



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Cardiac Rehabilitation Stress Management***



## ***Session 5: Social Support and Assertive Communication***



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

## *Outline for Today:*

- Review the homework
- Discuss the importance of social support
- Review effective communication
- Review Assertiveness skills
- Continue practicing relaxation exercises





# *Review*

- Any thoughts, feelings, reactions from the last session?
  - Homework
    - How did you change the distribution of your time across work, relationships and self-care?
    - What did you identify as 3 things you will do to use your time more efficiently?
    - How did the progressive muscle relaxation go?
    - Were you able to incorporate any of the “finding time” tips for exercise and healthy eating?
-



# ***Importance of Social Support***

- A strong social support system buffers the impact of everyday stresses
  - People in happy couple relationships, for example, have fewer illnesses and lower death rates than those in unhappy relationships
  - Achieving goals in any part of life is enhanced by the support of others
    - Parent, spouse/partner, friend, teacher, boss, coach
  - Getting support from others is sometimes complicated...and we often find it hard to ask.
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# *Communication*

- Effective Communication = expressing needs and getting needs met

## 4 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION STYLES





UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# *Communication Styles*

## THE 4 COMMUNICATION STYLES

PASSIVE



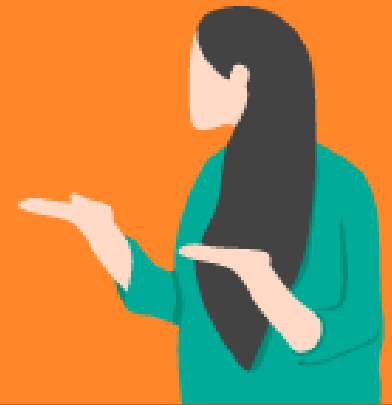
AGGRESSIVE



PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE



ASSERTIVE





UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# *Passive Communication*

- What does passive communication look like?
- How do you know when you have been too passive?
- How do you feel when you have been too passive?





# *Passive Communication*

- Individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings.
  - When hurt or angry, people using a passive style will not respond overtly.
  - Grievances or annoyances will mount
  - High tolerance...but once they reach this level, they are prone to explosive outbursts, usually out of proportion to the triggering incident
-





UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Impact of Passive Communication***

- Feeling that your position is not heard by others
  - Feeling like you can't influence things that are important to you
  - Feeling anxious, helpless or hopeless because life seems out of your control
  - Feeling resentful (but not always unaware of it) because your needs are not being met
  - Feeling dissatisfied or frustrated because you didn't get what was bothering you off your chest ("if only I had said")
  - If there was an outburst, they feel shame, guilt and confusion
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Aggressive Communication***

- What does aggressive communication look like?
- How do you know when you have been too aggressive?
- How do you feel when you have been too aggressive?
- How do others feel when you communicate with aggression?





# ***Aggressive Communication***

- Individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others
  - Aggressive communication often includes the use of humiliation to control others, criticizing, blaming or threatening others, speaking in a loud, demanding and overbearing voice, being rude, and not listening well (“you did....”)
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Impact of Aggressive Communication***

- Being alienated from others
  - Being feared or disliked by others
  - Increased chance of conflict - aggression leads to others fight back
  - One person getting their way, while the other person feels hurt, angry or put-down.
  - Aggressive people do not usually feel good after the interaction.
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# *Passive - Aggressive Communication*

- What does passive-aggressive communication look like?
- How do you know when you have been passive-aggressive?
- How do you feel when you have been passive-aggressive?





# *Passive-Aggressive Communication*

- Individuals appear passive on the surface but are really acting out anger in a subtle or indirect way
  - People using a passive-aggressive style usually feel powerless, stuck, resentful, and don't feel they can deal directly with the other person.
  - They often:
    - Mutter to themselves rather than confront the person or issue
    - Have difficulty acknowledging their anger or deny there is a problem
    - Use facial expressions that don't match how they feel
    - Appear cooperative, but disrupt or annoy
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Impact of Passive-Aggressive Communication***

- Being alienated from those around them
- Remain stuck in a position of powerlessness
- Feel resentful

