

**FEM
CON**

Empowering
Women in
Construction



Pedagogical guide & worksheet

MODULE 3

ASSERTIVE AND WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

www.femalesinconstruction.eu



FEMCON Curriculum ©
2022/2024 by FEMCON
Consortium is licensed
under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Table of contents

- 01 FEMCON Open Education Resources
- 02 Module introduction
- 03 Module information
- 04 Facilitators guide
- 05 Resources for learners
- 06 Worksheets



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

FEMCON Open Education Resources

FEMCON project

FEMCON develops innovative vocational education & training that assist women working in or considering a career in the construction industry to progress to visible roles within the industry.

In so doing, FEMCON aim to increase the attractiveness of the industry for others, thus leading to a greater number of women choosing the sector.

The long term objective of FEMCON education is to impact the female workforce in the construction industry across Europe, to become aware of their rights to equality in the industry & to utilize their skills, to enhance their career progression opportunities, thus creating conditions for positive change to happen, improving the industry's outlook & allowing women to thrive.

Open Education Resources

The FEMCON Open Education Resources (OER) aim to equip VET trainers to provide specialist learning content to women working or interested in a career in the construction to help career progression & development of females in this industry. The online resources target the needs of women in the industry through VET organizations & wider education providers across Europe making it very accessible.

The resources cover industry-specific issues giving attention to the needs and conditions in entering this field, the roles of women in the construction industry, the career progression possibilities, communication and assertiveness, as well as understanding new technology solutions & trends in construction and opportunities to develop innovative businesses based on the knowledge and experience gained.

The TRIPLE “I”

The course concept is based on the TRIPLE “I” idea, aiming to:

INSPIRE women to work in construction industry

and businesses to hire women,

IMPROVE professional skills, managerial and soft skills,

INNOVATE within the working possibilities and in the construction business.

Each module is designed to inspire woman to take on new challenges in construction industry, improve personal skills and thinking about careers in the construction industry and create innovative attitude to start working and developing career in the construction industry. The course aims to inspire business owners to engage women in the industry and contribute to its development.

The course structure

The course covers topics like new challenges in construction, managing construction projects, and soft skills needed to work effectively in construction. Specifically there are 5 modules available:

MODULE 1: Stereotypes affecting woman in construction

MODULE 2: Working well in the construction industry

MODULE 3: Assertive and workplace communication

MODULE 4: Future of construction

MODULE 5: Disruptive business (Innovation)

How to use

The resources are dedicated mainly for classroom learning to facilitate VET training sessions. They can be however regarded with flexibility for self-paced use or adapted to the needs of specific training programs.

Module introduction

The why

In the diverse and dynamic landscape of modern workplaces, effective communication stands as a cornerstone of success. Assertive communication strikes the balance between passive and aggressive dialogue. By expressing one's ideas clearly, confidently, and respectfully, individuals can avoid misunderstandings, reduce workplace conflicts, and foster a positive work environment. Embracing assertiveness ensures:

- Clear conveyance of ideas and feedback
- Enhanced collaboration among team members
- Respectful exchange of perspectives, fostering inclusivity
- Efficient decision-making processes
- Prevention of potential conflicts and misunderstandings.

Learning objectives

At the end of this module learners will:

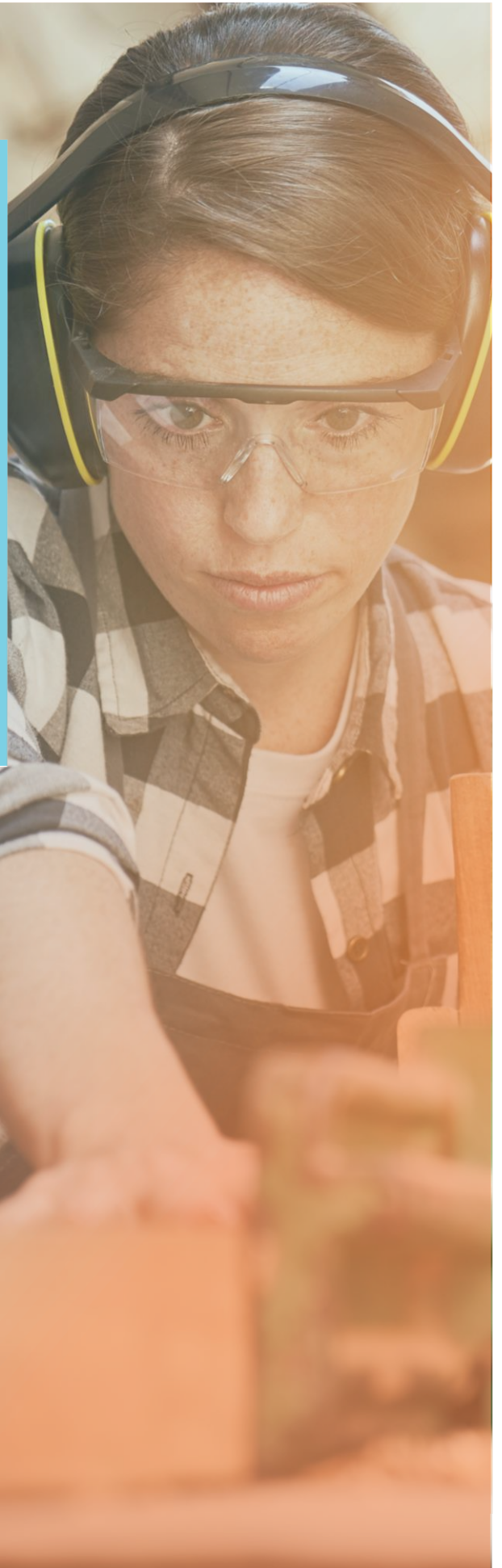
- Discuss common stereotypes and challenges faced by women in construction
- Understand the concept of assertive communication and its importance
- Differentiate the Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication Style
- Practice Assertive Communication in various workplace scenarios





