Objective

- Describe the differences between assertive, aggressive, passive and passive-aggressive behavior.
- Identify 3 methods of developing assertive behaviors.
- Identify the 3 benefits of assertiveness.
Introduction

- It has been said that internationally educated nurses are not assertive.

- This could be as a result of cultural differences.

- Being assertive is a core communication skill.

- Assertiveness is necessary for effective nurse/patient communication.

- Being assertive means that you express yourself effectively and stand up for your point of view, while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others.
Being assertive can also help boost your self-esteem and earn others' respect.

As a nurse from different cultural background and in a new and different environment it is important that you become aware of how to use assertiveness effectively in the workplace to help you manage some of the challenges you may face when dealing with others.

Assertive communication is a valuable skill to possess or acquire to deal with the complex human relations you encounter on and off the workplace.

Assertive nurses are better skilled at communicating effectively with other members of the healthcare team.
Definition of Assertiveness

- Assertiveness is the ability to honestly express your opinions, feelings, attitudes, and rights, without undue anxiety, in a way that doesn't infringe on the rights of others.

- Assertiveness is the ability to express yourself and your rights without violating or infringing on the rights of others.

- Assertiveness is about working with people, not against them.
Assertiveness

- Assertiveness is demonstrated in how a person communicates—direct, open, and appropriate in respect of others.

- When a person communicates in an assertive manner, verbal and nonverbal communication is congruent, making the message clearer, and often includes “I” statements.

- Assertiveness: facilitates the exchange of knowledge among professionals
Assertiveness

- Assertiveness is a healthy behavior that, when present mitigates against personal powerlessness and results in personal empowerment.

Why is Assertiveness important?

- If you don't know how to be assertive, you might experience:
  - Depression -- Anger turned inward, a sense of being helpless, hopeless, or of having no control over your life.
  - Resentment -- Anger at others for manipulating or taking advantage of you.
  - Frustration -- Why did I allow that to happen?
  - Temper/violence -- If you can't express anger appropriately, it may build up.
Difference between being Assertive and aggressive

- People sometimes confuse assertiveness with aggression.

- Assertive and aggressive communications are not the same.

- Assertiveness is a mid-point between passiveness and aggressiveness.

- Assertiveness is based on mutual respect, it's an effective and diplomatic communication style.

- Being assertive gives you the best chance of successfully delivering your message.
Passive Behavior

- Passive behavior occurs when an individual focus on the needs and desires of others, but ignore their own needs and wishes (disregard ones own needs).

- If your style is passive, you may seem to be shy or overly easygoing.

- When you are too passive you give others the impression that your thoughts and feelings aren't as important as those of other people.

- The behavior maybe interpreted as lack of interest/knowledge
Passive Behavior

- **Passive people:**
  - Tend to give in to other people's wishes while forgetting their own needs and wants.
  - Have a difficult time saying no to people.
  - Often have a hard time making decisions.
  - Have a hard time maintaining eye contact.
  - Avoid confrontation at all costs (e.g., not speaking up when the waiter brings you the wrong drink or warm instead of hot food).
Difference between being Assertive and aggressive

- **Passive-aggressive** behavior involves masking aggression to avoid accepting responsibility for the consequences of one’s behavior.

- Passive-aggressiveness is anger expressed in a nonverbal way.

- If you communicate in a passive-aggressive manner, you may say yes when you want to say no.
Passive-aggressive

- You may be sarcastic or complain about others behind their backs.

- You may have developed a passive-aggressive style because you're uncomfortable being direct about your needs and feelings.

- Over time, passive-aggressive behavior damages relationships and undercuts mutual respect, making it difficult for you to get your goals and needs met.
Difference between being Assertive and aggressive

- Being **assertive** shows that you respect yourself, because you're willing to stand up for your interests and express your thoughts and feelings.

- It also demonstrates that you're aware of the rights of others and are willing to work on resolving conflicts.

- Assertive persons are better able to confront problems in a constructive manner and do not remain silent.

