emotionally neutral, value-free, specific, factual observations. For example, 'I have a 90 cm waist' or 'I took 5 minutes to find my keys yesterday'. Alternatively, you could have them work with a list of pre-designed, self-critical statements. For example:

- 'I'm a real wimp'
- 'I'm too fat/short/ …'
- 'I always mess up.'
- 'I'm hopeless at …'
- 'I can't …'

Group/Share: Their observations and reactions to this activity.

Making meaningful affirmations

Many compliments or affirmations, while sounding 'nice', are simply opinions or value judgements. A compliment or affirmation is more meaningful when it combines an observation of what someone has done, or how they have been, with its positive impact on you. Perhaps surprisingly, praise or positive judgements can actually undermine self-esteem, by shifting the emphasis from self-evaluation to another person's opinion. A compliment based on the positive impact on you, is quite different. Compare: 'You're so brave', with 'When you chased off that big dog, I was impressed by your courage and I felt relieved and grateful.'

Activity 11—Affirmations/compliments

There are two main parts to this activity: practising an affirmation/compliment in the above form, and accepting an affirmation/compliment graciously.

Group/Task: Form a circle. One by one, each person turns to the person on their right and gives this person a genuine, positive affirmation in the form of an observation (about that person or their actions) and an 'appreciation' (how it has had a positive impact on you, the speaker, and how it has made your life better).

If the members of the group are relative strangers, acknowledge that the scope for affirmations will be limited. But regardless of this, the activity reflects situations we often encounter in real life.

Task: The one who is complimented is to accept it graciously, thank the speaker and avoid debunking or undercutting the positive feedback.

Group/Invite/Worksheet: After everyone has had a turn at giving and receiving compliments, share their experiences with this activity and make relevant notes.

Alternatively, affirmations/compliments can be written on slips of paper (preferably signed) and delivered in person to each group member (can also be used for closure—see **Reflection and Closure – Closing Activity 10**). This gives people something tangible to take away with them and has the advantage of having a more lasting impact. People have been known to keep and treasure these personal affirmations and re-read them from time to time, even years later. You might work out a way to combine the two approaches, by giving participants time to write their compliments down before saying them, and later handing them to the recipients. Remind them to put the other person's name and their own on the notes so that the identity of both the writer and the receiver are clear.

Winding up

Individual/Task: Make a commitment to work towards enhancing their own and other people's self-esteem by, for example:
- noticing and acknowledging personal strengths in self and others
- giving other people genuine positive feedback whenever appropriate, preferably by making an observation about what they did and connecting this with its positive impact on you
- graciously accepting compliments and positive feedback.

Individual/Task: Think of some situations in which you might apply these ideas, and what difference this might make to your relationships.

Self-care

Aims

- To recognise the need for personal restoration and 're-creation'.
- To recognise that the responsibility for this is yours.
- To become more skilled in caring for yourself.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.22–28, p.165–166.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

The importance of self-nurturance

Many people live or work in situations where the demands on their time and energy are high. With ever-increasing pressure to do more, work harder and strive to 'have it all' or 'give their all', they can find themselves feeling overloaded and stressed.

Against this backdrop, it is easy for self-care to fall by the wayside, or become a low priority. But, in some ways, human beings are like machines, requiring regular maintenance. You can choose to perform maintenance in an incremental, timely and sustainable manner, or you can wait until your hand is forced by a catastrophic break down, by which time the task of recovery is likely to be larger, less convenient, more complicated and more costly. Sometimes, it is too late to catch up on neglected self-care. You can brush your teeth daily and visit your dentist regularly, or wait until your teeth decay beyond repair, and by then you may need a full set of dentures! Restoration or 're-creation' is a basic human need, and each of us must take responsibility for finding and implementing ways to care for ourselves.

Tune in to your own needs! Listen to your body! Plan systematically for whatever 're-creational' and restorative experiences you need to enable you to retain your enthusiasm, energy and general wellbeing, so you can enjoy life and contribute meaningfully to the lives of others.

Activity 12—How do you nurture and care for yourself?

Group/Question: What self-nurturing activities or techniques have they discovered for rejuvenating or maintaining themselves? For example:

- Spend quiet time at home alone.
- Visit the bush.
- Listen to music.
- Chat with an old friend.

- Exercise regularly.
- Walk in the park.
- Meditate or do yoga.
- Set aside times for simply relaxing and doing nothing.

Board/Worksheet: List these ideas and suggest they record any ideas that appeal to them.

Share the following two common techniques for restoring calm and becoming centred.

Activity 13—Two short relaxation techniques

Group/Task: Demonstrate the 'Take Five' technique. Explain that this is a technique used by singers to calm themselves before a performance. Simply take five slow, deep breaths and let all the air out after each one. Invite the group to practise with you.

Group/Task: Demonstrate the shoulder drop. Sit comfortably. Take a deep breath and as you let it out, consciously drop your shoulders, down and back. Feel the tension leaving your body, notice the way it opens your chest and increases your lung capacity. Invite the group to try this too.

Making self-care a priority

To fit acts of self-care into your schedule, you will need to assign them a high priority and resist notions that self-caring activities are selfish, of secondary importance, or a waste of time. You may need to experiment in order to discover what suits you best.

If you are involved in nurturing or looking after the wellbeing of others, you many find that despite your best intentions, your personal resources become depleted. When this happens, it may be necessary to let your charges know your limitations, and to use your awareness that your batteries are running flat to motivate you to take time out to care for yourself.

Above all, be kind to yourself. Treat yourself with the same care and attention you would bestow on others. Learn to be your own best, most appreciative and encouraging friend. In the end, it is your 'self'—your strengths, energy, perceptions, wisdom and experience, your own uniqueness—that is yours to enjoy and to offer to your relationships and your community.

Task/Board: Write up the following statement:

The most important and vital resource you have is your 'self'. Appreciate it, and care for it.

Winding up

When it comes to respecting yourself, it is your responsibility to understand, appreciate, care for and nurture yourself, and to build and maintain your self-esteem. Others may help you, but no one else can do it for you. LTM has a number of suggestions about how you can start to appreciate yourself more and be kinder to yourself. Learning how to communicate more effectively can improve your relationships and is one way to increase your sense of efficacy and self-worth.

Activity 14—Reflecting on self-esteem and self-care

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Record their learning from this unit.

Task: Distribute **Notes—Self-esteem**.

WORKSHEET—SELF-ESTEEM

Activity 7—Using circular models

Consider the thoughts that might accompany the situation described for a person with:

Low self-esteem	High self-esteem

Activity 8—What's good about you?

Five things I like about myself:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Activity 9—Discarding the negative

One thing I don't like about myself is:

_____

However, it is positive in the following ways:

_____

_____

Recognising that negative attributes can have a positive side allows us to be kinder and more accepting of ourselves.

Activity 10—Observations versus evaluations

Sometimes I make these negative comments to myself about myself:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

A more accurate observation, free from generalisations and value judgements might be:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Activity 11—Affirmations/compliments

The affirmation/compliment I offered was …

_____

_____

The affirmation/compliment I received was …

_____

_____

Activity 12—How do I nurture and care for myself?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 14—Reflecting on self-esteem and self-care

In this session I have learned …

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Over the next week, I will think more about how I communicate. How do I do it? What works? What doesn't? What might I like to change?

NOTES—SELF-ESTEEM

- Self-esteem:
  - is the appreciation of your uniqueness and intrinsic value (LTM, pp.11, 25)
  - colours your life
  - is learnt and can therefore be modified (LTM, p.15)
  - is your responsibility (LTM, p.20)
  - is reflected in, and generated by, the way you talk to yourself (LTM, pp.29ff).
- Self-disparagement interferes with happiness and relationships.
- We can contribute, positively or negatively, to the self-esteem of others in the way that we communicate with them (LTM, p.33).

Self-esteem affects communication because the way you feel about yourself influences the way you interact with other people. Perception of your world, including other people, is mediated by your brain and, hence, is *subjective*. Maybe you compare yourself with other people, seeing them as 'bigger', 'weaker', 'smarter', 'louder', 'braver' or 'more successful' than you are. This comparative process affects the meaning you make from the messages you receive and, hence, the way you respond to them.

Everyone has value by virtue of being a human being. Low self-esteem develops as a reaction to negative experiences rather than due to any inherent lack of value. Interactions with significant people in your life, initially parents or primary caregivers and later peers, may have sent negative messages that fostered low-self-esteem (LTM, p.15).

A downward spiral of low-self-esteem (LTM, pp.16ff) can:

- manifest as hostility, dominance, aggression, or withdrawal, submission or defensiveness
- make life miserable
- engender a lack of self-confidence
- generate a sense of hopelessness and expectation of failure
- lead to anxiety and tension
- freeze you up, blocking access to your knowledge and creativity, and your ability to improvise or experiment with various options.

If you have learned low self-esteem, you can choose to learn new ways to view yourself, with the respect and understanding you truly deserve. This doesn't mean that you should think that everything you do is wonderful, but rather that you recognise your inherent value—just for being you, not just for your achievements. Transforming a negative spiral of destructive thoughts into a positive spiral that nurtures strong self-esteem requires interrupting the negative internal cycle of thoughts, feelings and actions, and replacing it with more specific, more realistic, positive approaches (LTM, pp.10–18, 25ff).

Be as kind to, and caring of, yourself as you would want to be to a friend (LTM, p.22).

Nurturing your self and your self-esteem is not only important for your own life; the way you are and the way you interact with other people affects their self-esteem, and hence the quality of their lives, as well as your own. We all have a social responsibility to develop the skills necessary to promote the wellbeing of both individuals and communities (LTM, p.13, 165–166).

SELF-AWARENESS and SELF-KNOWLEDGE

General introduction for the leader

● Read LTM, **Part Two: Self-awareness and Self-knowledge**, pp.35–67.

The more you know about who you are, what you really want, how you operate and your preferred personal style, the more you can choose how to live your life.

The importance placed on self-awareness and self-knowledge varies from person to person, and from time to time. Some people might be concerned about being too 'inward-looking' and self-centred, but we're not recommending incessant navel-gazing or self-focus at the exclusion of awareness of others. We recognise the life-enhancing benefits of combining mindfulness with a strong sense of self.

We believe that in order to connect authentically and communicate effectively with other people, you need to know yourself well, and to know your real intentions. Increasing your self-awareness and self-knowledge will foster more effective communication, enhancing your own life and the lives of those with whom you interact.

Sometimes it's hard to know where to start. In this section we suggest exploring the roles that fundamental needs and core values play in our lives, and how a purpose statement can keep us connected with these, moment by moment.

Fundamental human needs

Aims

- To accept that everyone has needs.
- To increase awareness of fundamental human needs.
- To understand how the drive to satisfy needs underpins everything we do.
- To distinguish actual needs from the strategies we employ to meet them.
- To recognise that there are many strategies for meeting needs, some more effective than others.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.44–55.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing the idea of basic human needs

In order to be complete, whole, fulfilled and thriving—to have health and wellbeing—it is essential that our basic human needs are met. Arguably, all people have these same fundamental needs, but there are many different strategies for meeting them. Most people would recognise our need for food, air and water, but may be less aware or accepting of other important needs, such as love, play or community.

Often the words 'needs' and 'wants' are used interchangeably, but they are not exactly the same. 'Wants', 'wishes' or 'desires' are typically more superficial than needs, or they may represent strategies for meeting needs. For example, I may *want* to be skinny, but what I really *need* is acceptance or love, and I mistakenly believe that satisfying my 'want' will achieve this. When I become aware of my underlying needs, I may be able to see many different ways to meet them.

Sometimes we hear of people being labelled as 'needy'.

Group/Discuss: What do we mean by 'needy'?

'Needy' might more fruitfully be seen as someone struggling to get legitimate needs met.

It can be empowering to recognise that:

- Everyone has needs.
- By virtue of being human, we all have the same basic needs.
- Attempting to get our needs met underpins what we do—including doing things for other people, our family and friends and the broader community.
- There are many ways to get needs met, and some work better than others.

Activity 15—Exploring needs

Group/Brainstorm/Board/Worksheet: Generate a list of human needs. Ensure that the following are included (keep this list on the board for **Activities 16, 17** and **18**):

1. Subsistence/physical sustenance
2. Protection/safety/security/peace
3. Love/affection/empathy/generosity/appreciation
4. Understanding/curiosity/discovery
5. Meaning/participation/connection/community/belonging
6. Leisure/rest/play/relaxation/humour
7. Creativity/self-expression
8. Identity/sense of self/belonging
9. Freedom/autonomy/choice/space/independence

Note that you can *survive* with many unmet needs, but you cannot truly *thrive* this way. It is a natural human drive to endeavour to get your needs met, not forgetting that your needs include considering the needs of others. Being aware of this drive, and the true nature of your needs, can help you to figure out the best, healthiest, most-effective strategies for meeting them.

Activity 16—How I meet my own needs

Individual/Worksheet: Choose one of the non-subsistence needs listed on the board during **Activity 15**. How do they currently get this need met? (Note: there may be many different ways.)

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Consider how meeting this need, in this way, might come into conflict with another need they have. For example, meeting their need for self-expression by singing loudly in the shower late at night might conflict with their need to be considerate of others who might be trying to sleep.

Group/Share: What have they discovered about themselves—their needs and their strategies for meeting them?

Activity 17—Other strategies for meeting needs

Small Group/Brainstorm/Worksheet: What are other ways in which the needs they selected in **Activity 16** might be met?

Group/Share: What have they discovered about the variety of strategies available to meet a single need?

Distinguishing between a need and the strategies for meeting it may sound simple, but owing to our relative unfamiliarity with this distinction, it can be difficult to do without a lot of practice.

Activity 18—Unmet needs

The following activity may be unsettling for some participants; they may have negative feelings, become agitated or withdrawn. Look out for and handle such responses with empathy and compassion.

Pairs/Task/Worksheet: Choose one of the non-subsistence needs listed in **Activity 15** that is not being adequately met at the moment, and brainstorm ways to go about meeting it satisfactorily when the time is right.

Group/Share: What have they discovered about addressing unmet needs?

Winding up

Group/Task: Summarise what they have learned about needs. Hopefully these will include:
- We all share basic human needs—it is useful to heighten our awareness of them.
- Needs drive us. Much of what we do, whether effective or not, is usually about attempting to satisfy our needs.
- There are many ways to meet needs; recognising the difference between a need and the strategy for meeting it is an important, empowering distinction.

Activity 19—Reflecting on needs

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Invite each participant to plan the first small step they could take to meet a currently unmet or inadequately met need when they are ready, and record their ideas.

Core values

Aims

- To increase awareness of personal core values.
- To recognise that living in accordance with core values is inherently fulfilling and satisfying.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.55–63.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Copy a set of the Values Cards in **Appendix 1** for each participant for **Activity 20**. Provide scissors for them to cut them apart, unless you prefer to pre-cut them prior to the session.
- Arrange for surfaces on which participants can sort cards (such as desks or tables) for **Activity 20**.

Introducing values

Values are beliefs, qualities or ways of being that are intrinsically worthwhile, significant, desirable and important to us. They are essentially an extension of our needs.

Our values provide a foundation for setting priorities for living, choosing how we think and what we do. They range in importance from somewhat superficial and transitory to deep and enduring core values. Honouring our core values as we live generates a deep sense of harmony and satisfaction. This doesn't necessarily mean being constantly cheerful; life can be challenging and fulfilling at the same time.

Uncovering your values is about finding out what really makes you tick—not what you think you *should* think, feel or do, or what others believe, or even what you learnt from your parents. It means determining what is at your very core. Living life according to your own values has a deep sense of rightness about it.

Sometimes it's difficult to find the right words to describe your values, maybe because you haven't given them much thought. But the very process of trying to articulate them can help you become clearer about what you really value and what is less important, and this can be both motivating and liberating.

It's easy to assume that your values are the same as other people's, and that's not a bad starting point in the absence of information to the contrary. But while we may have much in common with others, we are all unique individuals, so what's important to you may be less so for someone else and, conversely, what's important to them may not be a high priority for you.

The following activities aim to help participants discover more about their own core values.

