

Soft Skills II: Assertiveness & Manipulation in Interpersonal Communication

PA017 SW Engineering II → Aspects of SW Development
Management

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Types of behavior in interpersonal relationships

Aggressive

Denies rights of other people.

Perceived as: anger, intimidation, terrorizing, desire to control, punish and belittle others.

Consequences:

- towards self: guilty consciousness, frustration, bad self-concept (resulting from lack of self-control)
- towards others: loss of opportunities, unpopularity, loneliness, isolation (may lead to further aggressiveness)

Types of behavior in interpersonal relationships

Passive

Denies own rights.

Perceived as: retreating, self-denial, apologetic behavior, undue acceptance of fault, prioritizing needs of other people, inability to say "no".

Consequences:

- towards self: depression, helplessness, bad self-concept, self-harm, stress
- towards others: inability to fulfill tasks and expectations, unpopularity, isolation, passive aggression resulting from frustration

Types of behavior in interpersonal relationships

Assertive

Acknowledges own rights as well as rights of others.

Perceived as: adequate self-confidence, ability to clearly express own needs, understanding for and acceptance of needs of others.

- no impact on self-perception, adherence to own values and ideas
- constructive communication without perceived threat

Consequences of assertive behavior

- efficient problem solving
- all parties feel comfortable
- creates and maximizes opportunities
- allows to fulfill own potential
- contributes to calm, relaxed communication

Eight basic assertiveness techniques

1. Express your feelings – *"I don't like that"*
2. Authenticity – your words and facial expression should be consistent with your feelings
3. Right to say "No" – don't be afraid to refuse something you cannot commit yourself to
4. Use "I..." sentences – express your opinion, do not speak in the name of the group
5. Accept appraisal – do not devalue your success
6. Do not be afraid to be spontaneous – best cure to indecisiveness
7. Rely on your own perception of self rather than on opinion of others
8. If you do something for someone, do it from your own will

Assertive rights

- Right to make illogical decisions and you are not obliged to explain it to anyone
- Right to act independently on approval of others
- Right to question authorities
- Right to change opinion
- Right to not apologize if you do not feel guilty

Assertive rights

- Right to take time to make decision
- Right to say "I do not know"
- Right to say "I do not understand that"
- Right to admit that you do not care about certain things, that you do not have preference for any of presented options

Manipulation

Manipulation

Controlling, exploiting or influencing others to obtain an advantage that one would not have right to obtain otherwise.

- Manipulation is perceived negatively, since manipulator is creating an advantage on expense of a third party.
- On the other hand, influencing or persuasion is transparent and considered harmless, as it does not attempt to bypass one's right to accept or reject
- Manipulation positively correlates with emotional intelligence

30 signs of manipulative behavior

- 1 Invokes guilty consciousness in others in the name of "higher good" (project success, relationships, friendship, coworkership, love...)
- 2 Transfers own responsibility on others or attempts to get rid of it
- 3 Is not transparent (honest) about own attitudes, emotions, or requirements
- 4 Provides neutral or unclear answers to questions
- 5 Changes own attitudes, opinions, or emotions according to situation or when talking to different people
- 6 Supports his desires (emotional) with logical reasons
- 7 Denies rights of others to change their mind; insists that they must answer immediately and be clear about their their opinions

30 signs of manipulative behavior

- 8 Questions quality of others, subtly criticizes and judges them, highlights their (even minor) transgressions
- 9 Prefers indirect communication (emails, written notes...) or uses someone else to pass on the message
- 10 Uses "Divide & Conquer" approach – supports suspicions, invokes conflicts
- 11 Plays the role of a victim such that others will feel sorry about him/her (complains about stress, hard work conditions, exaggerates health conditions, unreliable colleagues...)
- 12 Does not consider requirements of other people (despite explicitly saying so)
- 13 Exploits morale values of others to fulfill own needs
- 14 Makes subtle threats or even explicitly extorts/blackmails others

30 signs of manipulative behavior

- 15 Tends to switch topic in a middle of a conversation or repeatedly returns to own topic regardless of others
- 16 Avoids meetings (comes late & leaves early) – to avoid assignment and/or control of tasks fulfillment; pretends to be superbusy; demands "special treatment"
- 17 Highlights imperfections of others to make impression that he/she is better
- 18 Lies
- 19 Lies to obtain the truth; twists words or takes them out of context, makes misinterpretations of other people's statements
- 20 Is selfish and egocentric
- 21 Is envious, even of own partner or kids

- 22 Hates criticism and is able to deny obvious facts
- 23 Is insensitive towards rights, needs and wishes of other people
- 24 Takes advantage of time pressure – makes requests or pushes others to make decision in last-minute
- 25 His/her speech appears to be logical and consistent, but his/her actions or way of life are contradictory to his/her statements
- 26 Uses compliments, unexpected gifts or favours

- 27 Other people feel uncomfortable or unfree in his/her presence
- 28 Follows own goals on other people account
- 29 Pushes others people to do things they would not do on their own will
- 30 People who know him/her frequently talk about him/her in his/her absence – is commonly a subject to long discussions

Evaluation: 10+ points means that the person probably is a manipulator.

How to communicate with a manipulator

- Speak in simple, short sentences
- Minimize explicit statements or information, be vague
- Use phrases, proverbs or references to general knowledge
- Speak generally (it, we, people)
- Act politely

How to communicate with a manipulator

- Do not get involved into discussion when it is manipulative – smile, joke around, joke on own account
- Do not get involved into discussion that is not leading anywhere or that only leads to criticism
- Avoid aggression
- Be ironic or sarcastic only to cut off a discussion and when feeling confident
- Simply say sorry, but do not justify yourself

Emotional Intelligence

- There is no correlation between IQ and EQ
- For a successful life, EQ is more important than IQ
 - Uncontrolled impulsive emotions and/or denied, suppressed emotions have great impact on quality of life (both professional and personal)

What is Emotional Intelligence about?

- Ability to reflect upon and respond to own emotions
- Ability to reflect upon and respond to emotions of other people, even when we feel it differently
- Ability to understand interpersonal relationships and handle conflicts
- Ability to understand social contexts, norms, expectations

People who develop their EQ understand their environment better and make use of opportunities which would make others to fall behind.

Aspects of Emotional Intelligence

- **Self-awareness** – I know myself, I understand myself
- **Self-control** – I can regulate my behavior and make use of it
- **Social awareness** – I know other people, I understand them
- **Managing relationships** – I make decisions about the relationships I am involved in such that I feel comfortable in them

EQ and Quality of Life

- High IQ, high work performance or good job position does not necessarily imply feelings of happiness or success
- Happiness and satisfaction comes when we can reach for achievements such that we do not hurt ourselves or others
- It is important to reflect own emotions as well as feelings of other people; to take them seriously and think about them – only then we can fulfill our potential

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