

Session 27

COMMUNICATING (Or: I thought you said she said he said?) - Advocating and appealing

WHOSE FUTURE GOAL 20: You will learn to communicate effectively in small group settings.



WHAT KIND OF
DELIVERY PERSON ARE YOU?
MY DOG COULD DO A BETTER
JOB OF DELIVERING THE
PAPER THAN YOU DO! OH
YEAH?.. WELL...

Oh... hi! I didn't see you. Sorry. I was kind of angry. You see, I have my newspaper delivered to my home every morning. That's how I like to start my day...a hot bowl of oatmeal, a glass of cold milk and my morning paper.



Except that the new person delivering my paper keeps throwing it in the bushes where I have to climb in to get it.




And it keeps getting all wet from the rain and the dew in the bushes.

I mean, who wants to read a soggy, torn newspaper every morning? So, I was just giving that newspaper carrier a piece of my mind!

Now where were we? Oh yeah, last time we were talking about the difference

between being *Assertive*



and **AGGRESSIVE!!**  and how being **AGGRESSIVE!!** is not a good way to get what you want.

What?

What do you mean do I ever listen to myself? Of course I do.

Oh, you mean the newspaper carrier. I was kind of **AGGRESSIVE!!**



when I talked to him, wasn't I? He looked like he didn't like it much when I told him my dog could do a better job. That's not true either. My dog would tear the paper to shreds and slobber all over it.

How should I have handled that situation?



Well, you are right. I probably should have started out by telling the newspaper carrier

what the problem was and suggest that he be more careful. Then, if the paper keeps ending up in the shrubbery, I could tell him that that wasn't going to cut it and that he needed to do something about it or I was going to contact someone who could. I guess if I had to I could then complain to his manager or someone.

But, I bet we could work it out if I did a better job of advocating for myself and not

be **AGGRESSIVE!!**



OK. I'll do that. Maybe we should work through some activities that will give both of

us  a better idea of how to advocate for ourselves!

Advocate. That means to speak up for or to support. When you advocate for yourself, you speak up for yourself and stand up for things that are important to you.

We are going to think about advocating for yourself in your educational planning process. There are three things you really need to be able to do to advocate for yourself during these meetings:

1. Know what you want.
2. Know what **other people** want.
3. Know how to communicate why it is important to do what you want.

OK. We have talked about what you want in your educational program in the other sessions. You should have a good idea of your learning strengths, some outcomes you prefer, the supports you need to reach

those outcomes, and goals that you can set to succeed. So you should know what you



want out of the meeting.

Unfortunately, we don't always get everything we want! So you should choose what is most important to you if you have several things you would like to have happen. Give a little on one thing and you might get something you really want in return!

Why is it important to know what the **other people** want? Well, for one thing you can look at what you want and what they want and see if there are some things that are the same. That way you can agree on at least part of what both of you want! Everybody wins!



A lot of times people want the same thing and just say it in different ways.

Later on we will talk about negotiating and compromising. If what you want and what someone else wants can never agree, maybe there is another outcome that you could both agree on. That is a compromise. If you know what the other person wants, you can figure out a good compromise.

Of course, the third thing you need to be a good advocate for yourself is to be able to communicate to others...that is what this whole section is about!

We've already talked some about being

Assertive.



You remember? Standing up for yourself, being confident and making sure your ideas and opinions are heard.

Right. To be a good advocate and to communicate what you want to **other people**, you have be *Assertive*.



How assertive are you?

Here is a little quiz you can take to see if you know how an assertive person should act. We'll talk about the answers to the quiz sheet when you finish. Take it just for fun and see how assertive you are!

If you are assertive, you should....

Put an X in either the True or False box under each statement.

If you are assertive, you should....

1. Make eye contact with the person who is speaking.
☐ True ☐ False
2. Talk with a firm, clear, friendly, direct voice.
☐ True ☐ False
3. Hide your face so you won't be embarrassed.
☐ True ☐ False
4. Stand or sit up straight.