Activity 20—The values card game

Individual/Task: Use the sets of Values Cards reproduced from **Appendix 1**, having the participants cut them apart if you have not already done so.

Individual/Task: Flip through the cards, one by one and, without agonising about the decision, place each card in one of three piles: 'very important to me', 'important to me' and 'not important to me'.

- Try to classify the values according to what is really true for them, rather than according to any other criteria.
- Add their own values if they cannot find them on the cards provided.

Individual/Task: When they have completed the first task, ask them to combine the 'very important to me' and 'important to me' piles and repeat the sorting, again and again, until they have no more than 10 cards in the 'very important to me' pile. This seems to work better than having them just use the 'most important to me' pile, which is an alternative way to proceed.

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Arrange the 10 chosen values in order of priority, record them in the space provided, and consider how they might live in ways that honour the top five values.

Winding up

> Whether you are interacting with yourself or with other people, knowing who you really are and what you really value is enormously important and empowering. It is difficult to interact effectively with others when you are not coming from clear and solid foundations.

Activity 21—Reflecting on the value of exploring values

Group/Discuss: What did they discover by doing this activity? In what ways was it challenging, fun, difficult, surprising, interesting, thought-provoking or valuable?

Individual/Worksheet: Record any particular revelations they might have had about values.

Purpose

Aims

- To understand what a purpose statement is, and how you can use one to improve your life.
- To create a draft purpose statement.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.64–67.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing the idea of living 'on purpose'

In the context of this training course, it is not important whether you believe that you have a purpose handed to you by an external power or whether it comes from within. The reason to articulate your purpose is to provide ready access to this wisdom. Putting it into words, by crafting a purpose statement that reflects the essence of your being, can help you to get really clear about your priorities. It is easier to keep your life on track when you have a readily accessible frame of reference and can see, effortlessly, what is, and what is not, consistent with it.

Ideally, a purpose statement should be short and to the point; fewer than 20 words is a good target. It should be empowering and grounding, giving you a sense of pleasure and connection with yourself—it should call you to live by it.

Activity 22—Reflecting on peak moments

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Recall and record a peak moment in their life—when they were 'being' a certain way, or doing a certain thing in a particular place that led to a sense of 'oneness' with the universe. Sometimes people refer to this as being 'in the flow', 'on a roll', joyful, or even blissful. Their description should be detailed and include: what they were doing, how they were 'being', where they were, who else was there and what they were doing that conspired to make it such a special time. You could write these prompts on the board.

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Determine, from this recollection, which values might have been honoured in this moment, and keep this in mind for **Activity 24**.

Activity 23—My eulogy

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Imagine that they are a 'fly on the wall' at their own funeral. What would they like to hear people saying about them and their life?

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Reflect on what this activity has revealed about what they would like their life to have stood for; what is really important to them.

> The process of developing a purpose statement is iterative—you draft it, say it slowly, over and over, see how it fits, try it on for size, modify it, then repeat the process until you have something that speaks to you. You do not have to share your purpose statement with anyone else. Ultimately it is just for you, to bring out your best, so make it as grand or as modest as you want, then enjoy living up to it.
>
> Give some examples to illustrate what you are talking about. Make up your own or you could use the following. My purpose is to:
> - form personal and professional partnerships with leaders who want to create organisations that nourish the human spirit.
> - be an agent for positive change.
> - foster peace and harmony in all my interactions.
> - develop and use my talents/gifts as fully as I am able in service of the human race and the biosphere.

Activity 24—Drafting a purpose statement

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Make a first draft of a purpose statement based on what they have learned about themselves in the previous activities. It doesn't have to be perfect, aim for about 70 per cent satisfaction. The statements can take various forms, such as 'My purpose is to …' or 'I am …'

It can help to consider:
- Do you feel a connection with this statement?
- Does the thought of fulfilling it give you pleasure?
- Would fulfilling it come easily?
- Is there anything redundant in it, or is something missing?
- Would other words express it more accurately?

Group/Share: If anyone is willing, encourage them to share their draft, but this must be entirely voluntary—no pressure!

Winding up

When you have an effective purpose statement, you will find it inspiring and motivating, it *draws* you toward it, creating energy. With a clear purpose, your life has a sense of direction—you know when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no' in pursuit of your intended life.

Individual/Task: Encourage them to continue using and refining their purpose statement over the next few weeks, noticing if, or when, it helps in making choices that are consistent with their deepest sense of self. When it isn't quite right, encourage them to fine-tune it to make it more effective and powerful.

Activity 25—Reflecting on self-awareness and self-knowledge

Small Group/Share/Worksheet: Share their learning from this unit.

Task: Distribute **Notes—Self-awareness and self-knowledge**.

WORKSHEET—SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Activity 15—Exploring needs

Basic needs common to all people include:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 16—How I meet my own needs

Specify a need:

_____

I meet this need by:

_____

_____

This strategy/approach might conflict with another need in the following way:

_____

_____

_____

Activity 17—Other strategies for meeting needs

Alternative ways I might meet this need include:

_____

_____

_____

Activity 18—Unmet needs

An unmet need of mine is:

_____

I could meet this need by:

_____

_____

Activity 19—Reflecting on needs

In order to meet my unmet need of _____, I plan to:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 20—Values card game

In priority order, my top 10 values, as uncovered on _____ (today's date) are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

I could honour or live in harmony with my top five values by:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Activity 21—Reflecting on the value of exploring values

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 22—Reflecting on peak moments

I recall the following peak experience …

_____

_____

_____

_____

At this time I was honouring the following values:

_____

_____

_____

Activity 23—My eulogy

After my death, I'd like people to say the following about me:

_____

_____

_____

From this it is apparent that the following things are really important to me:

_____

_____

_____

Activity 24—Drafting a purpose statement

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 25—Reflecting on self-awareness and self-knowledge

_____

_____

_____

NOTES—SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

- Self-awareness is about being intentional, cognisant, and self-monitoring—being mindful.
- Self-knowledge is about understanding ourselves: our needs, values and purpose. As Socrates said 'Know thyself.'
- Developing high levels of self-awareness and self-knowledge empowers choice.
- Basic human needs motivate or underpin almost everything we do.
- Our individual uniqueness is defined by, and reflected in, our values.
- A purpose statement provides a way to align your actions with your heart-felt priorities—your core values.

You could have a fulfilling life without necessarily being aware of what you are doing or how you are 'being' to achieve it. However, taking a more active and deliberate role in creating your life is likely to be a more effective approach. Increasing awareness of who you are and how and why you think, feel and do the things you do, can clarify your life choices (LTM, p.37).

- It is difficult to communicate effectively with other people if you don't really know yourself what it is that you wish to convey or what you are really trying to achieve.

One way to increase awareness of what makes life rewarding and fulfilling for you is to explore your *needs* and *values* and to determine your individual *purpose*. While some of these are fixed and enduring, others may evolve as you mature, so be prepared to reconsider these 'drivers' of life from time to time.

Needs: These are the requirements of life that, when satisfied, generate wellbeing. When needs are met, there is a profound sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, while neglecting needs can cause a sense of emptiness, unhappiness, discomfort or even ill-health (LTM, p.45–55).

Some approaches to meeting needs are more effective than others. Sometimes you can mistake your strategy for meeting a need with the need itself; in which case, further consideration may enable you to uncover the 'real need' driving the strategy. This can be enormously powerful because it opens up the possibility of new ways of satisfying the need (LTM, p.45).

Values: These are like needs, and the terms are sometimes used synonymously. There may only be a fine line between needs as fundamental, critical and probably common to all people, and values that describe those things that we, as individuals, hold most dear—perhaps they lie on a continuum. Being aware of—and understanding—your core values enables you to live a life that authentically expresses your individuality, honours your uniqueness and is genuinely fulfilling (LTM, pp.55–63).

Purpose: Have you ever wondered 'Why am I here?' or 'What am I meant to do with my life?' Developing answers to these questions can provide both a sense of life direction and the energy to pursue it. It's like a map for living. A purpose statement provides a short-hand guide for how to live your life in ways that honour your fullest potential (LTM, pp.64–67).

EFFECTIVE LISTENING

General introduction for the leader

◉ Read LTM, **Part Three: Effective Listening**, pp.69–166.

We believe *listening* to be at the heart of effective communication and rewarding relationships. For various reasons, many people don't listen well and they suffer for it. Fortunately, the capacity to listen can be improved by increasing awareness and knowledge of the processes involved, and by expanding our repertoire of skills.

For convenience, we have grouped effective listening skills into the following three sets:

Personal qualities/attitudes	Attending and encouraging	Responding
Genuineness	Physical and psychological attention	Response styles
Acceptance	Non-verbal communication	Reflective/active listening
Empathy	Establishing rapport	Paraphrasing
	Maintaining conversation	Useful phrases
	Minimal encouragement	Common mistakes
	Open questions	
	Empathic silence	

Raising awareness of response styles is useful in itself, but emphasising the specific form and value of empathic responses and practising reflective listening are perhaps the most important components of training in effective listening.

While it is important for the leader to offer instruction and guidance, it is essential to carefully monitor what is actually happening in practice groups. We have found that people often believe they are responding empathically or are paraphrasing when, in fact, they are not. This is why it is essential to have observers in the practice sessions. Participants benefit from this, both in the role of observer (as it is often easier to evaluate what someone else is doing) and when playing the role of listener (through receiving objective feedback).

Remind participants that our perceptions of the world around us are *subjective*. Since our experience is mediated by our brains, it does not reflect *objective* reality, but rather *our perceptions, interpretations* and *feelings*. Our cognitive and emotional reactions are *our own* responses to *our own* perceptions and interpretations that may be *triggered* by another person or circumstance, but not actually *caused* by anything as it exists outside our skin. This means that the more self-aware we become, the more we may be able to communicate effectively.

Personal qualities/attitudes

Aims

- To become aware of the meaning, importance and effects of genuineness, acceptance and empathy.
- To explore situations in which it may be difficult to manifest these positive attitudes.

Preparation:

- Re-read LTM pp.161–166.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Gather supplies of writing materials for small group reporters in **Activity 26**.

Introducing personal qualities/attitudes

A considerable body of research has established that *genuineness*, *acceptance* and *empathy* are essential in communicating effectively and building solid relationships. All of us have the capacity to embody these simple human qualities, yet sometimes we find it difficult to

refrain from being judgemental, disapproving or even misleading (for example, 'white lies'). We may find some people more likeable and easier to accept than others.

Sometimes our negative and judgemental attitudes about other people are based on aspects of that person that we don't accept in ourselves. Enhancing our self-awareness and skills can enable us to connect better with ourselves and, hence, be more able genuinely to accept and understand others.

In his excellent book, *People Skills* (1979, published by Simon & Schuster), Robert Bolton writes,

> Communication techniques are useful only insofar as they facilitate the expression of essential human qualities. The person who has mastered the skills of communication but lacks genuineness, love and empathy will find his expertise irrelevant, even harmful.

Activity 26—Attitudes are important

3 Groups/Discuss/Task: One group to discuss 'genuineness', one to discuss 'acceptance', and the third to discuss 'empathy'—what they mean and why they are important. Under what situations might it be difficult to maintain this attitude? Distribute writing materials and ask each group to nominate a scribe who will record their ideas.

Group/Share/Board/Worksheet: Ask the scribes to share their group's ideas. Summarise what genuineness, acceptance and empathy are and why they are important. Use the following to help produce a summary table:

	Genuineness	Acceptance	Empathy
Is …	Sincerity Being real True to self Not phoney Not manipulative Heartfelt Integrity Appropriately open	Warmth Respect Non-judgemental Caring Not necessarily agreeing Not necessarily liking Unconditional positive regard Love	Understanding Feeling 'with' Walking in the other's shoes Not enmeshed Present With appropriate boundaries Different from sympathy Concern for others' wellbeing
Are important because they …	Improve communication Enhance quality of relationships Enhance quality of life Affirm others, enhancing their self-esteem Convey respect and concern Require a useful degree of self-awareness and self-knowledge		

Group/Brainstorm: Using some of the difficult situations identified earlier by the groups, consider possible ways of dealing with them.

Individual/Question/Worksheet: Review by addressing the questions provided.

Winding up

It is important to apply these human qualities to ourselves as well as to others—to understand and accept ourselves, 'warts and all'. Not only does this make us happier, but this strong personal foundation is also a key to successful interpersonal interactions.

Remember that communication lacking the abovementioned attitudes is compromised—it can be: manipulative, unconvincing, meaningless, superficial, confusing, irritating, distancing, or all of the above.

Activity 27—Noticing attitudes

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Over the next few weeks, pay particular attention to situations in which they tend to be judgemental, rather than accepting or empathic. Consider the questions on the **Worksheet**.

Attending and encouraging

Aims

- To explore the non-verbal aspects of attending.
- To distinguish between attending and non-attending.
- To experience the impact of attention and inattention.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.108–117.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing attending

Attending skills involve paying both psychological and physical attention. They include the mindset and attitudes with which we approach a conversation and our body language, both of which convey the degree to which we are present as we listen. Since about 85 per cent of communication is said to be non-verbal, learning to attend well, both physically and psychologically, is a very important part of listening and responding effectively.

When we are attentive, we are really tuning in and listening with genuine interest and concern. We establish and demonstrate our attention to the speaker through our body language in various ways. For example, we may adjust the timing, pitch, tone and quality of

our voice, our posture, facial expressions and eye contact, and even our appearance to establish rapport.

Extensive research has shown that when two people are engaged in easy, effective conversation, they tend to mirror one another, often leaning towards each other and matching each other's pace. When initially focusing our attention, we can facilitate establishing connection in this way, and even if after a few minutes we gradually return to our own pace, we will be able to maintain our rapport.

You have probably had the experience of trying to share something of importance with another person who seemed distracted or inattentive. Perhaps they were busy doing something else, busting to share something of their own, or maybe they just thought it would be rude to turn you away. Consequently, they didn't attend to you fully or focus on what you were saying. Can you remember how you felt?

Group/Share: Reactions to being ignored, disregarded, 'blown off'…?

Being clear about your availability can improve communication. If you are otherwise occupied or likely to be distracted, rather than 'politely' pretending to listen while being mentally absent, it is actually more respectful and considerate to acknowledge your limitations and to suggest a more suitable time when you can give your full attention.

Activity 28—Non-verbal communication

Group/Question/Board/Worksheet: What are some of the important non-verbal or behavioural aspects of attending and establishing rapport? List them, and have the participants make their own notes.

Introducing encouraging

While attending skills indicate your readiness and willingness to listen, the next step, encouraging, involves offering invitations to the other person to continue, and makes space for them to do so.

An easy way to let people know that you are paying attention is to occasionally offer minimal encouragements such as 'Really!', 'Ah huh', 'For instance', 'And?', 'Go on'. These brief signals help to keep the conversation flowing, providing they are not used excessively.

If you sense that someone wants to talk but seems a bit reluctant, rather than ask probing questions, you can indicate your willingness to listen by issuing an invitation; for example, 'So what's been happening?' Alternatively, you could make an empathic observation such

as, 'You seem a bit down today', or 'You're looking particularly chipper today'. Sometimes attentive silence, or an encouraging nod, are enough to indicate your interest.

Don't be afraid of moments of silence in a conversation. People often use these for reflection or to set the pace. An engaged listener need not feel obliged to fill silent moments with unnecessary words or questions. If there is a lull in the conversation, take the time to just 'be' with the other person, maybe noticing their body language and imagining how they might be feeling.

Open questions, those that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', also create a space for the speaker to share what they want to tell you.

Compare these open and closed questions:

closed:	'Are you feeling sad?'
open:	'How are you feeling?'

closed:	'Do you want to go home?'
open:	'What do you want to do now?'

Activity 29—Open questions

Group/Brainstorm: Ask for examples of open questions.

Group/Question/Board: What words typically begin open questions? For example: what, where, when, how, who.

Pairs/Task/Worksheet: Interview each other. Taking notes as needed, learn as much as they can about their partner by asking only closed questions for two minutes, and then only open questions for two minutes. (Leader: indicate the times to change over.)