- Assertiveness is based on balance.
Assertiveness

- It requires being forthright about your wants and needs while still considering the rights, needs, and wants of others.

- Assertive behavior requires that the other person be treated with respect.

- When you are assertive, you are able to:
  - Express and communicate your feelings accurately.
  - Ask for things you want.
  - Say no to things you do not want.
  - Have the opportunity to have your needs and wants met.
  - Attain the respect of others.
Assertive Behavior

- Assertive people:
  - Are concerned with both their needs as well as other people's needs.
  - Are openly able to express themselves with other people.
  - Are able to respond in a respectful manner when there is a disagreement.
  - Are able to ask for help.
  - Are confident and able to make decisions.
  - Are able to say no to people/places/things they do not want.
  - Are responsible for their own feelings/behaviors/thoughts.
Difference between being Assertive and aggressive

- **Aggressive behavior** is based on winning.

- It requires that you do what is in your own best interest without regard for the rights, needs, feelings or desires of others.

- When you are aggressive, you take what you want regardless, and you don't usually ask.

- Aggressive behavior occurs when you force your own needs on others.
Your Needs

Assertive

Aggressive

Passive

Others' Needs

Aggressive

Assertive

Passive

MY WAY

HIGHWAY
Aggressiveness

- Aggressive behavior is push and inconsiderate.
- If your style is aggressive, you may come across as a bully who disregards the needs, feelings and opinions of others.
- You may appear self-righteous or superior.
- Very aggressive people humiliate and intimidate others, and may even be physically threatening.
Aggressive Behavior

- Aggressive people:
  - Tend to be concerned only for their needs at the expense of others' needs.
  - Have a tendency to lose their temper. May make decisions for other people.
  - May shout or use bully techniques to get their way.
  - May continue to argue long after someone has had enough.
  - May call others names or even use obscenities when angry.
  - May openly criticize or find fault with others ideas, opinions, or behaviors.
  - Often use confrontation to get what they want.
Passive
You step on me

Assertive
Both are protected

Aggressive
I step on you
Interpersonal Communication

- It refers to one-to-one interaction between two persons that often occurs face to face. The purpose of interpersonal communication is to share information, opinion, ideas, and so on. Interpersonal communication can be further divided into three types:
  - Assertive Communication
  - Nonassertive Communication
  - Aggressive Communication
Interpersonal Communication

Source: Review of communication process. Communication and nursing education. From
http://my.safaribooksonline.com/book/...1...communication.../ch1_6_xhtml

**Assertive communication**
- It is a type of interpersonal communication that has the following characteristics:
  - Confidently expressing what you think, feel, and believe.
  - Raising voice for your rights while respecting the rights of others.
  - Conveying meaning and expectations without humiliating or degrading others.
  - Based upon respect for you and respect for other people's need and rights.

**Nonassertive communication**
- Nonassertive communication is characterized as follows:
  - Inability to express consistently what you think, feel, and believe.
  - Allowing others to violate your rights without challenge.
  - Reflecting lack of respect for your own preferences.
  - Others can easily disregard your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.
- It cannot be considered a good communication strategy for a professional nurse.

**Aggressive communication**
- Aggressive communication takes place when someone expresses himself/herself in ways that intimidate, demean, or degrade another person, pursuing what you want in ways that violate the rights of another person. It is considered as an unsuitable communication technique for a professional nurse.
Resources

- Communication Style Self-Assessment. Visit New line ideas to complete a quick questionnaire.
- This questionnaire is designed to help you assess your preferred communication style.
- [http://www.newlineideas.com/communication-style-quiz.html](http://www.newlineideas.com/communication-style-quiz.html)
Critical rules related to assertive behavior (Smith, 1975)