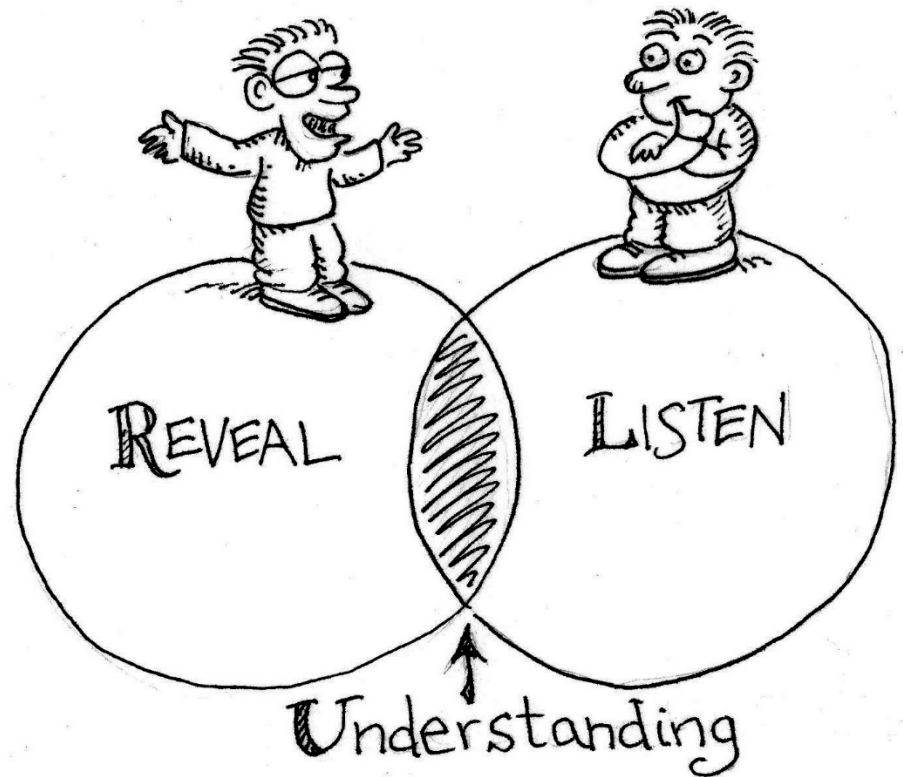




UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# Assertive Communication

- What does assertive communication look like?
- How do you know when you have been assertive?
- How do you feel when you have been assertive?







UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Assertive Communication***

- Individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and advocate for their rights and needs without violating the rights of others
  - Assertive communication is deliberate – we make a clear decision to use this style
  - The aim is to equalize the balance of power – not just “winning the battle”
  - No intention to hurt others
  - It does not always mean we get exactly what we set out to achieve
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Assertive Communicators will:***

- State their needs and wants clearly, appropriately, and respectfully
- Express feelings clearly, appropriately, and respectfully
- Use “I” statements
- Listen well without interrupting
- Speak in a calm and clear tone of voice & have good eye contact
- Have a relaxed body posture
- Feel connected to others





UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# ***Impact of Assertive Communication***

- Feel heard and connected to others
- More likely to get needs met
- Create a respectful environment in which they can grow