Group/Share: Compare how much they learnt about the other person using the different styles of questioning.

Activity 30—Attending and encouraging

Pairs/Task: One person to be the speaker and one to be the listener. Pick something to talk about. Anything will do but it should be a reasonably simple and open topic, for example:
- a nice thing that happened this week
- an unpleasant thing that happened this week
- food
- holidays.

Pairs/Task/Worksheet: With any necessary clarification from the leader, work through the seven short activities listed on their **Worksheets**, one by one, with each speaker talking for

about one minute while the listener responds according to the instructions. Then swap roles and repeat the activity. Spend a few minutes discussing how each felt during the activity. The leader should signal transitions between activities (blow a whistle, wave your arms, or something else).

Group/Discuss: What they have learned about attending and non-attending from both the speaker's and the listener's perspectives, and especially how it felt to be on the receiving end of inattention.

Ensure that everyone has discussed the activity sufficiently to have moved out of their roles and dealt with any residual feelings.

Winding up

Individual/Task: Suggest that they spend some time before the next session becoming more aware of how they attend to other people in daily life situations, and trying to use some of the better ways of attending they have learned.

Responding

Aims

- To appreciate the importance and consequences of how we respond.
- To explore five common styles of responding:
  - Which do we use most frequently?
  - What intentions or messages do they convey?
  - What typical reactions does each elicit?
- To experience:
  - Responding in the five styles.
  - Being responded to the five styles.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.81–99.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Copy **Response-style quiz (Appendix 2)** for each participant or provide access to LTM.

Introducing response styles

So far we have looked at the personal qualities/attitudes necessary for being an effective listener, and the importance of giving the speaker our full attention and encouragement. This next component focuses on some of the ways in which we, as listeners, are apt to respond, and the most likely reactions to these types of responses.

When we listen, the *way* we respond conveys a message to the speaker which, in turn, elicits a reaction from them, including thoughts and feelings about us and themselves. Sometimes we may not send the messages we intend, or our messages may not be received in the way we intended. Most of us wonder, from time to time, why misunderstandings seem to occur so frequently and what we could do to make communication work better. We can respond in any number of ways as we listen. The following activity provides an opportunity to explore your habitual ways of responding.

Activity 31—Response-style quiz

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Complete the **Response-style quiz** (**Appendix 2**), scoring their results in the table provided and tallying their responses.

Now put this aside. We will return to it shortly (in **Activity 33**).

Activity 32—Reactions to different response styles

In order to explore different ways of responding, you, the leader, will make a statement or comment and ask the participants to come up with responses to this statement. In role-plays, some of them will be asked to notice and record their own reactions to each of these responses—their feelings and their interpretations of the message that the response conveyed.

Task/Board: Draw the table below. Insert the statement offered here, or use one of your own, or you could ask for one from the group. Make sure that it is likely to elicit a full range of responses.

Statement: 'My in-laws are planning to visit right after our baby is born; they want to help out but I'd rather they didn't. I feel so selfish. I'm not sure how to handle it.'		
Responses:	Responses to responses	Styles:
	How you felt:	Messages conveyed:

Group/Share/Board: Read your statement out loud. Invite responses from five to 10 participants, one at a time, and record them in the appropriate column. You should add examples of any of Roger's five response styles that were not tendered (see **Activity 33** for more about these styles).

Task/Pair/Group/Share/Board: Using two volunteers or conscripts, have one (the speaker) say the comment out loud to the other, and the other (the listener) reply using one of the listed responses. Have the speaker share how they felt about the response and what messages it conveyed—add this information to the table on the board, along with any input from other participants.

Group/Discuss/Board: Consider the effects of different ways of responding:
- Which resulted in feeling respected and understood?
- Which triggered feelings of inferiority or foolishness?
- Which, if any, generated irritation?
- Which enhanced a desire to share more?
- What other reactions were there?
- Which responses seemed 'just right'?

We will leave the 'Styles' column to fill in shortly (at the end of **Activity 33**).

Activity 33—Identifying and understanding common responses

Group/Task/Board: Write the Roman numerals I to V in a column on the left-hand side. Referring back to the **Activity 31** results table, ask for a show of hands to determine how many had their highest score in each of the rows. Alternatively, you can just write up all the totals to illustrate the spread of responses.

Task/Worksheet: Name the five common response styles and add them to their **Activity 31** table.

Group/Discuss/Worksheet: Help the participants fill in their summary table to include examples of the five common response styles and the intentions behind them. Use the table below as a guide.

Style	Examples	Intention, to …
I. Judgemental, directive, evaluative	'You are …' 'You should …' 'It is …'	Evaluate Moralise Judge
II. Interpretive	'You do that because …'	Explain Analyse Teach

Style	Examples	Intention, to …
III. Supportive	'Never mind, it is bound to get better.' 'Don't worry, you'll be fine'	Soothe Sympathise Reassure
IV. Probing, questioning	'When did you first feel that way?' 'What do you plan to do now?'	Question Gather information
V. Understanding, empathic	'You sound really … (feeling word) …' 'It seems to you that …' 'Let me see if I understand: you feel …' 'Because … you feel …'	Empathise Confirm Clarify Understand Verify

Group/Task/Board/Worksheet: Return to the **Reactions to different response styles** table generated in **Activity 32** and work with the group to name the style of each response given.

Understanding different response styles

While each style has its place, Carl Rogers, the famous psychologist who first identified these styles, found that, regardless of the situation, people tend to use judgemental responses most frequently, and seldom use understanding or empathic responses. The following activity provides an opportunity to experience deliberately giving and receiving each of Rogers' response styles. Heightened awareness of the impact of what we are saying can enhance our ability to choose how we respond.

Activity 34—Practising different response styles

Ideally, you will use groups of three for this activity, but for very large groups, or if time is limited, use groups of seven, with each person offering only one style of response to one speaker. If a large group does not divide easily into seven, you can have more than one observer/helper.

Board: If they are not still there from **Activity 33**, list the five response styles and refer the participants to their copy of the table in **Activity 33**.

Triads/Task/Worksheet: Role-plays: One person is to be the speaker, one to be an observer/helper, the third is to listen and respond with each of the five response styles, one after the other. For each of the listeners' responses, the speaker is to make notes that enable them to convey to the listener how the responses affected them.

Athough responding this way is, and will feel, somewhat artificial, and it may take some time for them to formulate responses, they are to **stick rigidly** to each style for the purpose of practice.

The observers' function is to assist as necessary, and to ensure that the listeners' responses are true to each style. Making empathic responses can be particularly challenging, because people often think they are being understanding when they are actually giving advice or asking questions. If anyone has learned reflective/active listening before, perhaps they can begin with the role of observer.

Triad/Task: Swap roles until each person has observed, experienced and offered each style (unless you have larger groups, see above).

Group/Discuss: Share the experience and debrief.

Impacts of response styles

A particular style of response is not necessarily, in itself, good or bad. Each communicates different intentions and has a different effect on the conversation. Perhaps surprisingly, Rogers found that if a person responded with one style at least 40 per cent of the time, then that person was seen by others as *always* responding that way, and identified as that kind of person. For example, people who respond judgementally 40 per cent or more of the time are experienced as judgemental people.

We usually don't feel comfortable sharing our innermost feelings with very judgmental people, and we may be silent when asked too many probing questions, or feel annoyed when other people interpret our behaviour or tell us what to do. Sometimes we need and appreciate support and comfort, but too much of this can create a sense of distance or subvert necessary action. Most of us thrive on being genuinely understood. In addition to generating positive feelings, being on the receiving end of this kind of empathy empowers us to tap into our own knowledge and wisdom.

Winding up

Most of us are very good at the first four response styles; we use them often and with ease (if not to good effect), and certainly need no further practice. In contrast, empathic responses are used less often because we tend to find them difficult. It can be challenging to respond with understanding, particularly if we believe we know 'best', or if the other person's feelings seem negative, inappropriate or self-destructive. Empathic responses are

the most effective for sustaining positive relationships and for assisting others in need. For these reasons, most of us need to work on empathic responses, not in order to be counsellors, but in order to increase our repertoire of effective skills.

Individual/Task: Suggest that they notice what styles others use when responding to them, and the impacts these have.

Practising reflective listening

Aims

- To become proficient in reflective listening.
- To distinguish empathic responses from other responses.
- To practise paraphrasing.
- To experience being responded to empathically.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.128–161.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Some participants may initially be sceptical about reflective or active listening, thinking it sounds corny or artificial, or mistakenly believing it sounds as though they are telling someone what they are thinking or feeling. If so, ask them to put their judgements aside temporarily and to approach this topic with an open mind. Explain that practising how to do it well will add to the range of responses at their disposal and offer them wider choice. Since it may take time for participants to get the hang of this skill, you may need to spread this component over two sessions.

There may be some people in your group who have learned reflective listening before and believe they are proficient. If so, acknowledge this, and ask them to treat this activity as an opportunity for revision and consolidation, and if they would be prepared to use their expertise to assist others.

Introducing reflective/active listening

Learning to attend fully to another person, successfully understanding and reflecting how the world appears to them, without making judgements or pushing for change, is a real skill that requires considerable practice.

Good listening and appropriate responding are more difficult and demanding than they appear. When other people express negative feelings or are upset, we tend to search immediately for our own solutions to their problems, or we try to reduce or deny the intensity of the feelings expressed. It takes genuine respect, and a belief in each person's inner resources, individuality, separateness and personal worth, to refrain from trying to rescue or blame, and to create an environment that enables them to explore their own solutions.

In a reflective listening response, the listener communicates understanding and acceptance by paraphrasing, or restating in their own words, what the other person has expressed. This helps the listener put their own agenda aside and focus on what the other person means, and it lets the speaker know how they have been understood.

A good reflective response, which paraphrases both facts and feelings succinctly, lies at the heart of active/reflective listening. We already paraphrase quite naturally in some situations. We repeat the meaning of an instruction, a direction or other factual information to make sure we have understood it correctly. For example, 'So you'll leave after lunch, which means you'll be home in time for dinner.' With practice, paraphrasing feelings can also become quite natural.

Paraphrasing does not mean 'parroting'. Sometimes, when people start to learn reflective listening, they mistakenly repeat the speaker's message in exactly the same words. This sounds phoney and inane and is very irritating. While it may indicate that the *words* have been accurately heard, it does not convey an intelligent comprehension of their *meaning*.

We sometimes find it difficult to identify and respond to feelings, perhaps because we don't have the words to describe them. Perhaps, too, we have difficulty accepting them. But feelings are a valid component of our individual experience, and when they are out in the open and accepted, they are easier to manage, more amenable to change and less likely to cause ongoing trouble.

Being on the receiving end of good reflective listening helps us clarify our feelings, discover new ways of looking at ourselves and our situations, and to decide on appropriate action. Listening well to others does the same for them.

Demonstrating paraphrasing

Task: Invite someone in the group to sit opposite you and engage in a brief conversation, preferably about a real situation that involves feelings. If they are stuck for a topic you could suggest one—something they are looking forward to, something that upset them recently, gift shopping, holidays, food, or what they like or don't like about work/school. You will demonstrate the skills of attending, following and paraphrasing, particularly paraphrasing feelings.

Group/Share: If you find demonstrating these skills difficult, simply share this and acknowledge the artificiality of the situation. Point out that there is no single perfect paraphrase.

Task/Share: At the end of this demonstration invite feedback from the speaker. Did they feel understood and listened to by you? Also, invite comments from the group. You can use reflective listening in responding to their comments.

Sometimes a paraphrase might miss the mark, but this usually isn't a disaster, particularly if a good relationship has already been established. The speaker will often say, 'No, it's not like that, it's more that …' Misunderstandings will be corrected quickly, before they compound, and the conversation will usually flow on with an enhanced sense of connectedness.

Alternatively, people may actually feel 'not understood'. They may show this with puzzled looks, irritation, by changing the topic, becoming more factual, more superficial, or by abruptly ending the conversation. If you find this happens often, you might need to check whether you are really using reflective listening, or doing something else. If you don't get the hang of it straight away, don't despair. Most people have to practise it for a while. It's worth the effort, and will improve your relationships.

How to paraphrase

When learning to make a reflective listening response, it can be useful to have some sentence structures to help people get started.

Task/Board: List these prompts to assist participants with **Activity 35**.

- 'You feel…'
- 'It sounds as though …'
- 'You mean …'
- 'You feel … because …'
- 'Let me see if I understand; you feel …'
- 'It seems to you that …'
- 'In your experience …'
- 'From where you stand …'
- 'When … you feel…'
- 'Your main concern seems to be that …'

Activity 35—Practising reflective/active listening

Create a mood that facilitates experimentation, explaining that there is no single perfect response, and that this is an opportunity to play around with different paraphrases, to make mistakes and to learn from them.

> The main aim of this activity is to practise reflective listening and to develop your skill with paraphrasing. Resist the temptation to respond in other ways—such as giving advice, probing for more information etc.—even if you think these other responses might be more natural or appropriate, and even if paraphrasing feels artificial or awkward.

Triads/Task: One person acts as speaker, one as observer and one as listener/responder. The observer is to monitor the listener/responder's responses and to lead discussion in the small group. Again, ask those with experience in active/reflective listening, to begin with the role of observer. Explain that each speaker is to make a brief statement to each listener/responder, and that the listener/responder is to respond by paraphrasing in the manner that was demonstrated.

If the observers notice that people are not responding empathically, but are inadvertently using other response styles, they should point this out and ask the responders to try again. The speaker should ideally be able to confirm that they felt understood in all cases.

Discuss/Worksheet: Acknowledge that the listener/responders may need to take some time to craft their responses, and suggest that they might even like to write them down before saying them aloud.

Task/Board: You might write up a few examples of statements and reflective responses, such as:

Speaker: 'If we have another early morning scene about what to wear I don't know what I'll do to those children, so help me!'

Listener/responder: 'You get really angry and you're scared you'll do your block one day.'

Triads/Task: Switch roles until everyone has experienced each role.

Individual/Worksheet: Record what they found easy or difficult about paraphrasing.

Winding up

At the end of the session bring the whole group together to discuss the activity and debrief. Respond empathically to people's comments.

Activity 36—Reflecting on effective listening

Individual/Question/Worksheet: Reflect on and record their learning from this unit by answering the questions.

Individual/Task: Continue practising this skill in real life over the next few weeks, noticing other people's reactions.

Task: Distribute **Notes—Effective listening**.

WORKSHEET—EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Activity 26—Attitudes are important

Following group discussion, fill in the following table:

	Genuineness	Acceptance	Empathy
Is …			
Are important because they…			

What does it take to be genuine?

_____

_____

How might you show warmth and genuine acceptance towards people you don't like?

_____

_____

What is a key difference between empathy and sympathy?

_____

_____

Activity 27— Noticing attitudes

Over the next few weeks, pay particular attention to situations in which you tend to be judgemental. What do the situations have in common that might trigger this reaction? How might you have to think differently in order (to want) to respond differently?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 28—Non-verbal communication

List forms of non-verbal communication:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 29—Open questions

Open questions often begin with …

_____

Asking closed questions I learnt … about my partner.

_____

_____

_____

Asking open questions I learnt … about my partner.

_____

_____

_____

Activity 30—Attending and encouraging

Topic chosen for discussion:

_____

_____

My reactions (feelings, thoughts and actions) to the listener who was:

1. Non-attending, fiddling, distracted:

   _____

   _____

2. Non-attending, different distances apart, back-to-back:

   _____

   _____

3. Attending from different levels:

   _____

   _____

4. Attending at eye level:

   _____

   _____

5. Attending well, but not using words:

   _____

   _____

6. Attending using simple words of encouragement:

   _____

   _____

7. Attending fully, responding as completely as they could:

   _____

   _____

Activity 31—Explore your response styles

Record your responses to the multiple-choice questionnaire **Explore Your Response Style** (**Appendix 2**) or LTM pp.82–91. Circle your answers in the table below and tally the totals at the bottom of each column.