- 1. Avoid over apologizing.
- 2. Avoid defensive, adverse reactions, such as aggression, temper tantrums, backbiting, revenge, slander, sarcasm, and threats.
- 3. Use body language—such as eye contact, body posture, gestures, and facial expressions—that is appropriate to and that matches the verbal message.
- 4. Accept manipulative criticism while maintaining responsibility for your decision.
- 5. Calmly repeat a negative reply without justifying it.
- 6. Be honest about feelings, needs, and ideas.
- 7. Accept and/or acknowledge your faults calmly and without apology.
Assertive behavior (Katz, 2001, p. 267)

- Expressing feelings without being nasty or overbearing
- Acknowledging emotions but remaining open to discussion
- Expressing self and giving others the chance to express themselves equally
- Using I statements to defuse arguments
- Asking and giving reason

*Being assertive helps you find your voice as a nurse and as a person.*
The nurse’s voice

What is the nurse’s voice?

The “unique perspectives and contributions that nurses bring to patient care” (Pike, 2001, p. 449).

Keeping silent may have a negative impact on patient care.

- It may influence how a nurse speaks out or advocates for care that a patient needs;
- how effective a nurse can be on the interprofessional treatment team; and
- how nurses participate in healthcare program planning on many levels.
The nurse’s voice

- Each nurse has the responsibility and accountability to define himself or herself as a colleague, and empowerment is part of this process.

- Nurses are vital members of the healthcare team and should be seen and treated as such.

- Nurses have a lot to offer when healthcare issues and decision are made.

- They need to become more effective in communicating what nursing has to offer.

Learning to be assertive helps you with all of the above.
What are power, powerlessness, and empowerment?

- To feel like one is not listened to or not viewed positively can make a person feel powerless.

- Many nurses feel that they cannot make an impact in clinical settings, and they are not listened to or sought out for their opinion.

- This powerlessness can result in nurses feeling like victims.

- Learn to be assertive and feel less like a victim.
This feeling can act against nurses when they do not take on issues such as the image of nurses and when they allow others to describe what a nurse is or to make decisions for nurses.

What nurses want and need is power—to be able to influence decisions and have an impact on issues that matter to them.

Power and influence are related.

Power is about control to reach a goal.

“Power means you can influence others and influence decisions” (Finkelman, 2012, p. 341).
Empowerment

- To empower is to enable one to act—a critical need in the nurses.

- Empowerment is needed in day-to-day practice as nurses meet the needs of patients in diverse settings.

- Empowerment also implies that some may lose their power while others gain power.

- Nurses who experience empowerment feel that they are respected and trusted to be active participants.

- Staff who feel empowered also demonstrate a positive image to other healthcare team members, patients and their families, and the public.
Empowerment

- Nurses who do not feel empowered will not be effective in demonstrating a positive image of nursing;
- they will not be able to communicate that nurses are professionals with much to offer.
- Empowered teams feel a responsibility for the team’s performance and activities—this can improve care and reduce errors.
- Nurses share responsibility and accountability for patient care outcomes
- Handle conflict in a positive manner
Resources

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlzXCUGoEuA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlzXCUGoEuA)
Assertive Rights

- Right to be treated with respect;
- Right to a reasonable workload;
- Right to an equitable wage;
- Right to determine our own priorities;
- Right to ask for what you want;
- Right to refuse without making excuses or feeling guilty;
- Right to make mistakes and be responsible for them;
- Right to give and receive information as a professional;
Assertive Rights

- Right to act in the best interest of the patient;
- Right to be human;
- The right to have and express your own ideas and feelings;
- The right to be listened to and taken seriously;
- The right to be treated with respect;
- The right to ask for information from others;
- The right to make mistakes and learn from them.
The assertion model Safer Healthcare

1. Get Person’s Attention
2. Express Concern
3. State Problem
4. Propose Action
5. Reach Decision
Advantages of assertive communication

- Get what you want when you clearly ask for it
- People respect clear, open, honest, communication
- Stand up for your own rights and feel self-respect
- Avoid the invitation of aggression when the rights of others are violated.
- More independent
- You become a better decision-maker
- Boost self confidence.
Some irrational beliefs that impede assertive communication