☐ True ☐ False

5. Yell or scream so you get everybody's attention.

☐ True ☐ False

6. Be prepared to talk about what you

need. ☐ True ☐ False

7. Start crying if you don't get your way.

☐ True ☐ False

8. Find out who you need to talk to about your problem.

☐ True ☐ False

9. Take a friend with you if you feel afraid or nervous.

☐ True ☐ False

10. Not worry about what the laws say because they are too confusing.

☐ True ☐ False

11. Ask if there is an appeal process.

☐ True ☐ False

12. Not take no for an answer.

☐ True ☐ False

13. Ask for help if you can't solve the problem yourself.

☐ True ☐ False

14. Give up and go home.

☐ True ☐ False

Easy, right? Well, let's look at these answers and see!

If you are assertive, you should....

1. Make eye contact with the person who is speaking.

True! We've already talked about that, right? Looking at people when they are talking lets them know you are listening to



what they have to say.

If you are assertive, you should....

2. Talk with a firm, clear, friendly, direct voice.

True! That way, people will understand what you have to say and will be more



likely to listen to what you say!

If you are assertive, you should....

3. Hide your face so you won't be embarrassed.



False! It hardly does any good to speak in a firm, clear voice if you are speaking to the table or into your arms or lap! Of course you shouldn't hide your face...I mean, you can't look someone in the eyes and hide your face at the same time, can you?

If you are assertive, you should....

4. Stand or sit up straight.

True! Another one we talked about.



Sitting up straight says that you are paying attention and are interested.

If you are assertive, you should....

5. Yell or scream so you get everybody's attention.



False! What is that? Right, that is being aggressive not assertive! You might get everyone's attention, but most likely they will throw you out for making a scene!

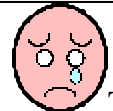
If you are assertive, you should....

6. Be prepared to talk about what you need.

True! Another one we've already talked about! Hey, you already know this stuff, don't you? By being prepared to talk about what you want you will be prepared to answer all the questions that might come up and can convince more people that what you want is right.

If you are assertive, you should....

7. Start crying if you don't get your way.



False! This may seem silly, but when people are talking about you, you might get really upset! It is best to try to keep all your emotions under control. It's OK to feel something, like anger or pleasure, but don't act based on your emotions. When something makes you feel angry, happy or even confused, tell the team using "I" statements. Those are things like "I feel angry when I hear you say something like that" or "I am glad we decided that!"

If you are assertive, you should....

8. Find out who you need to talk to about your problem.

True! Remember my paper carrier? If I could not get him to quit tossing the paper

in the bushes, I should have found out the person at the paper company who is in charge of paper carriers so I could talk with that person. Of course, in your educational and transition planning meetings, the people who you need to talk to, who can make things happen for you, should be at the meeting!

If you are assertive, you should....

9. Take a friend with you if you feel afraid or nervous.

True! Being assertive does not mean being the Lone Ranger! Come to think of it, even the Lone Ranger had a friend! If you feel uncomfortable, bring a friend.



If you are assertive, you should....

10. Not worry about what the laws say because they are too confusing.

False! You need to know your rights and your responsibilities. It is part of being prepared!

If you are assertive, you should....

11. Ask if there is an appeal process.

True! I had to sneak one in on you since you were doing so well! We haven't talked about the appeal process! You know of course that a process is something with



several steps in it before it is finished. Appeal means to ask someone to look at something again or to think about a decision that has been made. If decisions are made at your planning meetings that you

disagree with, and you can't get the team to see your point, you might be able to appeal the decision. That means someone else would look at the decision and decide whether it was a good decision or whether the team should meet again to make another decision.

Your school might not have an appeals process for students, but the law



requires that families can appeal decisions. You might think about working with your parents (I know, I know... ugh!) if some decisions are made that you all don't agree with.

If you are assertive, you should....

12. Not take no for an answer.

True! If you believe in what you want, and you know it is right for you then don't give up too soon. Keep working on it and maybe you can convince others to join you. That doesn't mean you shouldn't compromise and there are times when we all have to quit trying...at least for the moment!

If you are assertive, you should....