Question	Response styles				
	I -	II -	III -	IV -	V -
1.	b	d	c	a	e
2.	c	a	b	e	d
3.	a	c	e	d	b
4.	d	e	a	b	c
5.	e	b	d	c	a
6.	d	b	c	e	a
7.	c	e	d	a	b
8.	e	d	a	b	c
9.	b	a	e	d	c
10.	a	d	b	c	e
11.	d	c	e	a	b
12.	a	b	d	c	e
13.	c	a	b	e	d
14.	b	e	a	d	c
15.	c	e	d	b	a
Totals					

Activity 32—Reactions to different response styles

Statement:														
Responses	Responses to responses	Styles												
		Messages conveyed												
		How you felt												

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Activity 33—Identifying and understanding common responses

Style	Example phrases	Intention
I.		
II.		
III.		
IV.		
V.		

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Activity 34—Practising response styles

Notes about the activity, and/or my experience in the roles of:

Speaker

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Listener

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Observer

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 35—Practising reflective/active listening

What I found easy

_____

_____

What I found challenging

_____

_____

Activity 36—Reflecting on effective listening

Considering effective listening—attitudes and skills, such as genuineness, attending fully and responding empathically using paraphrasing—what I noticed in each role was:

As speaker

_____

_____

As listener

_____

_____

As observer

_____

_____

NOTES—EFFECTIVE LISTENING

- Listening and responding are at the heart of effective communication.
- It's frequently not *what* you say, but the *way* you say it, that makes all the difference.
- Listening well requires your full attention, as well as specific attitudes and skills.
- Different styles of responding convey different messages and yield different outcomes.
- An effective listener is non-judgemental and empathic.
- Empathy is feeling *with* another person, *as if* you were them.
- Empathic responses improve shared understanding and foster good relationships.
- An empathic response checks that the listener has heard and understood the whole message correctly (verbal and non-verbal, content and feelings).

Good listening and effective responding are more difficult and demanding than they appear, but awareness of, and practice with, the following components can improve your versatility and skills.

Personal qualities/attitudes:
- Genuineness, sincerity and authenticity bring the real 'you' to a conversation. This means that you choose what to share and with whom without misrepresenting yourself.
- Acceptance is sometimes called 'positive regard'. It is non-blaming and involves respect and concern for another person's wellbeing. It does not mean or require agreement.
- Empathy involves a sensitive and accurate understanding of the other person's feelings, as though you were standing in their shoes. Being empathic requires being aware of, and maintaining, your own separateness and boundaries (LTM, pp.161–165).

Attending skills: Defining your availability and establishing rapport—through pacing, eye contact, attentive expressions and posture, and psychological attention—are both part of being truly and effectively present in a conversation (LTM, pp.108–117).

Encouraging skills: Maintaining the momentum of a conversation can be as simple as avoiding getting in its way by, for example, interrupting, imposing your own agenda or missing important cues. Learning how to 'follow' the speaker, providing invitations and minimal encouragements, avoiding blocks and using open questions and silence productively, can all help (LTM, pp.117–128).

Responding skills: Reflective/active listening using paraphrasing is a powerful response skill that promotes understanding and good relationships. Paraphrasing involves tentatively reflecting, in your own words, both the facts and the feelings conveyed by the speaker, checking for accuracy and summarising, while avoiding judgement, interpretation, support or probing. In summary:

Good Reflecting (LTM, p.128ff):
- Sums up what the other person has said, making it clearer and more real.
- Checks out that you have understood and interpreted the meaning correctly.
- Reassures the speaker that they are being heard.
- Communicates acceptance, respect and concern.
- Is non-judgemental.

- Encourages the other person to go on talking.
- Is well timed.
- Is concise, simple and understandable.
- Is accurate—reflects what the other person has communicated.
- Responds to the whole message, both verbal and non-verbal components.

What to do (LTM, pp.135–143):

- Attend to the whole communication.
- Imagine what the other person has experienced and is feeling.
- In your own words, paraphrase what you think has been communicated to you.
- Be direct and simple. If you don't understand, say so politely and ask for clarification.
- Reflect content and feelings: 'Because of … you're feeling …'
- When mixed feelings, or separate ideas are expressed, include them all in the paraphrase: 'You feel … but you also feel …'

Useful phrases (LTM, pp.143–145):

- 'It seems to you that …'
- 'In your experience …'
- 'You're feeling …'
- 'In other words …'
- 'Let me see if I understand. You feel …'
- 'Perhaps you're …'

- 'You feel …'
- 'From where you stand …'
- 'You believe …'
- 'I get the impression that you …'
- 'I'm sorry, I'm lost. Tell me again.'
- 'I wonder if …'

Common mistakes (LTM, pp.156–158):

- Judgemental comments.
- Defensive responses.
- Responding to content and missing the feelings.
- Clichés.
- Responding only to words, missing body language.
- Responses indicating rejection or disrespect.
- Unsolicited advice.
- Pretending to understand.
- Talking too much.
- Too many questions.

- Taking sides.
- Inappropriate use of sympathy.
- Use of closed, inappropriate or irrelevant questions.
- Patronising or placating responses.
- Too many lazy or inadequate responses (for example, 'Uh huh').
- Responses that imply superiority or condescension.
- Interpreting or playing 'psychologist'.
- 'Parroting'.
- Jumping in too quickly or too loudly.
- Defusing or undercutting.

SELF-ASSERTION

General introduction for the leader

● Read LTM, **Part Four: Self-assertion**, pp.167–216.

It would be helpful if at least some of the information about self-awareness and self-knowledge had already been covered, because to be assertive, you really need to know your own intentions (based on needs and values), as well as be aware and considerate of other people.

There is often confusion about the meaning of assertiveness and what constitutes assertive behaviour. For people who mistakenly think that being assertive means being aggressive, it may evoke quite negative reactions. For those who recognise that it indicates a high degree of self-confidence, awareness of, and respect for others and that it promotes effective communication, assertiveness takes on a more positive light. Assertiveness really means standing up for yourself and expressing your own needs, in ways that do not violate the rights of others.

When sharing information about assertiveness, it is particularly important to emphasise that assertiveness involves mutual respect, and is not about pushing other people around, being bossy or demanding your own way.

Skilful self-assertion increases the likelihood of having one's needs met, being heard and understood, setting limits or saying 'no', handling criticism and managing anger.

Sometimes, when developing new skills, people can be clumsy or get a little carried away. The risk with self-assertion is that they may come across as aggressive; especially if they actually are! To guard against this, it is important to be mindful of the needs and rights of all parties, and to be receptive to feedback.

What assertiveness is and is not

Aims

- To introduce the topic of assertiveness.
- To clarify the meaning of assertiveness.
- To dispel common negative misconceptions.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.169–216.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Flip chart, markers and adhesive.

Introducing self-assertion

Activity 37—What is assertiveness?

Group/Brainstorm/Board: Explore and record ideas about assertiveness, assertive behaviours and assertive people.

Group/Discuss/Board: When you have a reasonable list of descriptive words, consider which seem desirable, which do not and any apparent contradictions. You could place '+' or '–' next to the words.

Task/Board: Provide this definition used by psychologists: 'standing up for one's own needs with respect for the needs of others'. This is the goal of this training. In recognition of the common misinterpretations of the word 'assertiveness', you could suggest that a better term might be 'appropriate self-expression'.

> The aim of this training is not to produce bossy, mean, selfish people, but to give people some extra skills from which to choose, so that they can stand up for themselves and communicate clearly and honestly, with *respect for themselves and for others*, in ways that promote mutually satisfying and effective relationships.

Non-assertive behaviours

Aggressive behaviour involves standing up for yourself in ways that blame or attack other people, judge them, put them down or violate their rights. Aggressive people often 'come on too strong', making hurtful or negative impressions. It is usually unpleasant to be on the receiving end of aggressive exchanges, and, hence, they often provoke defensive reactions, including counter-attacks. The intention of aggressive behaviour is to control or dominate another person—it is inherently disrespectful and undermines relationships.

Submissive behaviour involves habitually giving in or giving up, putting other people ahead of yourself. It involves avoidance or denial. While it may have a place in your repertoire, chronic submission can mean allowing other people to walk all over you, putting yourself down, or failing to share or stand up for your own feelings or needs. It often involves unclear or confusing double messages. For example, you might say, 'Yes, I'd love to do that for you', while your body language is conveying the opposite—your teeth are clenched, your smile is forced, your eyes are averted! When conflicting messages are expressed concurrently, the person on the receiving end is likely to be confused and feel uncomfortable, irritated or guilty. So, while you may intend to be caring—to protect feelings, or avoid conflict, ridicule or rejection—the outcome may be quite the opposite.

Both aggression and submission are non-assertive, and often arise from low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness. It's also quite common for non-assertive people to flip from one form of non-assertiveness to the other. They may give in until the resentment about being denied or overlooked wells up and reaches a critical threshold, then suddenly over-react with an outburst of inappropriate aggression.

Activity 38—Comparing aggression, submission and assertion

Group/Share/Board: Share situations they have experienced that provoked one of the above non-assertive responses in order to explore the range of possible reactions. For example:

- Someone cut in front of you in a queue.
- You are asked to volunteer your services, but you don't have time.
- You want something done in a particular way.

Group/Discuss/Worksheet: For each situation generate responses that are submissive, aggressive and assertive, and make notes about any they find particularly illuminating by finishing the sentences on their **Worksheet**.

Winding up

> Remember that the first step to becoming more assertive is often simply noticing when you are not, and considering what you might do differently another time.

Why be assertive?

Aims

- To clarify the value of self-assertion skills in various situations.
- To become aware of some of the consequences of non-assertive behaviour.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.176–179.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Gather supplies of writing materials for small group reporters in **Activity 39**.
- Make a list of personal examples of situations in which you might want to be more assertive, for **Activity 39**.

Activity 39—Why be assertive?

Triads/Task: Distribute writing materials. Each group appoints a reporter to record their ideas, which will be shared with the whole group.

Triads/Discuss: Share situations in which they might want or need to be more assertive. You might offer some personal examples to get them going.

Task/Board/Discuss: Draw up this table and fill it in with input from the triads.

	Aggressive Response		Submissive Response		Assertive Response	
Situations	Outcomes		Outcomes		Outcomes	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
My sister borrowed my dress without asking.	Got my dress back	Sister angry, dress torn	Sister happy with me	I'm angry	She understands and won't do it again.	It took courage and skill.

Group/Discuss: Using a sample of the situations, consider the likely effects of the different responses on:

- self-esteem
- stress
- health
- the relationship
- sense of personal power
- achievement of goals/intentions

Group/Discuss/Board: Consider what the effects might be if they were to choose to act assertively in these situations. Would they choose to be assertive rather than submissive or aggressive? If so, why? If not, why not? Record their responses.

Winding up

The aim of assertiveness training is to broaden the range of constructive options from which to choose.

The capacity to choose is important. Learning assertion skills does not mean feeling compelled to be assertive at all times. There are times, for all of us, when for very good reasons we choose not to be assertive, but opt to respond in some other way.

Blocks to assertiveness

Aims

- To explore what stops people from being assertive.
- To consider the degree to which these obstacles are realistic or reasonable.
- To discover some strategies for overcoming blocks to being assertive.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.193–195.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing blocks to assertiveness

Most of us are able to be assertive in some situations, but sometimes, even when we want to be assertive, something seems to stop us. At such times, it can be useful to explore what we are thinking about the situation, about ourselves or about the other person that discourages us from being assertive. What are we saying to ourselves? Are there any prescriptive 'shoulds' in there? If so, might they be based on expectations associated with gender, race, age, culture or past experience? Or perhaps we simply don't have the necessary skills.

Some blocks may be appropriate and reasonable, while others might be worth challenging because they are simply getting in the way of effective communication and healthy relationships. Either way, increasing our awareness of this allows us to assess their relevance to our current lives and to make informed choices.

Activity 40—What stops you being assertive?

Pairs/Task/Share/Worksheet: Situations in which each person would like to have been more assertive; use the outline on the worksheet (participants can use the situations from **Activity 39** if they wish). Each person should have an opportunity to describe their situation and then, with assistance from their partner, figure out what stopped them from being assertive.

Group/Share: Any revelations? Are there any common themes, such as dealing with authority figures, professional people, spouses or parents? Are there different prescriptions for men and women, or for particular cultures? How relevant are these now? If inappropriate, how might these be challenged? What difference would that make? What difference might it make to change 'I should' to 'I choose to'?

Winding up

There are many potential blocks to assertiveness, some habitual, some personal, some cultural. Combining increased awareness about these with self-assertion skills, empowers choice about when and how to be assertive.

Assertiveness in practice

Aims

- To practise being assertive in a relaxed and playful environment.
- To help participants formulate appropriate assertive responses.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.195–199.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.
- Arrange for a partner to assist you with **Activity 41**.

Preparing to be assertive

In order to be assertive, you will need to:

- Know what you are really trying to communicate (self-knowledge and self-awareness).
- Know how to express it using verbal and non-verbal messages.
- Understand and respect the needs and rights of other people ('other-awareness' and empathy).

You are *more likely* to get what you need or want if you are assertive, than if you are not. If you don't tell others clearly what you want, in ways that they can understand, chances are that they won't know. If you expect them to guess, demand or bully them, or communicate in ways that are ineffective, they are unlikely to understand or support you. Even if you do convey your message effectively, you won't *necessarily* get what you want. Other people also have choices about what they will and won't do, but at least if communication is working, each person will be clear about what is going on. When differences or conflicts occur that are clearly understood by all, they can be addressed and solutions sought (see **Managing conflict collaboratively**).

The first step in assertive communication is to make sure that you have the other person's attention, and that they are really listening to you. In order to achieve this, it is useful to be aware that people often receive messages more effectively through one sensory mode than another. Many people connect more easily with messages delivered visually; they prefer to look at written material or pictures, or to watch a video. Others relate better to information coming through auditory channels; they like to listen to verbal explanations or engage in discussion. Still others are kinaesthetic, more effectively reached through touch, gut feelings or by doing—dramatising, being physically engaged, taking notes or drawing. If you're wondering how you might know what you are dealing with, these differences are often reflected in the words people use; for example, 'I see …', or '… sounds like …' or ' … feels …' For example: If your partner is primarily visual or kinaesthetic, you could talk to them until you are blue in the face and still fail to get your message through. To be effectively assertive, you might need to write them a note, or have them take notes during your conversation.

Activity 41—Self-assertion primer

Before beginning this activity, you and your assistant will need to plan an 'event' that has visual, auditory and kinaesthetic elements. For example: They knock on the door, you open it and let them in. They enter, shake your hand and say tentatively 'Good morning, is this where the workshop is being held?' You answer, 'Yes it is, come on in.' They look into their bag, shuffle some papers, look awkward and say 'Woops, I left my notebook behind' and run out, slamming the door behind them.

Group/Task/Worksheet: Explain that, on your cue, something is going to occur, and you want them to record their experience, in order to report on it afterwards.

Task: Without further information, stage your event.

Group/Board: Ask participants to report on the event, one recollection at a time. Record these and ask for a show of hands from the rest of the group for those who had similar recollections.

Individual/Task: Tally the results to evaluate the relative tendency to receive input in each modality.

> When preparing to present an assertive message, you can achieve maximum effect if you match your delivery to the dominant sensory system of your audience—when in doubt, try to communicate using all three modes, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

Making assertive statements

'I' STATEMENTS

> One of the best ways to communicate assertively is to use direct, simple and clear 'I' statements. An 'I' statement is one in which you actually use the pronoun 'I' to express how you feel or what you want or need.
>
> Here are some useful ways to construct 'I' messages:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | 'When you … I feel …' | 'When you give me so much to do, I worry about my competence and feel guilty when I have to leave without completing everything.' |
> | 'When … I want … because I need …' | 'When I have to make life and death decisions, I want more information because I need to be safe.' |

Small Group/Discuss: Ask for more examples.

Compare this with 'You' statements, which point the finger at the other person, incorrectly making them responsible for your feelings. For example, 'You *make* me feel guilty by giving me too much to do.' When we communicate directly with 'I' messages, we not only let others know how we feel, but we also take responsibility for our thoughts and associated feelings.