- Focus on negative outcomes
- Assertive people are cold and self-serving
- You will be devastated if someone gets angry with you
- Wrong to turn down legitimate requests
- Assertiveness causes others to become angry, hurt or upset with you
- It is uncaring to be assertive
- If someone says ‘no’ to my request, they don’t like or love me
- I shouldn’t have to say what I need – people close to me should know
Aggressive communication

- Loud
- Forceful
- Confrontational
- Aggressively "trying to get what you want"
- Rights are responded to out of proportion to those of others.
Behavior of an assertive nurse

- An assertive nurse
  - appears self-confident and composed
  - maintains eye contact during communication
  - uses clear, concise speech
  - speaks firmly and positively
  - speaks genuinely, without sarcasm or disdain for others
  - is non-apologetic for expressing his/her opinion or ideas
  - takes initiative to guide situations
  - gives the same message verbally and nonverbally
The DESC script

- The DESC script was developed by Sharon and Gordon Bower and is discussed more fully in their book, “Asserting Yourself”.

- DESC stands for Describe, Express, Specify, and Consequences.

- Using the DESC Script can help you develop and become more assertive.

- Try practicing the script for different situations.
Using the DESC script

- **D = DESCRIBE**
  - Describe the situation or the behavior that you do not like.

- **E = EXPRESS**
  - Express what you think and your feelings regarding the behavior, using an “I” statement.

- **S = SPECIFY**
  - Specify your request or a more acceptable behavior, either with or without the input of the person(s) with whom you are experiencing the conflict.

- **C = Consequences (no threats)**
  - Developing consequences, both positive and negative,
Following is an example in which the DESC model has been used:

“I feel (state a feeling) when you (describe the behavior). I would really like to do something about this situation so that it will not happen again. I’m wondering if you have any ideas about possible solutions. Here are some of my ideas. (State alternative solutions and come to an agreement on one of them.) Now, since this problem has come up before, I want some assurance that the problem will work this time. (Negotiate positive and/or negative consequences.) I feel much better now that we’ve spoken about this issue. I appreciate your willingness to work this out with me.” (Lyman, 2007)
Learning to say ‘no’

- Saying no is an important component of learning to be assertive.

- It helps to develop boundaries, which can safeguard your time and energy.

- Saying no effectively may even help keep you and patient safe from harm.

- Saying no won't be easy if you're used to saying yes all the time. But learning to say no is an important part of simplifying your life and managing your stress. And with practice, you may find saying no gets easier.
Why We can’t say no;

- You want to help.
- Afraid of being rude.
- Wanting to be agreeable.
- Fear of conflict.
- Fear of lost opportunities
- Not burning bridges

**Reasons for saying no;**

- Saying no isn't necessarily selfish.
- Saying no can allow you to try new things.
- Always saying yes isn't healthy.
- Saying yes can cut others out.
Learning to say ‘no’

- By learning to say ‘no’ in an assertive, non-aggressive way, to new commitments, you are able to streamline your schedule, reduce stress level, and have time for what's really important in your job.

- When you say ‘yes’ instead of saying ‘no’ regardless of whether your reason is guilt, inner conflict, or a misguided notion that you can do everything, by learning to say ‘no’, you can be helpful to yourself and others.

- People who agree to do things they don’t really want to do, or have the time or capacity to do, end up feeling angry with themselves and resentful towards the person they said yes to, instead of finding enjoyment in the task.
How to say ‘no’

Some things to keep in mind when you need to say ‘no’:

- Say no. The word "no" has power. Don't be afraid to use it. Be careful about using wimpy substitute phrases, such as "I'm not sure" or "I don't think I can." These can be interpreted to mean that you might say yes later.

- Be brief. State your reason for refusing the request, but don't go on about it. Avoid elaborate justifications or explanations.

- Be honest. Don't fabricate reasons to get out of an obligation. The truth is always the best way to turn down a friend, family member or co-worker.
How to say ‘no’

- Be respectful. Many good causes may be presented to you, and it can be tough to turn them down. Complimenting the group's effort while saying that you can't commit shows that you respect what they're trying to accomplish.