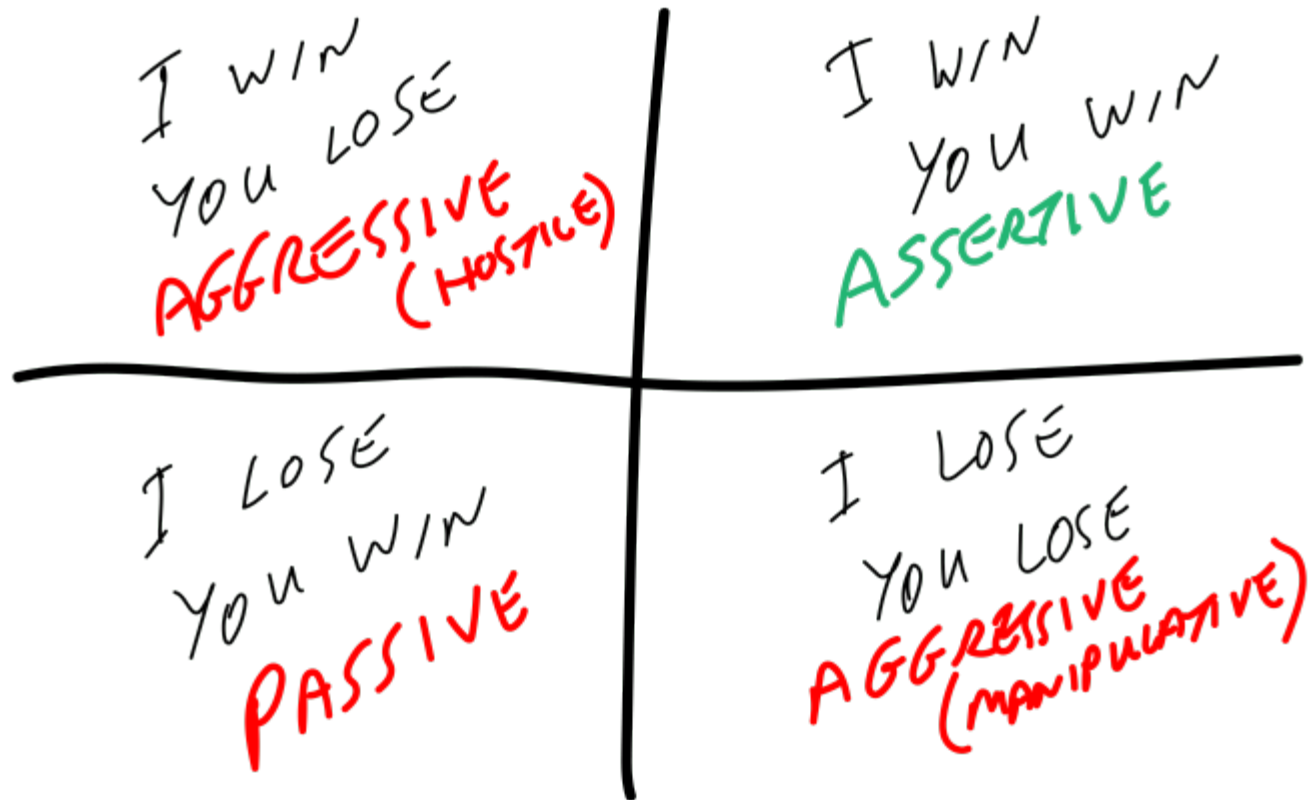
## **How does assertive behaviour reduce stress?**

- When we are assertive, we have expressed our needs and our desired outcome. We have said or done what we have a right to say or do – we've gotten it off our chest. That way, we don't end up upset, saying to ourselves, "I really should have told him/her how I was feeling about what they said or did"
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# Who wins with each style?





UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

## *Communication tips:*

- Express thoughts, feelings and needs clearly and directly using “I feel” statements
    - “I’m feeling attacked and put down,” rather than “You’re wrong! I hate when you criticize and nag me!”
  - Don’t make assumptions
    - Ask the listener to convey back to you their understanding of the message you sent; correct misperceptions.
  - Don’t interrupt
  - Plan what you want to say in advance
  - Think about the timing of your message
  - Use empathy - put yourself in the other person’s shoes & acknowledge how they are feeling
  - Inquire/explore: Ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling
-



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# *Practice*

Think about a few relevant scenarios  
and how you might react



- Appt with cardiologist
- Have questions about test results
- S/he is late & in a rush
- How can you be assertive in this situation?



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# *Practice*



- Work – you booked off Friday as vacation & arranged to meet with friends to golf
  - Tee-off time is reserved
  - Thursday at 4:15pm – your boss tells you there is an important meeting you should attend tomorrow
  - How would you deal with this situation in an assertive manner?
-

# ***Mindfulness***

*Maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings & bodily sensations*

*Involves acceptance  
– we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them*







UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

# Homework

- Review “assertiveness behaviour” sheet
- Complete “assertive communication aid” sheet
- Note examples of situations that occurred during the week when you were passive, aggressive or assertive. What helped you to be assertive?
- Mindfulness exercise