Use of 'I' messages can help you to make clear, responsible communications, increase your self-respect and improve relationships. Sometimes other people will not be overjoyed when you assert yourself, and may even respond defensively or angrily. Using reflective listening skills (see **Effective listening**) will help you deal appropriately with this sort of reaction. You may find that you need to switch back and forth between asserting yourself and listening reflectively.

Whole messages

We often speak in a kind of short-hand, sending only half the message and expecting the listener to guess the other half. For example, a half message might be: 'I won't come to visit you today'. It can be much more effective to state the whole message, which might be: 'I wish I could visit you today, I always enjoy our conversations, but I just don't have the time right now. I'd love to see you tomorrow, would that work for you?'

Whole messages can also convey your attempt/willingness to understand the other person's point of view, even though you may not be able to meet their needs.

A useful way to state an empathic whole message is:

'I understand that you ... but I ...'   'I understand that you want to borrow my tennis racquet, and I know you are careful, but I'm just not prepared to lend it to anyone.'

This kind of two-part message is often referred to as 'empathic assertion', because you put into words your attempt to understand the other person's situation, as well as presenting your assertive message. Empathic assertion is a gentle and effective way of being assertive.

Group/Share: Ask for some more examples of empathic assertion.

Whole messages are also a useful way to communicate mixed feelings, for example:
'I'm feeling both excited and scared about starting a new job.'
'I'm sad Harry died, but I'm relieved he's no longer in pain'

Group/Share: Ask for some more examples of conveying mixed feelings assertively.

Activity 42—Practice with assertiveness

This activity has three parts: Initial sharing of problematic situations, sharing these with the groups to identify what might be getting in the way of being assertive, and then role-playing assertive responses.

Triads/Task: Adopt the following roles within each group:

- Speaker: shares a situation involving another person with whom they are having difficulty being assertive. They will need to convey sufficient detail to enable the listener to play the role of the other person convincingly.
- Listener: role-plays the person with whom the speaker is having trouble being assertive.
- Facilitator: helps or prompts the speaker when necessary, attends to both the verbal and non-verbal communication, and offers constructive feedback.

Group/Share/Board: Use the following headings to work through the shared problem situations. Explain each to the whole group, listing the headings on the board as a reminder.

Goals:	What do you hope to achieve for yourself and the relationship by being assertive?
Blocks:	What might stop you from being assertive, or make it difficult?
Anxiety:	If you are anxious, how can you relax yourself? Or how might you use this energy?
Information:	Do you have all the information you need? If not, do you need to reschedule the interaction?

Triads/Task: The speaker should role-play with the listener different ways of assertively handling the described situation until an assertive response is found that feels right and seems likely to achieve their goal. Approaching the task playfully will enhance their creativity.

Triads/Task: If there is time, have the participants swap roles within their groups and repeat the exercise.

Group/Discuss/Worksheet: Debrief. What was achieved? How did it feel? What was difficult or uncomfortable? What was rewarding? Ask if any participants are still stuck in their role. If so, ask what it would take for them to feel like themselves again. Make sure everyone is reasonably comfortable before the session ends.

Winding up

Practising being assertive requires us to be clear about what we are really trying to achieve (goals/intentions), to confront what gets in our way (blocks), and to find ways to express ourselves appropriately and effectively.

When a person knows how to assert themselves, but *chooses* not to in a real-life situation because of probable negative consequences, their self-esteem can remain intact because the choice was theirs. This is completely different from habitually being a doormat.

Activity 43—Reflecting on assertiveness in practice

Individual/Question: Invite participants to consider whether they are ready to apply the learning from their role-play to a real-life situation. If not, what would they need to enable them to be more assertive?

Individual/Question/Worksheet: Consider the questions.

Dealing assertively with criticism

Aims

- To enhance awareness of common negative and unhelpful responses to criticism.
- To hear and respond to criticism assertively—hence, maintaining self-esteem.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.208–210.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Activity 44—Responses to criticism

Group/Share/Board: Consider emotional and behavioural reactions they have experienced when criticised, and list these under two headings. They might include:

Feelings	Actions
hurt	tried to hide
indignant	attacked
unloved	ran away
embarrassed	asked for more information
relieved	criticised back
guilty	cried
grateful	switched off, went quiet
rejected	denied it
like a bad person	gained insight
undermined	got depressed
inadequate	laughed it off
like a failure	dismissed it

Group/Discuss: Which of these reactions were assertive and self-affirming?

It is easy to perceive criticism as a personal assault—especially if it is—and to allow it to trigger negative thoughts and feelings or defensive behaviours (refer back to the lists on the board). But defensiveness, which is intended to protect us, often gets in the way of relationships and reduces the likelihood of both learning and effective communication.

To handle criticism assertively, we need to be able to discriminate between what seems real, reasonable or accurate, and what is not; whether it is intended to be helpful or hurtful; or if it has some other purpose. For example, you inadvertently knock over a cup of coffee and someone says, 'Not again, you're always so clumsy'. Is that true or untrue? Is it helpful and constructive, or is it just an unkind put-down?

Criticism is unhelpful when it is vague, or based on generalisations or exaggerations. Or if it is focused on the person rather than the behaviour, implying that the recipient is bad, incompetent or unacceptable; this is a form of character assassination. For criticism to be useful and constructive, it needs to be concrete and specific and focused on behaviour.

Although it is only another person's judgement or opinion, criticism can be helpful by providing different perspectives, informing us how we might change, and providing feedback about our impact on others. It's useful to learn how to turn criticism to our advantage, to decide for ourselves whether, or how, we will change our behaviour, and to respond assertively.

Activity 45—Assertive responses to criticism

This activity is intended to provide participants with strategies for handling criticism assertively, followed by an opportunity to practise using them.

Task/Board: Write up the following table. Speak to these ways of responding assertively to criticism.

If it is accurate or true …	**Accept** it. 'Yes, I'll work on it.'
If it is clearly wrong …	**Disagree** and **affirm** yourself. 'That's just not true, in fact I …'
If it is too broad or general, or vague …	**Clarify** it. Ask for behavioural examples … then **accept** what is true and **reject** the rest.
If it is about you as a person rather than about your behaviour …	**Accept** the behavioural part if it is true. Reject the personal label, and affirm yourself. 'I may sometimes … (state behaviour), but I am not a … person. In fact, I am a … person.'
If it is nagging, too frequent or destructive and you want to distance yourself …	**Agree 'in principle'**. 'You could be right' or 'Maybe sometimes I do …' or 'I can understand how you might think that.'
If stunned, taken aback, confused or overcome …	**Delay**. 'I'm surprised/amazed/stunned …' or 'I don't know how to respond' or 'I need time to think about it'.

Group/Discuss: Explore the ideas.

Pairs/Task: Using this model, role-play situations in which they were criticised and they would like to have responded assertively, but didn't. Each should describe their situation to the other, then practise an assertive response. If time permits, they might find it useful to role-play several different situations.

Group/Discuss/Worksheet: How did they feel about being assertive in these ways? What was easy? What was challenging? What was new to them?

Winding up

Individual/Task: Look out for criticism to which they might apply this model, or ways they might use it to make their own critical comments more constructive.

Setting limits and saying 'no'

Aims

- To validate the legitimacy of setting personal boundaries or limits.
- To share some appropriate strategies for maintaining boundaries.
- To experience different ways of refusing a request.
- To practice an 'empathic no'.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.204–207.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing setting boundaries/limits

Many people have difficulty determining and implementing appropriate boundaries or defining their limits. People involved in caring for others and those who work in demanding and stressful situations may be especially challenged. They may say 'yes' to a request when they really want or need to say 'no'. They may then get angry for allowing themselves to be manipulated, or they may begin to resent the other person. If this happens to you, you are in good company. Most people (except two-year-olds), find 'no' a difficult word to say.

It can be particularly difficult when the other person's needs are reasonable and their request seems legitimate, or when the person is someone you care about or want to please. Some ways of saying 'no' are more satisfactory than others, depending on the situation. If a child is about to dash across the road in front of a car, you don't stop to give reasons. You issue a sharp 'no' and grab the child. But if you wish to refuse a request, there are more

appropriate ways of saying 'no'. Sometimes it is tempting to back up your 'no' with 'white lies' or false reasons for your refusal, but these can lead you into a veritable minefield.

The nicest possible way to say 'no', which ironically, may not include the word 'no', is by using the two-part empathic assertion (mentioned above in **Whole messages**):

1. Express your understanding of the other person.
2. Make your refusal.

For example:

Request: 'I need to go to the library. Will you lend me your car?'

Response: 'I realise that you need to go to the library, but I'm really not comfortable lending my car.'

Request: 'Would you help me with the working bee on Saturday?'

Response: 'I understand that you want assistance with this worthy project, but I won't be available to help on Saturday.'

If the other person is inclined to be manipulative or unreasonable, avoid making suggestions about other ways of solving their problem. Remember that you do have the right to say 'no'. They are responsible for solving their problem, just as you are responsible for establishing appropriate limits to your involvement.

In addition to setting boundaries by being able to say 'no', it's also important to know when and how to say 'yes' with genuine enthusiasm to the things that meet your needs and honour your values.

We are going to practise different ways of saying 'no' to refuse a request, as an example of one way to set boundaries or limits.

Activity 46—Practise saying 'no'

Pairs/ Board/Task: Person 1 will state a request. Person 2 will respond to Person 1 in the four ways listed. After each response from Person 2, Person 1 will record their reactions. Then swap roles and repeat the process:

1. Saying a simple 'no' with no explanation.
2. Saying 'no' and giving false reasons.
3. Saying 'no' and suggesting alternatives.
4. Saying an empathic 'no'. For example: 'I understand that you … but I …'

Examples of possible requests:

- 'I'm going to a party tomorrow night and I've got nothing to wear—can I borrow your little black dress?'
- 'Come and have dinner with me tomorrow night.'
  Encourage participants to make up their own requests.

Group/Question/Worksheet: How did they feel in the role of Person 2, saying 'no' in each of the four ways? And how was it for the person on the receiving end? Which way was more difficult, and which more comfortable? With this approach, might they feel more able to refuse requests assertively in the future? Record their observations.

Winding up

Activity 47—Communication mantra

Share: The following conclusion:

*It's often not **what** you say, but the **way** you say it that makes all the difference—especially if it's 'no'.*

Individual/Task: Suggest the participants write the above statement on a card in bold letters, decorate it and put it somewhere prominent.

Dealing assertively with anger

Aims

- To distinguish between aggressive, submissive and assertive expressions of anger.
- To practise assertive ways of dealing with angry feelings.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.209–212.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing handling anger assertively

People sometimes mistakenly believe that being assertive means speaking calmly and not getting angry. But annoyance and anger are not bad or wrong, they are simply internal signals that something is not right for you. They form part of the normal range of human emotions. Anger only becomes destructive when it is inappropriately expressed.

Sometimes we believe we shouldn't be angry, especially when another person can't help doing whatever it is that triggers our anger, so we try to contain or hide our feelings. But feelings are real and need to be handled appropriately. Attempting to suppress or deny feelings of irritation can lead to growing resentment. And anger expressed aggressively,

with hostility and blame, attacking another person, is likely to be hurtful, as well as damaging to the relationship.

Anger expressed assertively lets people know about your feelings, wants and frustrations, in a respectful way. It offers an opportunity for them to respond to you and to change their behaviour if they choose to do so. But they don't have to change just because you feel angry and upset. Other people may trigger your angry feelings, but they are not responsible for them, nor are they responsible for making you feel better. Your feelings are your own, and you are responsible for choosing how you deal with them.

Sometimes anger flares up suddenly and you may be at risk of losing control. This is more likely to happen if you are under stress, overloaded, have bottled up a lot of feelings, or seem naturally to have a somewhat short fuse.

Activity 48—Handling rising anger

Group/Share/Board/Worksheet: Ask participants to suggest successful ways of managing rising anger before it becomes destructive. Record their ideas. For example:

- Count to ten before responding.
- Take 'time out'. (Leader: you may need to clarify this; for example: 'I'm starting to feel really angry. I need to go for a walk until I cool down, then we can talk about it.' Don't just rush out in a huff without saying anything. Pay the other person the courtesy of offering to deal with the situation when both of you are ready to listen and can discuss the issue in a rational manner.)

When the emotional flood is in check, your rational brain will be available to deal with the trigger of your anger in an assertive manner—to pursue your goals with due respect for others.

Anger can generate a lot of energy. When you express angry feelings assertively, you are using your energy to deal with the situation, clear the air and, hopefully, arrive at an understanding. You might discover that the other person meant no harm, that you jumped to the wrong conclusion, or that you have some sensitive spots. Explored appropriately, anger may also provide you with insight into your own unmet needs.

Board: Here are some ways to express anger assertively:

- **'I' statements**—let other people know how you feel. For example: 'I feel angry when I think people don't appreciate how hard I work.'
- **'I want' statements**—state clearly what you want, rather than just being angry and resentful that things are not the way you want them to be. For example: 'I want some clear guidelines about your expectations and my responsibilities.'

- **Mixed-feeling statements**—allow you to describe the anger while acknowledging positive aspects. For example: 'I love my work, but I get very angry when my opinions or ideas are ignored.'
- **Empathic assertion**—expresses your understanding of the other person's situation, which makes it easier for them to accept your angry feelings. For example: 'I realise that you may be engrossed in your book, but I feel really angry when I ask you something and you don't respond.'

Another aspect of dealing with anger is coping with being on the receiving end. When someone expresses their anger in a hostile or aggressive way, it is easy to bite back defensively. This tends to escalate the situation. More effective management would involve using an empathic or reflective listening response. For example, with an inquiring tone, 'When I try to help you out of the car, it seems that you think I'm insulting you, and that triggers your anger.'

Many of us have difficulty dealing with our angry feelings. We may either bottle them up, or express them in aggressive and destructive ways, or both. Most of our feelings result from how we think about things, so while others can trigger our anger, no one can 'make' us feel angry, and hence, no one can 'take our anger away'; it's up to us.

Activity 49—Dealing assertively with anger

Pairs/Share: Consider a recent situation in which they experienced anger. What happened and how did they handle their feelings? Were they aggressive, submissive or assertive? What were the consequences?

Group/Brainstorm/Task/Board: Someone is to share the situation they discussed, or create a new one (real or hypothetical), in order to consider aggressive, submissive and assertive ways of dealing with the angry feelings. List them on the board under those headings.

Group/Discuss/Worksheet: What are the likely consequences of each of these styles of dealing with anger, particularly in terms of each person's self-esteem and the effect on the relationship? Explore more examples, focusing on how to form assertive responses only, using 'I' statements, empathic assertion and so on. Record ideas.

Winding up

Remember that assertion and listening go hand in hand. We often need to switch back and forth between asserting ourselves and listening with understanding to the other person's responses.

Self-assertion—A five-step approach

Aims

- To craft assertive responses.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.212–213.
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

Introducing an assertiveness 'recipe'

> Sometimes, especially when learning new skills, it is easier to fulfil your intentions by following a general script or recipe; filling in the particulars to suit your situation. You can use this five-step approach to clarify your thoughts about a situation and your desired outcomes, or to plan and practise an assertive statement. If you are writing a letter, you could use each step to plan a sentence or paragraph, but you needn't feel compelled to use every step unless it is appropriate.

Task/Board: List the following five steps on the board and speak to them.

1. **Describe** the situation that bothers you, sticking closely to the observable facts, and being concrete and specific. For example, 'Last week you didn't show up for our meeting and I waited around for an hour.'

2. **Express** your feelings about the situation in an 'I' statement. For example: 'I felt angry with you for letting me down.'

3. **Empathise** by indicating your understanding of the other person's needs, feelings or the situation. For example: 'I realise that you may have been very busy.'

4. **Specify** desired actions by clearly stating what you want the other person to do. For example: 'From now on, I would like you to let me know if you are unable to keep our appointment.'

5. **Anticipate** consequences by describing the likely results arising from action, or alternatively, from no action. For example: 'That way I can plan my time accordingly and I'll feel much better about you when we meet.' Or, 'Otherwise I will be reluctant to make similar arrangements in the future.'