- Be ready to repeat. You may need to refuse a request several times before the other person accepts your response. When that happens, just hit the replay button. Calmly repeat your no, with or without your original rationale, as needed. (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). (2013)

- Practice. Saying “no” is like any other interpersonal skill—it feels clumsy and awkward at first, and we improve only with repeated effort.
How to be effectively assertive:

- Assess your style. Do you voice your opinions or remain silent? Do you say yes to additional work even when your plate is full? Are you quick to judge or blame? Do people seem to dread or fear talking to you? Understand your style before you begin making changes.

- Use assertive body language. Communication isn't just verbal. Act confident even if you aren't feeling it. Face the other person, stand or sit straight, don't use dismissive gestures, be sure you have a pleasant, but serious facial expression, keep your voice calm and soft, not whiny or abrasive. Don't wring your hands or use dramatic gestures. Practice assertive body language in front of a mirror or with a friend or colleague.

- Use "I" statements. Keep the focus on the problem you're having, not on accusing or blaming the other person. "I'd like to be able to tell my stories without interruption." instead of "You're always interrupting my stories!" Say, "I disagree," rather than, "You're wrong."

- Practice saying no. If you have a hard time turning down requests, try saying, "No, I can't do that now." Don't beat around the bush — be direct. If an explanation is appropriate, keep it brief.
How to be effectively assertive:

- Rehearse what you want to say. If it's challenging to say what you want or think, practice typical scenarios you encounter. Say what you want to say out loud. It may help to write it out first, too, so you can practice from a script. Consider role playing with a friend or colleague and ask for blunt feedback.

- Keep emotions in check. Conflict is hard for most people. Maybe you get angry or frustrated, or maybe you feel like crying. Although these feelings are normal, they can get in the way of resolving conflict. If you feel too emotional going into a situation, wait a bit if possible. Then work on remaining calm. Breathe slowly. Keep your voice even and firm.

- Use facts, not judgments. "Your punctuation needs work and your formatting is inconsistent" instead of "This is sloppy work." or "Did you know that shirt has some spots?" instead of "You're not going out looking like THAT, are you?“
How to be effectively assertive:

- Express ownership of your thoughts, feeling, and opinions. "I get angry when he breaks his promises." instead of "He makes me angry." or "I believe the best policy is to..." instead of "The only sensible thing is to ...".

- Make clear, direct, requests. Don't invite the person to say no. "Will you please ... ?" instead of "Would you mind ... ?" or "Why don't you ... ?"

- Broken record -- Keep repeating your point, using a low level, pleasant voice. Don't get pulled into arguing or trying to explain yourself. This lets you ignore manipulation, baiting, and irrelevant logic.

- Start small. At first, practice your new skills in situations that are low risk. For instance, try out your assertiveness on a partner or friend before tackling a difficult situation at work. Evaluate yourself afterward and tweak your approach as necessary.
How to be effectively assertive:

- Example: You are taking something back to a store that you know gives refunds, but the clerk first questions your decision, tries to imply that there's something wrong with you because you changed your mind, tells you that she can only give a store credit, etc. Using the broken record, you walk into the store and say "I decided I don't need this and I'd like my money back." Then no matter what the clerk says, you keep repeating "I decided I don't need this and I'd like my money back." If she doesn't get it, simply ask to speak to a manager and say the same thing.

*The Above How to be effectively assertive was retrieved from* [http://revelle.ucsd.edu/res-life/life-skills/assertiveness.html](http://revelle.ucsd.edu/res-life/life-skills/assertiveness.html)
The benefits of assertive behaviors

- Assertive behavior can help you
  - Gain self-confidence and self-esteem
  - Understand and recognize your feelings
  - Earn respect from others
  - Improve communication
  - Create win-win situations
  - Improve your decision-making skills
  - Create honest relationships
  - Gain more job satisfaction (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER), 2011).
For more information and to learn the skills of becoming more assertive go to http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Assertiveness.htm#sthash.qzvUmHct.dpuf

Assertiveness and Conflict resolution

- Assertiveness is important strategy in the management of conflict.

