

Assertiveness Beliefs Check

Questionnaire

This exercise is designed to 'surface' some of the beliefs that affect your ability to behave assertively. Score each of the following statements using the following scale.

- ☐ 0 I don't believe this to be true
- ☐ 1 I sometimes believe this, depending on the situation
- ☐ 2 I usually believe this, but there are exceptions
- ☐ 3 I strongly believe this to be true

A reminder of this marking system is given at the top of each page. If an item does not apply to you in your current circumstances, mark it with a 0. Be sure to respond to all the statements. Be honest with yourself!

- 1 ☐ Nice people don't win
- 2 ☐ People must take me as they find me
- 3 ☐ Don't rock the boat
- 4 ☐ Admitting mistakes is an admission of weakness
- 5 ☐ Other people's ideas are usually better than mine
- 6 ☐ Anything for a quiet life
- 7 ☐ Nothing ventured, nothing gained
- 8 ☐ Opportunities are never missed; someone else takes them
- 9 ☐ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth

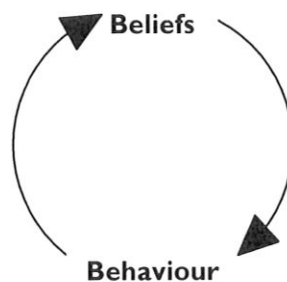
☐ 0 Don't believe ☐ 1 Sometimes ☐ 2 Usually ☐ 3 Strongly

- 10 ☐ The experts know best
- 11 ☐ False modesty is better than none
- 12 ☐ People are inherently lazy
- 13 ☐ I'm not in business to be popular
- 14 ☐ Never volunteer for anything
- 15 ☐ Results are the bottom line
- 16 ☐ Leave well alone
- 17 ☐ Other people should stand on their own two feet
- 18 ☐ I should put others first
- 19 ☐ In the event I'm usually proved right
- 20 ☐ If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen
- 21 ☐ My opinions don't count
- 22 ☐ It's wrong to upset people
- 23 ☐ Attack is the best form of defence
- 24 ☐ Better safe than sorry

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Commentary

Beliefs are conclusions we have reached from experience. Our beliefs affect the way we behave and the way we behave affects our beliefs.



Our beliefs are important because:

- we hold them to be true
- they affect our overt behaviour.

Beliefs are covert. No one can observe them, only the behaviour that results from them. Also beliefs are often vague. We are not necessarily very clear about our own beliefs or the extent to which they affect our behaviour.

The short checklist is designed to surface some of the beliefs that make it difficult for you to behave assertively in tricky situations. Half the statements represent beliefs that will incline you towards submissive behaviour and the other half towards aggressive behaviour. Assertive beliefs are excluded because the purpose of this exercise is to see, *when you are not being assertive*, whether you are more inclined to be submissive or aggressive.

Of course your beliefs do not necessarily dictate your outward behaviour. It is possible to hold submissive or aggressive beliefs yet override them and behave assertively. In other words, whatever your beliefs you can *choose* how to behave.

Clearly it is easier to have your beliefs and behaviour synchronised, but if they are not, you might find it easier to make adjustments to your behaviour first and hope that your beliefs will align themselves behind the new behaviours. The alternative is to overhaul your belief system and, having done so, expect the behaviours to flow more 'naturally'. The most potent recipe is to tackle both simultaneously; overhaul your beliefs about your rights to be assertive and use assertiveness techniques to modify your behaviour.

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Score Key

Transfer your marks into the boxes below

| | |
|-------|----------------------|
| 1 | <input type="text"/> |
| 2 | <input type="text"/> |
| 4 | <input type="text"/> |
| 7 | <input type="text"/> |
| 8 | <input type="text"/> |
| 12 | <input type="text"/> |
| 13 | <input type="text"/> |
| 15 | <input type="text"/> |
| 17 | <input type="text"/> |
| 19 | <input type="text"/> |
| 20 | <input type="text"/> |
| 23 | <input type="text"/> |
| Total | <input type="text"/> |

Beliefs associated with
Aggressive behaviour

| | |
|-------|----------------------|
| 3 | <input type="text"/> |
| 5 | <input type="text"/> |
| 6 | <input type="text"/> |
| 9 | <input type="text"/> |
| 10 | <input type="text"/> |
| 11 | <input type="text"/> |
| 14 | <input type="text"/> |
| 16 | <input type="text"/> |
| 18 | <input type="text"/> |
| 21 | <input type="text"/> |
| 22 | <input type="text"/> |
| 24 | <input type="text"/> |
| Total | <input type="text"/> |

Beliefs associated with
Submissive behaviour

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Interpretation

The interpretation is straightforward. The higher of the two scores indicates the direction in which your belief system is likely to incline you.

If there is no difference, or only, say, a two-point difference between the two scores, then you probably alternate, with more or less equal frequency, between submissive and aggressive behaviour. In this case, you might like to identify when you incline one way or the other. Since your beliefs equip you to go either way with equal ease, presumably the key to which way you go is the circumstances in which you find yourself. For example, you might find you tend to be submissive in your dealings with seniors and aggressive with peers or subordinates.

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Suggestions for Action

In tricky situations there are considerable advantages in being assertive and resisting the temptation to be submissive or aggressive. (This does not mean that it is **never** appropriate to be submissive or aggressive. There is a time and place for everything!)

Assertive behaviour is easier if you are clear about your rights and believe that you are entitled to them. Assertive rights are not enshrined in the laws of the land in the same way that consumers' rights are and so they are more a matter of belief than incontrovertible fact. See which of the rights on the following list you believe you are entitled to:

- the right to express your opinions, views and ideas
- the right to have your opinions, views and ideas listened to
- the right to have needs and wants that may differ from other people's
- the right to ask (not demand) that others respond to your needs and wants
- the right to refuse a request without feeling guilty or selfish
- the right to describe how you feel about something openly and honestly
- the right to be wrong or make mistakes from time to time
- the right to have others respect your rights
- the right to be clear what is expected of you
- the right to know how your manager sees your performance
- the right to get on with your job in your own way once objectives and constraints have been agreed
- the right to expect work of a certain standard from those who work for or with you
- the right to criticise people's performance when it falls below the agreed standard
- the right to be consulted about decisions that affect you

- the right to choose not to raise an issue and to decide not to assert yourself.

For more on assertive beliefs read chapter 3 in *Assertiveness at Work* (Third edition) by Ken and Kate Back published by McGraw-Hill, ISBN 0 - 07-709533 - 2.