Activity 50—Using the five-step approach to assertiveness

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Draft a simple, assertive letter of complaint or to offer a meaningful compliment using the five-step approach.

Winding up

A common question is, 'What happens when two people are communicating assertively?' In fact, communication becomes much easier, because both are being clear, direct and respectful. If there is a conflict of interests, it is out in the open, with the option to negotiate a workable solution.

Activity 51—Reflecting on self-assertion

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Record their learning from this unit.

Task: Distribute **Notes—Self-assertion**.

WORKSHEET—SELF-ASSERTION

Activity 37—What is assertiveness?

Words that describe assertiveness, or assertive behaviours include:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 38—Comparing aggressive, submissive and assertive behaviours

My situation is …

_____

_____

I could respond aggressively in this situation by …

_____

_____

I could respond submissively in this situation by …

_____

_____

I could respond assertively in this situation by …

_____

_____

The key differences are …

_____

_____

_____

Activity 39—Why be assertive?

Situations	Aggressive Behaviour		Passive Behaviour		Assertive Behaviour	
	Outcomes		Outcomes		Outcomes	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative

Activity 40—What stops you from being assertive?

My situation …

_____

_____

_____

_____

Instead of asserting myself, I …

_____

_____

The outcomes, including my feelings were …

_____

_____

Instead of what I did/said, I would like to have done/said …

_____

_____

What stopped me? Was it reasonable?

_____

_____

_____

If I had asserted myself, I think the outcome would have been …

_____

_____

Activity 41—Self-assertion primer

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 42—Practise with assertiveness

What I learnt from this role-play exercise was …

_____

_____

_____

Activity 43—Reflecting on assertiveness in practice

'You' statements often elicit defensive, aggressive or negative responses because …

_____

_____

What is meant by empathic assertion, and why is it so powerful?

_____

_____

Activity 45—Assertive responses to criticism

What was easy? What was challenging? What was new about handling criticism assertively according to the model?

_____

_____

_____

Activity 46— Practise saying 'no'

My reactions to:

1. Saying and receiving a simple 'no' with no explanation

_____

_____

_____

2. Saying and receiving 'no' and giving false reasons

_____

_____

_____

3. Saying and receiving 'no' and suggesting other alternatives

_____

_____

_____

4. Saying and receiving an empathic 'no'. For example: 'I understand that you … but I … '

_____

_____

_____

Activity 47—Communication mantra

_____

_____

Activity 48—Handling rising anger

Strategies include:

_____

_____

_____

Activity 49—Dealing assertively with anger

What I have learned about handling anger assertively is …

_____

_____

_____

Activity 50—Using the five-step approach

My situation was …

_____

_____

_____

My feelings expressed as an 'I' statement were …

_____

_____

My understanding of the other person was …

_____

_____

What I wanted from them, specifically, was …

_____

_____

The anticipated outcomes of complying with this request, or not, are …

_____

_____

_____

Activity 51—Reflecting on self-assertion

_____

_____

_____

_____

Listen to Me, Listen to You: A step-by-step guide to communication skills training. Published by ACER Press. © Kotzman and Kotzman 2008.

NOTES—SELF-ASSERTION

- Being assertive is standing up for yourself *without violating the rights of others*.
- Even when you are skilled at self-assertion, you may *choose* not to assert yourself.
- Non-assertive behaviours—aggression and submission—often stem from low self-esteem or lack of skills (LTM, p.177).
- Self-assertion is not aggression.
- With assertive 'I' messages, you take responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, needs and behaviour (LTM, pp.196–199).

Mastering self-assertion is a key to communicating effectively.

> If I act **submissively** towards you
> I convey to you that you count
> but **I** am unimportant.

> If I act **aggressively** towards you
> I convey to you that I count
> but **you** are unimportant.

> If I act **assertively** towards you
> I convey to you that we both count
> and we are **both** important.

Self-assertion in five useful steps (LTM, pp.212–213):

1. **Describe the situation**, sticking to the observable facts. Be concrete and specific.
2. **Express your feelings** about it in an 'I' statement.
3. **Empathise**, indicating your understanding of the other person's needs, feelings, or situation.
4. **Specify desired actions** by stating what you want the other person to do.
5. **Anticipate consequences**, describing likely outcomes, positive or negative, arising from action or inaction.

- **Self-assertion** plays a key role in maintaining a strong sense of 'self'.
- **Empathic assertion** has two parts: stating your understanding of the other person's position, and following it with an 'I' message that conveys your own thoughts, feelings or needs. It can be particularly useful when setting your boundaries or limits, such as saying 'no' (LTM, p.204).
- **Blocks to assertiveness** include: inadequate skill level; lack of clarity; cultural, gender, age or other expectations. With awareness, understanding and skills, complying with these blocks becomes a matter of choice rather than habit (LTM, pp.185–186, 193–194).
- **Handling anger assertively** requires recognition that, although other people or events may trigger your feelings, they are actually your own. Anger arises from your perceptions and interpretations, and is your responsibility—not someone else's. This also applies to someone who is angry with you (LTM, pp.209–212).

Handling criticism assertively, the five-step approach (LTM, pp.208–210)

Accurate or true	**Accept** it. 'Yes, I'll work on it.'
Clearly wrong	**Disagree** and **affirm** yourself. 'That's just not true; in fact I …'
Vague, too broad or general	**Clarify** it. **Accept** what is true and **reject** the rest.
Personal versus behavioural	**Accept** the behavioural part if it is true. **Reject** the personal label, and **affirm** yourself.
Nagging, too frequent, destructive, need distance	**Agree** '**in principle**'. 'You could be right' or 'Maybe I sometimes do …' or 'I can understand how you might think that'.
If stunned, taken aback, too confused or overcome	**Delay**. 'I'm surprised/amazed/stunned' … or 'I don't know how to respond' or 'I need time to think about it'.

MANAGING CONFLICT COLLABORATIVELY

General introduction for the leader

◉ Read LTM, **Part Five: Managing conflict**, pp.217–245.

The more that people are able to *connect* with and *learn* the various components of collaborative conflict management, the more they will be able to see their relevance and power, and be motivated to use them. The collaborative approach aims for win: win outcomes in which both parties get what is really important to them, and their relationship is preserved or nourished in the process.

Aims

◉ To understand better the nature and causes of conflict.
◉ To understand how different conflict-management processes and outcomes affect relationships.
◉ To recognise the roles of attitudes, emotions, listening, creativity and needs in managing conflict collaboratively.
◉ To experience using a collaborative conflict-management process.

Preparation

◉ Re-read LTM, pp.217–245.
◉ Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

- Think of an example of your own experience of conflict arising from a misunderstanding for **Apparent conflict**.
- Think of an example of your own experience of escalating conflict for **Pick your battles**.
- Print out a group set of **State of mind scenarios** from **Appendix 3** for **Activity 53**.

Activity 52—A memorable conflict

Individual/Task/Worksheet: Invite participants to recall a personal experience of a conflict that they might be willing to share later, and answer questions about it.

> Through group discussion about these recalled experiences, we will tease out three aspects (sources, feelings and outcomes) of these conflicts, and of conflict in general, for further discussion and exploration.

1. Sources of conflict

Group/Discuss/Board: Explore the nature of conflict using examples from the previous activity. Record what the conflict was about, who was involved etc. Use this list of points as a guide:

- Conflict is—disagreements, quarrels, arguments, differences.
- Conflict is based on—positions, wants, needs, perceptions and beliefs.
- Conflict involves—two people with one issue, one person with an internal conflict, or two or more people with a variety of issues.

> If conflict exists, there is, by definition, more than one perspective.

Apparent conflict

> Conflict is not always what it seems. It is quite common for a simple misunderstanding to produce apparent conflict where none, in fact, exists.

Group/Share: Ask those who have had the experience of conflicts arising from misunderstanding to share their experiences with the group, if they are willing. Share your own if necessary.

Pick your battles

Before becoming too involved in conflicts, it is useful to distinguish those that are significant, ongoing or deep-seated, from those that are not all that important and that you may more easily choose to let go.

Regardless of the seriousness of a conflict, escalation is almost a certainty if strategies that include over-generalising, adding in other issues or character assassination are employed. For example, a couple disagreeing about a purchase might easily slip into a full-blown argument about financial responsibility, equality of contributions or spending habits.

Group/Share/Board: Invite exploration of experiences of escalating conflicts, or share your own. Look out for, and note, phrases such as 'You always …' or 'You are …'

2.   Feelings associated with conflict

Conflict is often associated with strong emotional reactions that can hamper our ability to handle the situation as we may want. The first and most important step in managing conflict is being able effectively to manage your own emotions, so that you can respond appropriately to those of others.

Group/Share/Board: What feelings were associated with the conflicts they recalled earlier (**Activity 52**)? As leader, look for some of these:

- enraged
- seething
- furious
- puzzled
- battered

- fearful
- confused
- frustrated
- incredulous
- sad

- anxious
- depressed
- irritated
- defeated
- smug

Recognise that when feelings are running high, it is often difficult to think clearly or behave appropriately. Research has shown that our physiological responses to stresses such as anger and fear, which are designed temporarily to fuel our primary defences, can reduce blood flow to the problem-solving, thinking areas of the brain, literally making it difficult to 'think straight'.

Group/Share: Strategies for managing emotions, or responding to others when their feelings are running high.

Using effective-listening techniques can help (see **Effective listening**). Often, when emotions are handled empathically—really heard, acknowledged and accepted—the conflict itself simply melts away.

3.   Outcomes of conflict

Group/Brainstorm/Board: List the possible outcomes of conflict in terms of winners and losers. Use the following list to flesh out the ideas:

Lose: lose	We both lose, neither of us gets what we wanted.
Win: lose	I win, you lose, but we both lose because of the impact on our relationship.
Lose: win	I give in or lose, you win—but you also lose because of the impact on our relationship.
Win and lose	I win and lose, and so do you—compromise, both win and lose some. Sense of fairness, but still both are losers.
Win: win	We both get what really matters and we offer and receive respect and consideration—the best outcome for good relationships.

Note that all of these outcomes, except the win: win, result in some degree of loss, with perhaps the greatest negative impact being on the relationship.

Group/Share: Is there anything else they'd like to share about sources of conflict, feelings or outcomes before moving on?

State of mind and approaches to conflict

Your state of mind or mood affects the likelihood of becoming involved in a conflict, and can assist or hamper your attempts to craft an agreeable outcome if a conflict occurs. If you value others as much as yourself, or value yourself as much as others, only a mutually acceptable outcome will really satisfy you.

We are not impartial, objective observers in the world. What is going on in our minds and our lives, from moment to moment, colours our perceptions by modifying both our reception of information and the way we process and make meaning from it. While most of us know this intellectually, we can easily forget it in the heat of the moment.

Activity 53—State of mind

The following role-play is designed to emphasise the importance of state of mind, mood and attitudes, by observing the variety of reactions to a single stimulus.

Individual/Task: Give each participant a **State of mind scenario** (from **Appendix 3**), attempting to spread the five scenarios evenly throughout the group.

Individual/Task: Encourage participants to get into their roles and prepare to assess their own reactions: What would you *think*? How would they *feel*? How would they *react*? How would they *respond*? Write them down. Build the suspense, 'Are you ready?'

Task/Worksheet: Tell them: 'Now the phone rings … brrrring brrrring'. Have them record their responses.

Group/Share/Board: In a column write the headings, Scenario 1, Scenario 2 etc., on the left side of the board. Ask for the responses from all those with Scenario 1, and record these next to the heading. Repeat for each scenario. Enjoy the reactions!

Group/Share/Discuss: Have a representative for each scenario read it to the whole group, and then explore the differences and emphasise how state of mind can be such an important factor in conflict, and how awareness of this can be invaluable in avoiding or managing conflict effectively.

Attitudes and beliefs

In the same way that your state of mind or mood can affect the development and handling of conflict, so too the attitudes and beliefs with which you approach a conflict will have a significant influence on the direction it takes.

- Do you believe in the fundamental legitimacy of the other party/position/opinion/etc.?
- Do you trust them?
- Do you have genuine respect for them and their rights?
- Are you willing to be open and honest?

If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, recognise that these attitudes are likely to be major stumbling blocks to managing conflicts satisfactorily.

Consider the relative importance of:

- getting your own way, what you want or winning the argument
- satisfying the other person
- preserving or nourishing your relationship.

Your answers to these questions will have a *huge* bearing on your propensity to get into conflicts, and on your ability to resolve them satisfactorily. Remember that attitudes need not be set in stone, so if yours are not working well for you, consider reviewing them and possibly making adjustments.

Activity 54—Attitudes

Small group/Task/Share/Worksheet: Ask participants to generate two lists of attitudes, those that are conducive to the positive management of conflict and those that are counterproductive or negative. Ask them to share these and record them. Use this list as a guide:

Positive	**Counterproductive/negative**
Genuine concern for others	Superiority
Willingness	Self-centredness
Empathy	Disengagement
Honesty	Lack of empathy
Goodwill	Manipulation
High self-esteem	Low self-esteem
Patience	Judgemental
Respect	Impatience
'Can do'	Intolerance
Optimism	Self-righteousness

Individual/Task: Refer participants back to the memorable conflict they recorded in **Activity 52**. Ask them to try to remember which of the attitudes or approaches might have applied to them when they began to manage the conflict.

Many of these attitudes are habitual, but they are also a matter of choice. By becoming more aware of them, we can see them for what they are, and choose to change them if they don't serve us well. Sometimes, the simple act of choosing to behave in more positive ways can actually modify our attitudes in a positive direction (see **Why bother with self-esteem?**).

Bringing useful skills and creativity to conflict

Here are some key skills and approaches that can contribute to the successful management and resolution of conflict.

Needs versus positions/strategies

When people are involved in a conflict, they often adopt a fixed position as a strategy for meeting their needs. But positions, by definition, are rigid and limited. When people are able to move past being 'stuck' with their position, to focusing on understanding what each person really needs, conflict can be more readily resolved. Compare:

A strategy/position—one way to meet a need   'I want *you* to do this for me.'

The need   'I need help with this …'

Group/Brainstorm/Board: Create a list of basic needs on the board—make it a generous list. Encourage and reward suggestions (see **Activity 15** for guidance if necessary).

Activity 55—Needs beneath positions

Group/Task/Worksheet: Present the following statements of positions/strategies and ask for ideas about the possible underlying needs. Have participants record their ideas.

Positions/strategies	Possible underlying needs
I want you to clean your room.	Order, respect, appreciation or aesthetics
It doesn't make sense to do it that way.	Respect, to make a difference, autonomy
I need some chocolate.	Nourishment, comfort, pleasure
I can't help you with the landscaping.	Safety, autonomy, respect

Group/Task: If time permits, ask for additional examples of positions/strategies and figure out what needs they were generated to satisfy.

Effective listening

Effective listening, a key component of communication, enables us to gather the information necessary to understand another person and, through the way we respond as we listen, convey our understanding and intentions. Raising our awareness about how this works, and our ability to listen with empathy, are key to managing conflict effectively.

Introduce (or reiterate) Carl Rogers' concept of five response styles that account for about 80 per cent of all responses (see **Effective listening—Responding**).

Task/Board: Write up 'judgemental', 'supportive', 'interpretive', 'probing' and 'empathic', briefly outlining the intentions and possible effects of each (see **Activity 33** and LTM, pp.92–96).

Response styles are not, in themselves, good or bad. They convey different messages and produce different reactions. Knowing this enables you to choose your message according to your intention—assuming you have figured it out and have the necessary skills.

As a listener, your 'good' empathic response often involves paraphrasing, including both the substance of the message and the associated feelings—expressed in your own words. It is delivered in a tentative, questioning tone. It carries the message: 'I think this is what I have heard and sensed, did I get it right?' It invites the speaker to confirm, share more, correct or clarify if necessary.

Activity 56—Effective listening

Triads/Task: Practise reflective listening. Participants take turns playing these roles:

- Speaker briefly shares an experience with the listener.
- Listener reflects back, in their own words, the *facts and feelings* they have heard.
- Observer checks if it is truly a reflective response and assists as needed.

When the speaker is satisfied and feels understood, swap roles and repeat the activity.