- Conflicts that are not managed assertively can lead to feelings of stress, anger and frustration on the part of those involved.

- To effectively manage conflict one need to be equipped with assertiveness skills.

- Assertiveness can be a useful tool in the management of rude, hostile, threatening, and insulting behaviors in a peaceful manner.

- Assertive behavior allows one to express their opinion without creating unnecessary conflict.
What is conflict?

Conflict is a disagreement in which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. In other words, Conflicts occur when people perceive that, as a consequence of a disagreement, there is a threat to their needs, interests or concerns.

Conflict is a normal part of any relationship including at work relationship. It is important to understand and learn how to deal with conflict rather than avoid it.

Conflicts can trigger strong emotions which if not managed properly can exacerbate the conflict.

By learning the skills for conflict resolution, you can keep your personal and professional relationships strong and growing.
Conflict resolution

- **What is conflict resolution?**
  - Conflict resolution is the process of resolving a dispute and/or disagreements by meeting at least some of each side’s needs and addressing their interests.
Where does conflict begin?

- Conflict is often based upon six major sources which are listed below with some examples:
  - Different goals and objectives
  - Values - differences in basic beliefs and personal values
  - Different perceptions
  - Tasks and performance
  - Resources
  - Rules and policies
  - Poor communication
What are conflict resolution skills?

- **Steps to conflict resolution**
  - You have to see the whole picture not just your own
  - What are the needs and concerns of everyone involved.

- **Conflict resolution skills.**
  - Are the skills that enable us to bypass personal differences and to open up to possibilities.
  - The conflict resolution skills draw us closer to other people, as we jointly search for fair solutions and balanced needs.
  - It involves a powerful shift from adversaries to co-operative partners.
  - In this shift each person benefits.
Benefits of conflict resolution

- Successful conflict resolution has several benefits. However, if conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging.
  - Increased understanding: The discussion needed to resolve conflict expands people's awareness of the situation, giving them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people.
  - Increased group cohesion: When conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual respect, and a renewed faith in their ability to work together.
  - Improved self-knowledge: Conflict pushes individuals to examine their goals in close detail, helping them understand the things that are most important to them, sharpening their focus, and enhancing their effectiveness.
To learn more about conflict resolution and Conflict Resolution Skills visit the Conflict Resolution network at

Assertive Communication

- This module is designed for use throughout the North Carolina Associate Degree Nursing concept-based curriculum. The module includes a video recording with various scenarios contrasting nonassertive and assertive communication.

- [http://media.faytechcc.edu/content/mitcc/mcc.html](http://media.faytechcc.edu/content/mitcc/mcc.html)
One of the most common problems in communication is caused by trying to read people's minds or expecting them to read yours.

If you want people to respond to your ideas and needs, you have to be able to say what they are, and say it in a way that will make others want to listen and respond appropriately.

Remember, learning to be assertive takes time and practice.

If despite your best efforts you're not making progress toward becoming more assertive, consider formal assertiveness training.

By becoming more assertive, you can begin to express your true feelings and needs more easily. You may even find you get more of what you want as a result.
For additional information on RNs, including credentialing, contact the ANA [http://nursingworld.org](http://nursingworld.org)

For information on a career as an RN and nursing education, contact the National League for Nursing [http://www.nln.org](http://www.nln.org)

For information on obtaining U.S. certification and work visas for foreign-educated nurses, contact the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools [http://www.cgfns.org/](http://www.cgfns.org/)

For information on nursing career options, financial aid, and listings of bachelor’s degree, graduate, and accelerated nursing programs, contact the American Association of Colleges of Nursing [http://www.aacn.nche.edu](http://www.aacn.nche.edu)
References