

# The Jack Petchey **Spark** Programme

a self-discovery programme for young people



**Discover how to be at your best  
more of the time!**




## **Session 9: Confident communication**

# Communicating with others

In this session we will look at some common trigger situations that for many of us regularly result in us going In the Box, and consequently Not Being at Our Best. We will introduce a new tool, **Confident Communication**, that can act as a short cut to getting Out of the Box and finding your more resourceful self.

## What is Confident Communication?

Confident Communication (sometimes known as Assertive Communication) is a way of communicating that involves expressing your point of view in a way that is clear and direct, while still respecting others. It is underpinned by a mindset that values your own needs as much as others' needs. Confident communication is different to Passive and Aggressive communication styles which usually reflect an 'In the Box' state. The differences between the three styles are illustrated below:

| <br><b>Passive</b> | <br><b>Confident</b> | <br><b>Aggressive</b> |
|---|---|--|
| Apologetic language   | Uses 'I' statements   | Uses blaming 'You' statements  |
| Overly quiet or hesitant voice  | Expressing your point clearly and confidently   | Loud voice, shouting, swearing   |
| Makes body smaller – eg. hunched shoulders, leaning over  | Open, welcoming body language   | Makes body bigger - eg. head high, shoulders out, hands on hips, feet apart                              |
| Thinking your own needs don't matter  | Expressing your needs clearly but respectfully  | Forcing your needs or opinions on others   |
| Not talking, not being heard  | Talking and listening   | Talking over people  |
| Trying to keep the peace  | Making sure things are fair – for you and others  | Looking out for yourself   |
| Allowing yourself to be bullied or ignored  | Standing up for yourself; treating others with respect  | Often involves bullying or pushing others around   |
| Damages relationships – other people respect you less   | Enhances relationships – other people know where they stand   | Damages relationships – other people don't like aggression   |
| Underlying mindset – “ <i>my needs are less important than yours.</i> ”                             | Underlying mindset – “ <i>my needs are important and your needs are important.</i> ”                  | Underlying mindset – “ <i>your needs are less important than mine.</i> ”                                 |

## 'I' Statements

Using 'I statements' is a helpful tool for giving a confident response. Instead of a 'you statement', which might be a blaming, aggressive reaction to a situation, try responding with a statement using the following structure “*I feel... when (event)... because (what I was thinking at the time). What I would like / need is...*”

Eg. “*You never include me in your activities*” could become “*I feel upset when I am not included. Please could I be added to the WhatsApp group so that I can join in?*”

# Exercise: Communication audit

Let's see how comfortable you are using Confident Communication in different situations, and in which types of trigger situation you find it most difficult.

Rate each situation listed below from 0 (extremely uncomfortable) to 10 (extremely comfortable) and then complete the questions afterwards.

|   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Telling someone that I like them                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Starting a conversation with someone I don't know very well |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Ending a conversation                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Going into a room full of strangers                         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| When people criticise me                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Giving someone a compliment                                 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Telling someone that I feel hurt                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Giving myself praise  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Standing up for my point of view                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Asking for help from a teacher                              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Telling someone I'm annoyed                                 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Saying 'no' / turning down a request                        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Making a complaint  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Asking for a favour   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Expressing an opinion in class                              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Refusing to be put down                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Being the centre of attention in a group                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

**In what type of situations do you find it most difficult to communicate confidently?**

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>List your top three:</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> | <p>How do you tend to communicate in these situations?</p> | <p>What is your self-talk (Pessimist or Judge) telling you?</p> |
|---|--|---|

## Passive-aggression

Can't you take a joke?

There is a fourth, unhelpful communication style. Passive-aggression is characterised by **being aggressive, but in a quieter, less obvious way**. It can include things like being sarcastic or sulky, acting stubborn, talking behind someone's back, starting rumours, saying something rude with a smile on your face, or ignoring someone. 'Fine. Whatever!' and 'Can't you take a joke?' are classic examples of a passive aggressive response.

# Exercise: Switching to confident language

In this exercise consider how you could use confident communication in three common trigger situations where many of us regularly go In the Box. These are:

- When you see behaviour that annoys you
- When someone disagrees with you or criticises you
- When you feel unable to ask for what you want or need

Have a read of the following scenarios and change the In the Box (passive or aggressive) responses to Out of the Box confident responses, using I statements. The first two have been done for you.

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| You are in the school canteen and a friend accidentally knocks your drink over on to your books  | Look what you've done, you're so clumsy          | I'm worried my books will be damaged. Can you help me clear this up please?                                  |
| You have told your Mum about a school trip that's coming up that you'd really like to go on. Her initial response is "I'm not sure about that."              | You never let me do anything that I want to.     | I would really like to go on this trip because it will help me ..... What is it that you're concerned about? |
| You are with a group of friends. Two of them start to tease you about your new hairstyle.  | Leave me alone. You look pretty stupid yourself. | I ...  |
| You and your friends are going to see a film. One person is insisting on a film you definitely do not want to see.   | OK ...   | I ...  |
| You have been working hard at your French but have done badly in a test. Your Dad is disappointed with you and has stopped your pocket money for a fortnight | You're being really mean. That's so unfair!      | I ...  |



**Go Do!**

As with all the tools that we have shared with you, the key to being able to communicate confidently even when you might be triggered and end up In the Box, is to practise. **For your Go Do challenge, look for opportunities to use an 'I' statement to respond when you have been triggered. If you notice the trigger, take a deep breath, count to five and try a confident response.** If you don't manage this in the heat of the moment, take some time later when you're Out of the Box again and reflect on these three questions. It helps to write the answers down!

1. What happened? What was the trigger?

2. How did you respond? Which communication style did you use?

3. What was the result?

## Key Insights

- Confident communication can help us stay resourceful even when triggered
- It involves clearly expressing your point of view, whilst still respecting other people's needs, through talking and listening