Group/Share: How was it?

Individual/Question/Worksheet: Summarise the key elements of an empathic/reflective response, its underlying intentions, likely effects and any comments from their experience.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process employed to generate novel ideas—to stimulate genuine creativity. In the case of managing conflict, brainstorming has the potential to generate surprising solutions that meet everyone's needs. It's the 'two heads are better than one' approach. By combining your talents, you can quite likely come up with ideas that neither of you would have thought of alone. Resist the temptation to focus solely on perfect ideas, as this will inevitably stifle creativity. The best results will come from encouraging as many ideas as possible, especially seemingly 'bad' ones; the more extraordinary, the greater the chance of finding something that just might work.

Deliberately avoid making premature judgements about ideas, just collect them; preferably writing them down. They can be evaluated later, but doing this prematurely will hinder the process.

Nine-part collaborative conflict management

Aims

- To practise a guided, scripted approach to managing conflict collaboratively.
- To experience the difference this approach makes to the process, the way it feels and the outcomes.

Preparation

- Re-read LTM, pp.231–245
- Review **General preparation for all sessions**, p.6.

So far we have explored what conflict is, its causes, the feelings it can generate and the range of outcomes. We have considered how the importance of tapping into underlying needs and bringing appropriate attitudes, skills and creativity to managing conflict can improve our ability to achieve positive outcomes.

For many of us, especially when we are trying something new, having a recipe or script to follow can make it easier to achieve the results we are seeking. For example, when cooking a new dish, having a recipe that tells us what ingredients to assemble, which utensils and appliances are needed, what to do with the ingredients and in what order, can produce high-quality results. When we have had more experience, we can afford to modify or adapt the recipe to suit our own tastes by substituting ingredients, or adding or leaving out this or that. Learning to manage conflict effectively can be a similar process.

Activity 57—Practising collaborative conflict management

This activity will involve a team role-play, with a scripted scenario, which you, the leader, will write on the board. It is important to work through slowly and deliberately each of the nine parts of this collaborative process. Use the following script, or create your own. This is a challenging activity that requires careful and thorough preparation and execution. Your job will be to coach each group as needed and to maintain a playful atmosphere.

Although this is a somewhat contrived situation, we will use it to remind us of these important components: respectful behaviour, effective listening, acknowledging feelings, determining important needs and collaborative, creative problem solving.

2 Groups/Task: Have two groups separate to either side of the room, more or less facing each other. As 'Party 1' and 'Party 2', they will attempt collaboratively to manage the assigned conflict in order to achieve a win : win outcome.

Scripted scenario: 'Party 1' lives in a coastal village that has expansive sea views and is nestled in a natural bushland setting. The property next door has recently been sold, and the new owners (Party 2) want to erect a tall brick fence. They have also asked Party 1 to cut down several tall trees on their property.

Position of Party 1: You don't want this fence and you don't want to cut down your trees.

Position of Party 2: You want a tall brick fence and you don't want their trees to block your view.

Some ideas to help the leader:

Possible needs of Party 1: autonomy (right to control own life and space); community/ connectedness (need to get along with local community, including neighbours); relationship/connection to the natural environment; beauty (natural vegetation, continuity); harmony; peace.

Possible needs of Party 2: safety/security (from intruders, to keep dog in); beauty (an uninterrupted view); autonomy (express their right to control their own property).

Use the table below to guide you through the activity.

Group/Discuss/Board/Worksheet: Using the table outline from the worksheet, record what was said or done by each party in each part. Be sure to take some breaks as this is quite a demanding activity.

Parts		For the leader
Foundations	1. Respectful conduct	In turn, each party will try to acknowledge the legitimacy of the other—identify how each would convey this— behaviours such as listening attentively, not interrupting or making faces, not shouting etc. Monitor and adjust self-talk as needed.
	2. Acknowledging and accepting feelings	2 & 3 go together. In turn, each party is invited to share how they feel at the beginning of the process and the other party will reflect back what they hear.

Parts		For the leader
Skills	3. Effective listening	The more each party can listen with empathy, reflecting what they hear until they 'get it right' the more easily the whole process can move along. Remind participants that good reflective/empathic responses capture both content and feelings.
	4. Presenting your case	In turn, each party should clearly state what it is that they are wanting—initially their positions or strategies representing what they want or believe. The other party should reflect back what they hear in order to be sure they have understood the message.
Creative Processes	5. Uncovering needs beneath positions	This is about finding out what really matters for each party (Activity 55).
	6. Brainstorming ways to meet needs	This is a creative, but respectful, free-for-all. Focus on fun and creativity; the more ideas the better. Avoid evaluating them at this stage.
	7. Plan and implement outcome	Evaluate these ideas to see whether any might be worth trying. If so, determine who will do what, when and where. If none are mutually acceptable, continue brainstorming.
Final Steps	8. Evaluate process and outcome	Take a few moments to reflect on the process. How does each party feel now, about themselves and the other party? What did they like or not like about the process? What would they do differently if they went through it again? Then consider the outcome. Are they happy with the proposed solution? Are they willing to give it a try? If not, return to part 6.
	9. Affirming, thanking, forgiving	Finish off with thanks for partaking in the process. Identify the differences between this approach and other ways they might have handled the conflict.

Group/Discuss: Seek feedback about the value of this approach. Debrief the roles.

Winding up

Individual/Task: Consider how you might use this process, or any of its parts, in dealing with existing or future conflicts.

Task: Distribute Notes—**Managing conflict collaboratively**.

WORKSHEET—MANAGING CONFLICT COLLABORATIVELY

Activity 52—A memorable conflict

With whom?

_____

Conflict about …

_____

How was it handled?

_____

How did I feel about it?

_____

What role(s) did I play?

_____

What did I do well?

_____

What did I do less well?

_____

What was the outcome—resolved, managed satisfactorily, or not?

_____

How was my relationship affected by this event?

_____

Activity 53—State of mind

My reactions—feelings, thoughts—and how I might respond:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 54—Attitudes

List the attitudes you identified as having a positive or counterproductive/negative impact on your ability to manage conflict effectively.

Positive	Counterproductive/negative

Activity 55—Needs beneath positions

Record the needs identified as underlying the example positions.

Stated position or strategy	Underlying needs

Activity 56—Effective listening

What are the key elements of a reflective response, its intentions and its likely effects?

_____

_____

_____

Activity 57—Practising collaborative conflict management

	Parts	Party 1	Party 2
Foundations	1. Respectful conduct		
	2. Acknowledging and accepting feelings		
Skills	3. Effective listening		
	4. Presenting your case		
Creative Processes	5. Uncovering needs beneath positions		
	6. Brainstorming ways to meet needs		
	7. Planning and implementing outcome		
Final Steps	8. Evaluating process and outcome		
	9. Affirming, thanking, forgiving		

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NOTES—MANAGING CONFLICT COLLABORATIVELY

- Conflict is a manifestation of differences, often expressed as positions.
- Typical outcomes of conflict include (LTM, pp.227–230):

Outcome	Details	Collateral
Lose: lose	Both lose, neither gets what was wanted.	Unsatisfying, relationship suffers
Win: lose	I win, you lose.	Relationship suffers—we both lose
Lose: win	I give in, or lose, you win.	Relationship suffers—we both lose
Win and lose	Compromise: I win and lose, you win and lose.	Sense of fairness, both lose some
Win: win	We both get what really matters.	Sense of fairness, both win, relationship enhanced

- Attitudes and states of mind have a huge bearing on the process and outcome of conflict. Mutual respect can be enhanced by remembering what we all share (LTM, pp. 231–232):
  - Just like me, this person is seeking to fulfil their needs.
  - Just like me, this person is seeking happiness.
  - Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering.
  - Just like me, this person is learning about life.
- Emotions are often a big part of conflict—handling them appropriately, with the right attitudes and using effective listening, is key to successfully managing conflict (LTM, pp.232–234).
- Uncovering the needs beneath positions is a powerful step in conflict management (LTM, pp. 234–236).
- Understanding their real needs can enable parties to move beyond their irreconcilable positions, through creative brainstorming, to mutually satisfying strategies for resolution.

Nine-part collaborative conflict management involves (LTM, pp. 231–245):

Processes	Parts
Foundations	1. Respectful conduct
	2. Acknowledging and accepting feelings
Skills	3. Effective listening
	4. Presenting your case
Creative Processes	5. Uncovering needs beneath positions
	6. Brainstorming ways to meet needs
	7. Planning and implementing outcomes
Final Steps	8. Evaluating process and outcome
	9. Affirming, thanking, forgiving

- Commit to becoming proficient with all parts of collaborative conflict management.
- Use all or some parts as needed to become an agent for positive change—to enrich your life and the lives of others.

REFLECTION AND CLOSURE

General introduction for the leader

You may think that this final process is unnecessary and be tempted to squeeze it in at the end of your final topic session, or to sidestep it altogether. However, just as an orientation is an important entry point, closure is an important opportunity to consolidate learning, to consider the journey the group has taken and for each person to anticipate how they will use this experience. We urge you to set aside a discrete time and provide space for calm reflection, evaluation and farewells. People can become quite attached to each other during courses such as this and need a place to appreciate this and their achievements, plan for the future, give thanks and say 'goodbye'.

For workshops of one day or less, the leader will probably need to select, plan and orchestrate the closing ceremony. For more intense or longer programs, it is more feasible to have group participation in choosing the type of ceremony they would like, and for them to be engaged in making it happen. This would, however, need to be negotiated ahead of time.

It makes sense that what you decide to do is scaled to suit your particular program. For even the shortest programs, it is desirable to conclude by asking participants what they found useful, having them complete feedback sheets and thanking them for their participation. While you might celebrate the end of a one-hour seminar with some chocolates, participants in a multi-week program might decide to celebrate with a shared meal or some other farewell ritual.

Closing ceremonies can involve as little as shaking hands or exchanging contact information, or they can be much longer, more elaborate rituals. The key is to engage the participants and leaders in a collaborative, meaningful form of closure that leaves everyone feeling satisfied. This is an opportunity for you and your group to be creative, so rather than providing specific instructions, we simply offer some ideas to stimulate your creative talents.

Aims

- To reflect upon and evaluate the program—content and presentation.
- To appreciate and celebrate what has been learnt.
- To have each person consider how they might use these new ideas in the future.
- To acknowledge the value of everyone's contribution to the learning process.
- To formally thank each other and say 'goodbye'.

Preparation

- Plan ahead—decide what form(s) your closure will take. Some materials, arrangements, actions etc. will need to be dealt with in earlier sessions to support your final farewell.
- Assemble materials as needed for your chosen activity(s).

Below you will find a smorgasbord of activities from which you can choose. Use them individually or in combination, or modify them to suit the circumstances of your particular group, to generate:

- opportunities to reflect, acknowledge and consolidate learning
- keepsakes, reminders, souvenirs or mementos
- affirmations from fellow participants
- rituals of inclusion, celebration and farewell.

We have combined both the preparation (some of which may need to be completed before the final session) and the execution in each activity description.

Closing activity 1 – Verbal feedback

Invite participants to share what they have found particularly interesting or useful.

Closing activity 2 – Written feedback

Use the feedback sheet provided (see **Worksheet—Feedback sheet**), or use your own version.

Ask participants to complete them. Explain that while they may find it useful for them, and that you will most certainly find it helpful.

Closing activity 3 – Giving thanks

Thank the group members for their presence, involvement and participation. This can be made more powerful if you can offer a personal statement about how you have been touched by interacting with this group.

Closing activity 4 – Certificates

Create individual certificates of attendance, involvement or achievement with a brief description of the topics covered. They should suit the flavour of your program—attractive, comical, flamboyant, or perhaps formal (for an example, see **Worksheet— Sample certificate**).

   With some pomp and ceremony, and perhaps a little speech about the significance of developing improved interpersonal and communication skills in relation to quality of life, distribute the certificates at the end of the final session. These are surprisingly popular and, depending on the course content and purpose, can be customised to meet the documentation requirements of employers or professional organisations.

Closing activity 5 – Contact information

With permission from participants, make and distribute copies of contact information, or if there is only partial support for this idea, encourage those who wish to exchange information to do so. Have those who choose to do so, fill in a 'contact information sheet' in time to copy and distribute it.

Closing activity 6 – Program photos

If your group was happy to have photos taken during the program, you will need to allow time to process the images, including downloading, editing and possibly assembling them as a collage on a single page or two (perhaps to form the front and back covers of a transparent folder designed to contain their handouts).

   Make and distribute copies to all participants.

Closing activity 7 – Group photo

If you have gathered the participants and leader(s) together in the second-to-last session for a group photograph, create an outline of the image of the group with each person identified.

   Make and distribute copies of both the photo and the ID sheet to all participants.

Closing activity 8 – Positive messages

Pin a sheet of paper or card on each person's back.

Arm each participant with a suitable, non-staining pen; offer a variety of colours.

Have participants circulate around each other, writing positive messages on each other's backs to create a set of affirmations they will be able to keep.

Closing activity 9 – Reflections

Have each person take some time to think about and write down some memories, insights, comments etc. arising from, or relevant to, the program. You can do this by having them complete the statements on the **Worksheet** provided.

Based on these responses, you could then have each of them write a couple of sentences as a personal testimonial to share with the group.

If everyone was happy for you to copy these for distribution, you might need to do this activity at the end of the second-to-last session.

Closing activity 10 – Testimonials 1

Provide everyone with small squares of decorative or coloured paper (the number of squares per person equal to the number of participants minus one). Ask them to write the name of each member of the group on a separate piece, and write down one thing they specially liked, valued or appreciated about that person. Ideally, these personal testimonials would be signed.

There are various ways to distribute these messages. You can gather them up, sort them by individual recipient, then fasten them together with a decorative clip and distribute them making sure everyone receives their full set. Or you could provide a small basket or box for each person, labelled with their name, and have everyone deliver their messages to the recipients in person. We have found that people often treasure these keepsakes and may even read them again and again over many years.

Closing activity 11 – Testimonials 2

Before the final session, prepare a sheet of paper for each participant with their name and photo (optional) on the top. You could kickstart the process of assembling testimonials by writing one comment for each person about how they have positively affected you (that is, made a difference in your life) during the program.

Circulate the sheets around the group and have everyone write down something they liked or valued about each person (preferably signed).

Ensure that everyone receives their sheet back at the end.

Closing activity 12 – Social gathering

Make arrangements for the whole group to meet and share a meal at a place of their choosing; for example, at a picnic ground, park, café, restaurant, a private home etc.

Closing activity 13 – Sharing food

Either you bring food to share, or have participants create and bring food to share at the program venue—a pot luck, fondue, biscuits and cheese, dessert or even biscuits or a cake to accompany a final cup of tea/coffee. Be mindful of cultural, dietary and allergy issues.

Closing activity 14 – Candles

Get a large bowl of water and floatable candles (one per person).

Have participants light their candles from each other's flames, to symbolise the sharing of knowledge. Then float the candles in the bowl of water as a table centrepiece. Several bowls might be needed for larger groups. Check fire ordinances and insurance constraints prior to ignition!

Closing activity 15 – Say it with flowers

As the leader, you could bring a bunch of rose buds with individual name tags attached. Present each person in the group with one to take home in memory of their group experience, to represent the potential for their new knowledge and skills to unfold and add beauty to their lives.

Make a brief speech about the significance of developing improved interpersonal and communication skills in relation to quality of life. Wish them all well.

Thank you for sharing this journey with us!

WORKSHEET—CLOSING ACTIVITY

Closing activity 9—Reflections

My most significant learning from this course has been (new insights, ideas, knowledge or skills):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I particularly enjoyed the following:

_____

_____

_____

I found the following particularly challenging:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other participants enhanced my experience by:

_____

_____

_____

_____

In the future I hope to do the following things differently as a result of what I have learned:

_____

_____

_____

I expect this will make a difference in these ways:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I plan to start doing this (when?):

_____

_____

_____

_____

I see the next step in my personal communication skills development as:

_____

_____

_____

_____

A year from now I believe I will remember the following about this course of training:

_____

_____

_____

_____

My most significant learning from this course has been (new insights, ideas, knowledge or skills):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Feedback sheet

I/we would be delighted if you would take the time to respond to the following inquiries.