13. Ask for help if you can't solve the problem by yourself.


True! What makes you think you know everything? Of course you could use some assistance...we all can. Go ahead and take advantage of the people around you who can assist you in reaching your goals.



If you are assertive, you should....


14. Give up and go home.

False! Well, what can I say, really? If you

give up and go home  then **other people** will just keep making those decisions and living your life for you!



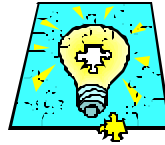
Go back and count the number of answers on the quiz that were the same as those I just gave you. If you got 10 to 14 of them right, you know a lot

about being assertive!  Good job! If you got 5 to 9 right, you've got a good start...keep after it! If you got 1 to 4 right...you must have been asleep during the last two sessions again! You don't want people running your life for you, do you? I didn't think so...work some more on the last few sessions!

There are some other things that will make you a better advocate for yourself. We've talked about how important it is to be prepared. That's why it is important that you know about your rights. I mean, if you are going to stand up for your own rights, you had better know what in the world they are, right? As a student receiving MULES



(remember ... My Unique Learning and Educational Supports?), you have some rights. We've already talked about IDEA



and some of the things it says you have rights about. I will bet that somewhere there is a list or booklet that shows your rights as a student in special education.



Take some time now to find out about your rights as a student. See if the school district has a book listing those



rights. Maybe they have a book about parental rights that also lists your rights. You may have to just talk with someone or actually phone someone who might know.



In any case, find out what rights you have available to you.

I'll wait.

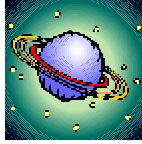
OK. Now, you've got an idea of some rights. We've talked about a lot of them. Like the right to an IEP that lists your goals and the right to the supports you need.

Rights have responsibilities with them. So, if you have a right to be involved in your transition meeting, you also have the responsibility to come to that meeting prepared, right?

Anyway, knowing your rights will help you advocate for yourself better. I mean, let's suppose you go to your meeting and begin demanding that for lunch each day you have pizza. I mean, that may be something you want. On the other hand, I doubt your

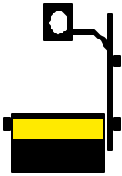
folks want to have you eating pizza every day. But anyway, you are in this meeting and you stand up and say “I have a right to have pizza every day!”

Well, they are going to look at you like you



are from Saturn. I mean, no law gives you the right to have pizza every day!

But if you say that you understand that you have the right to participate in your planning meeting and that you have done some work to prepare for it...well, that's a different story. Those **other people** are going to take you seriously for a change!



Okay. Let's look at what you've covered this session.





- ☒ You learned that it is important to a _____ and speak up for yourself and for things that are important to you.
- ☒ You found out that if decisions are made at your planning meetings that you disagree with, you might be able to a _____ the decision.
- ☒ You saw that you do have r _____ as a student, but that you also have to be reasonable about what you want.

☒ You learned that if you want to be taken seriously, you have to be p _____ when you go into your meeting.

☒ You saw the difference between being assertive and being a _____ and learned that you don't get anywhere by being aggressive.



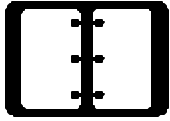
Before the next session, you should have:

-  Thought about what you want out of your IEP meeting.
-  Thought about how you are going to communicate the things that are important to you to the other team members.
-  Talked to someone at your school to see what rights you have as a student if you disagree with the decisions made during your planning meeting.
-  Taken responsibility to be prepared for your planning meeting.

Okay. So that's it for now.



Later.



Session 27 Summary Sheet - Advocating and appealing

WHOSE FUTURE GOAL 20: You will learn to communicate effectively in small group settings.

- ☒ You learned that it is important to advocate and speak up for yourself and for things that are important to you.
- ☒ You found out that if decisions are made at your planning meetings that you disagree with, you might be able to appeal the decision.
- ☒ You saw that you do have rights as a student, but that you also have to be reasonable about what you want.
- ☒ You learned that if you want to be taken seriously, you have to be prepared when you go into your meeting.
- ☒ You saw the difference between being assertive and being aggressive and learned that you don't get anywhere by being aggressive.