I found out about this workshop from

_____

This workshop was what I expected—yes/no/maybe: explain

_____

I believe my experience in this workshop will be useful to me—yes/no/maybe: explain

_____

I would rate the quality of the content (circle level):

1	2	3	4	5
(Excellent)				(Poor)

I would rate the quality of the presentation (circle level):

1	2	3	4	5
(Excellent)				(Poor)

If there was one thing I found particularly interesting/useful/valuable, it would be:

_____

_____

Given the opportunity, I would make the following change(s) to this workshop:

_____

_____

I might also be interested in workshops on the following topics:

_____

Please notify me about upcoming events or new information (please print clearly):
Name:

_____

Preferred contact:

_____

Phone numbers:

_____

A year from now, I hope this is what I would say about the value of this workshop:

_____

_____

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Sample certificate

Certificate of Attendance

This is to certify that . . . .

has actively participated in interpersonal and communication skills training including, but not limited to:

- ☐ Self-esteem
- ☐ Self-awareness and self-knowledge
- ☐ Listening skills
- ☐ Self-asserion
- ☐ Managing conflict collaboratively

on the . . . . day of . . . . in the year . . . .

Signed . . . .

APPENDICES

Appendix 1—Values cards

Each person needs their own set of **Values Cards**. Copy, enlarge, and pre-cut them, or provide scissors. Print the cards on card stock, or laminate them for multiple-use.

VERY IMPORTANT TO ME	IMPORTANT TO ME	NOT VERY IMPORTANT TO ME
1. Acceptance To be accepted as I am	**2. Accomplishment** To make things happen	**3. Accuracy** To be accurate in my opinions and beliefs
4. Achievement To have important accomplishments	**5. Adventure** To have new and exciting experiences	**6. Affection** To give and receive warmth and friendliness
7. Attractiveness To be physically and/or spiritually appealing	**8. Authority** To be in charge and responsible	**9. Autonomy** To be individually complete

10. Beauty To sense and appreciate aesthetics	**11. Caring** To look after others	**12. Challenge** To tackle difficult tasks and problems
13. Change To experience variety	**14. Comfort** To have a pleasant and comfortable life	**15. Commitment** To honour pledges and promises
16. Compassion To feel and act on concern for others	**17. Connectedness** To feel linked or joined to others	**18. Contribution** To do my part, be involved in the world
19. Cooperation To work collaboratively with others	**20. Courtesy** To be considerate and polite to others	**21. Creativity** To generate new and original ideas
22. Decisiveness To act with conviction	**23. Democracy** To seek and embrace a balance of everyone's opinions and ideas	**24. Dependability** To be reliable and trustworthy
25. Directness To be clear and uncomplicated	**26. Duty** To meet obligations	**27. Ecological awareness** To live with mindfulness of the environment
28. Effectiveness To make things happen with minimal effort	**29. Excellence** To perform at a high level	**30. Excitement** To have a life with thrills and stimulation

31. Faithfulness To be loyal and true in relationships	**32. Fame** To be recognised and known	**33. Family** To happily belong, to have kin
34. Fitness To be physically or mentally in shape and robust	**35. Flexibility** To adjust easily to new circumstances	**36. Forgiveness** To have mercy, let go
37. Freedom To have liberty and independence	**38. Friendship** To have close, reciprocal, supportive relationships	**39. Fun** To laugh, plan and enjoy life frivolously
40. Generosity To share what I have with others	**41. Genuineness** To be true to who I am	**42. God's will** To seek and obey the will and laws of my God
43. Growth To embrace progressive development	**44. Harmony** To live in accord with the world and its peoples	**45. Health** To be physically and mentally sound
46. Helpfulness To be obliging and cooperative	**47. Holiness** To strive for faithful piety	**48. Honesty** To be open, truthful and direct
49. Hope To maintain a positive and optimistic outlook	**50. Humility** To be modest and unassuming	**51. Humour** To see the funny side of myself and the world

52. Independence To be free from dependency on others, self-reliant	**53. Industriousness** To work hard and well	**54. Influence** To sway, dominate and control
55. Inner peace To experience personal tranquillity and serenity	**56. Integrity** To behave honestly, with truth and genuineness	**57. Intelligence** To be clever
58. Intimacy To share my innermost experiences with others	**59. Justice** To promote equal and fair treatment for all	**60. Knowledge** To gather information and understanding
61. Leadership To guide from the front	**62. Leisure** To take time for relaxation	**63. Lovability** To be worthy of others' caring and affection
64. Mastery To be competent and capable	**65. Mindfulness** To live consciously and deliberately; in the present	**66. Moderation** To avoid excesses
67. Nurturance To cultivate the wellbeing of others	**68. Nature** To appreciate and celebrate the natural environment	**69. Non-conformity** To question and challenge authority and norms
70. Passion To feel deeply about ideas, activities and people	**71. Openness** To be receptive to new ideas, experiences and options	**72. Order** To live with a place for everything and everything in its place

73. Power To have control	**74. Pleasure** To experience happy enjoyment	**75. Popularity** To be well-liked by many people
76. Realism To perceive and act rationally and pragmatically	**77. Purpose** To have meaning and direction in life	**78. Rationality** To be guided by reason and logic
79. Responsibility To act with reliable consideration	**80. Recognition** For my achievements to be well-known and celebrated	**81. Respect** To be appreciated and admired and to offer others the same
82. Safety To be secure and protected	**83. Risk** To take chances	**84. Romance** To have intense, exciting love in my life
85. Self-esteem To be and know I'm okay	**86. Self-acceptance** To be comfortable with who I am	**87. Self-control** To be disciplined in my actions
88. Service To help and assist others	**89. Self-knowledge** To have a deep and honest understanding of myself	**90. Serenity** To have an inner peace and tranquillity
91. Solitude To enjoy time and space apart from others	**92. Sexuality** To have an active and satisfying sex life	**93. Simplicity** To be happy and content satisfying minimal needs

94. Tolerance To accept and respect those who are different from me	**95. Spirituality** To nurture belief in something unifying beyond worldly experience	**96. Stability** To enjoy a life with fairly consistent predictability
97. Virtue To live a morally pure and excellent life	**98. Tradition** To follow respected patterns of the past	**99. Truth** To embrace fact, authenticity and precision
100. Wealth To have money or other riches	**101. World peace** To strive for and promote sustained, peaceful co-existence	Personal Values Sorting cards adapted from W.R. Miller, J. C'de Baca, D.B. Matthews and P.L. Wilbourne, University of New Mexico, 2001

Appendix 2—Response-style quiz

Read each statement and the five possible responses provided. Select your most likely response and record it in the table on your **Worksheet**.

1. Margaret—I can't stop Ronnie painting on the walls. He has painting books, he has crayons, pencils, everything.
   a) How old was he when he started painting on the walls?
   b) At his age he shouldn't still be painting on the walls. You really shouldn't let him get away with it.
   c) It's not really fair to you when you've given him so many materials to play with.
   d) Maybe he's acting in a babyish way because he's jealous of the new baby.
   e) You feel helpless and desperate that in spite of all the things you give him to do he still paints on the walls.

2. John—Sometimes I wish I didn't have quite so many jobs coming my way. It's great to be in demand, but there are times when I would like more time for other things.
   a) You're just feeling that way because of all the articles you've read about people having heart attacks.
   b) I'm sure you can manage. You've always been able to keep up with things.
   c) When so many people are unable to get work, you should be thankful that you've got plenty of jobs on hand.
   d) You've got mixed feelings about having so much work.
   e) How many new jobs have you had in the last month?

3. Sam—A weekend is coming up and I guess Joanna will start her usual, telling my new girlfriend to go away.
   a) It's time she was learning to be a bit more polite to visitors. She needs to be taught how to behave.
   b) You're worried that Joanna is going to be rude to your friend once again.
   c) Do you think perhaps she just wants her family all to herself?
   d) Why do you think she doesn't want visitors around?
   e) Never mind. I'm sure your new girlfriend will understand.

4. Kate—Kids! They look so happy playing here now, but by tea-time they drive me mad.
   a) Don't let them get you down. They're really good kids.
   b) Do you spend plenty of time with them in the afternoon?
   c) Sometimes they just drive you crazy.
   d) You shouldn't let them get under your skin; it only makes them worse.
   e) Maybe they get irritable because they have their dinner too late and they're overtired.

5. Stephen—I'm a nervous wreck this week. My wife's mother is coming to stay for three months and Jim and Peter are continually at each other's throats. I just know they'll be at their worst. What am I going to do to preserve my sanity?
    a) You're dreading the next few months and feeling frazzled already.
    b) It's good for children to have their grandparents around.
    c) How long is it since your mother-in-law came to stay?
    d) I'm sure it will work out just fine and you'll enjoy having Gran to stay. It will be good for the boys, too.
    e) You should have a talk to the boys before their grandmother comes and make sure they're on their best behaviour.

6. Peter—I have the queerest feeling. Whenever anything good happens to me I find it hard to believe. I act as though it never happened. And it worries me. I wanted to take Sarah out for dinner. When she said 'yes', I was so flustered that I messed up the whole evening.
    a) It seems too good to be true when something good happens.
    b) You probably feel you don't deserve to have anything good happen and it makes you feel guilty.
    c) Well, you shouldn't worry about it.
    d) You've got to grow up and be a bit more realistic about women. She was probably dying to go out with you.
    e) Are these feelings associated with something that happened in the past? When did you first notice them?

7. Phillip—If we have another early morning scene over what to wear I'll smack those children … so help me!
    a) How many times have they made a scene?
    b) You get really angry and you're scared you'll do your block one of these days.
    c) But it's great that they care to dress nicely. You should be thankful.
    d) Oh! Go on! You know you love those children and they'll grow out of it.
    e) You just get upset because you were never allowed to choose your clothes.

8. Maria—I'm so excited! My sister is coming back to Australia for Christmas and the whole family will be together for a great celebration on Christmas Day.
    a) You poor girl; you must have been very lonely here without all your relatives.
    b) Is Christmas a big deal in Australia?
    c) It's just great to have her come back at this time and have the whole family all together at last.
    d) You want to have all your relatives together so you feel that you belong here.
    e) You shouldn't get too excited about things. It's too easy to be disappointed.

9. Alan—I'm determined to get ahead. I'm not afraid of hard work or of taking a few hard knocks, and I'm not against climbing over a few people who get in the way. This job means a lot to me. I want to be somebody. I can't be satisfied with a mediocre job.

    a) Because you come from a working-class background you feel you have to get on and do really well.

    b) You've got the right idea. You can't afford to put your career at risk by pussyfooting around.

    c) You see yourself as a very ambitious person, is that it?

    d) What do you suppose makes you so determined to get ahead?

    e) I can help you with some tests to find out what your strongest skills are, but you've got such drive you are sure to do well in anything you try.

10. Rosy—I can't stay. Things are crazy at home, what with hubby off work with a back injury. What will I do with the holidays coming up? Help! Do you know where I can get sitters or something? I have to have some time for me!

    a) You'll really have to put the needs of your husband and children first over this period. He can't help having a bad back.

    b) Never mind. The holidays aren't very long and I'm sure your husband will be okay soon.

    c) What is it you wanted time to do over the holidays?

    d) You probably feel that way because you're used to having time to yourself and you think life should be more balanced.

    e) You sound really pushed. Everyone seems to be needing you at once and there seems to be no time for you at the moment.

11. Kelly—We've been here for years. I was a kid in this area but you wouldn't know it. We don't have any friends. Anyway most people can't stand the kids. I guess five littlies is a lot when I call in on them. Anyway, I don't need to see people; I'm too busy.

    a) How often do you visit your neighbours?

    b) You're feeling pretty lonely and almost past caring.

    c) You probably don't have friends because you haven't made the effort to get to know the neighbours.

    d) Well, you can't expect to have time for social chit-chat, having such a large family.

    e) I'm sure people like you and don't mind the kids as much as you think.

12. Doug—I can't get this child to sit still for one minute. He's making it impossible for me to cut his hair. I've tried everything and nothing works. What can I do?

    a) You should try being much firmer with him and insisting that he conforms.

    b) He's the youngest in the family and used to getting his own way.

    c) Have you told his parents?

    d) Don't worry; he will probably settle down soon.

    e) You're fed up with this child. He's upsetting you and you don't know what to try next.

13. Sandy—Well, as a student I'm just expected to do what I'm told, not rock the boat, just do and say what has been done and said for the past hundred years!

    a) You have trouble with people in authority and you don't like being told what to do.
    b) Never mind. When you graduate you'll be able to do it your way.
    c) You have to remember that your teachers are very experienced and it's their job to teach you what they know.
    d) You don't feel you can attempt anything new and it's really frustrating.
    e) Well, don't you think they know how things should be done when they have been in the job so long?

14. Ken—I can't find my wallet! I think I left it in the car while it was parked outside the house and it's not there now. Oh! How could I? I just got out $300 for the rent! All my credit cards were in it, too …

    a) What a shame! But maybe it's not really lost.
    b) You ought to know by now that you have to lock everything up and you can't trust anyone.
    c) How upsetting! You're worried that you might have lost the lot!
    d) How long did you leave the car there?
    e) You have always been too trusting.

15. Mary—My mother has been sick, my father has left home and my sister has a new baby. I've been looking after all of them as well as my little sister and I just haven't had the time to do that extra work. I'm terribly behind and I'm really scared I'm going to lose my job.

    a) You've been so busy propping up your family that you've let your own commitments go and now you're really worried.
    b) How far behind are you at work?
    c) It's right and proper that you put your family first; you may just have to risk your job right now.
    d) I'm sure you'll catch up in time. It can't be all that bad.
    e) You wouldn't get so behind if you organised yourself better.

Appendix 3—State of mind scenarios

Make sufficient copies and cut them apart so that each participant gets only one scenario. We have found that a laminated set works well for repeated use.

1. You are in the middle of a very busy week. You day planner is full. You've just emerged from a difficult meeting and are feeling stressed and anxious—you don't know how you are going to get everything done in time. The company is downsizing and you are concerned that if you don't prove yourself, you might lose your job. You have a proposal on your desk that requires immediate attention and a colleague is hovering at your door with an urgent question …

2. You retired five years ago from a boring job where you had made few friends. Your childless marriage ended long before that. Now you live on your own in a quiet neighbourhood, have no family living close by and only a few close friends; your closest friends have been away on a long adventure holiday, you haven't seen anyone for a couple of weeks and you are getting sick of your own company. Your friends are due back today …

3. You have been feeling unwell for some months, your energy is low and you haven't had enough sleep. After excluding more obvious causes, your doctor has done some tests for more serious conditions. On one hand you hope they come back negative, on the other, you'd like to know that you have something that can be fixed. You still feel fragile and unwell, and have been waiting to hear what the test results reveal …

4. You work in a call centre and like the flexibility it provides. It's your job to answer the phone and attend to the inquiries. You have had training in how to handle calls professionally, you hold yourself to the highest standards and take it as a personal challenge to do the very best job you can with each and every caller. You enjoy 'meeting' the people who call in, even though you have to stay focused. So far it has been a great day …

5. You are deeply engrossed in a task that takes all your concentration and focus. You are content, excited, immersed. You are so absorbed that you have forgotten to eat and don't even notice the passing time as you attend to what you are doing and the results of your actions; each step builds on the previous as you pursue your goal. You have been at it for hours and will probably still be at it hours later …

A step-by-step guide to communication skills training

LISTEN TO ME, LISTEN TO YOU

This step-by-step guide is a companion to the popular *Listen to Me, Listen to You: A practical guide to self-awareness, communication skills and conflict management* (Revised edition, Penguin Books, 2007). It is designed for use by anyone working in communication skills and personal development training.

Resource material is grouped under major headings:

- Orientation
- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness and self-knowledge
- Effective listening
- Self-assertion
- Managing conflict collaboratively
- Reflection and closure

Each of these topics features key ideas as well as individual and group activities which can be used singly, or as part of a course, and includes reproducible masters for use by participants.

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