“A woman with a voice is a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult.”

– Melinda Gates, Co-founder of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



03

Module Information

Time needed to deliver

Total: 4 hours

- theoretical introduction: 2 hour
- collaborative learning, workshop activities: 1,5 hours
- feedback and discussion: 0,5 hour

Delivery mode

Group learning (workshop-specific group size)
Relevant for women only, or mixed groups

Pedagogical methods

Teaching and learning activities: Role play, Self-reflection

Assesment and feedback practices: Think-Pair-Share

Educational technologies: Videos

Module resources

PPT presentation for class delivery

Additional support material

Women in the industry can lay a solid foundation for those interested in pursuing a career in construction.



04 Facilitator's guide

The aim

The module "Assertive and Workplace Communication" aims to support women in the construction industry by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to become assertive and professional communicators.

The module covers topics such as dealing with stereotypes, assertive communication methods the importance of communication for career progression and developing a career plan.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges women face in the construction industry due to prevalent stereotypes. This module will introduce strategies to tackle these stereotypes in the workplace, highlighting the significance of assertive communication. Participants will be equipped with a clear definition of assertive communication, its key characteristics, and techniques. The module will further delve into the different communication styles and offer practical exercises to enhance assertive communication skills in various scenarios. By the end of this module, participants will grasp the pivotal role of effective communication to career advancement within the construction industry.

Pedagogical methods explanation

In this module, various teaching and learning methods will be utilised to ensure an engaging and comprehensive educational experience:

- **Think-Pair-Share:** this is an interactive method to encourage individual reflection and group sharing. Here's how it works:
 - Initially, students are given time to think about a specific question or problem.
 - They then pair up with another student to discuss their thoughts.
 - Finally, each pair shares their insights with the larger group.
- **Role Play:** This method allows participants to step into someone else's shoes. Here's what happens:
 - Students are given roles based on real-life situations or hypothetical scenarios.
 - They act out these roles, which helps them understand different perspectives and approaches.
 - After the role-play, a discussion usually follows to reflect on what was learned.

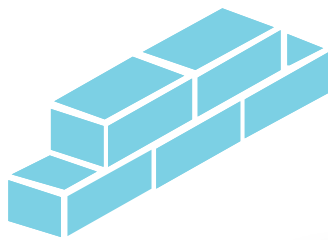
Women in the industry can lay a solid foundation for those interested in pursuing a career in construction.



05

Training scheme

1. Using PPT materials, the trainer introduces the concept of assertive communication, differentiating it from passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive communication. Theoretical frameworks that support the importance of assertiveness in professional settings are also discussed
2. Trainer invites learners to complete **Worksheet 3.1. Analyse Your Communication Style**. This allows learners to reflect on their current communication habits.
3. Learners receive information and tools on mastering assertive communication. The module's content is organised into these key themes:
 - Understanding Assertiveness
 - Barriers to Assertive Communication
 - Techniques and Strategies
4. For each section, there are activities that provoke learners to delve deeper into the subject. Activities involve role-playing, group discussions, and self-reflective tasks. Detailed guidelines are found in worksheets. Some exercises are for individual reflection, while others use techniques like jigsaw, fishbowl, and group brainstorming.
5. Learners are encouraged to explore real-life examples from various professional sectors where assertive communication played a pivotal role. This can be done through case studies, interviews, or social media discussions.
6. In the **Practical Techniques of Assertive Communication** section, learners are introduced to **Worksheet 3.2. Crafting Assertive Responses**. This exercise helps them structure their communication in an assertive way without coming across as aggressive or passive.
7. During the **Practicing Assertive Communication in Various Scenarios**, learners will use **Worksheet 3.3. Role Play Activity**. This challenges them to apply assertive communication techniques in mock workplace situations, promoting real-time learning and feedback.



INTERACTIVE AND INNOVATIVE

- Training materials are developed in PowerPoint. They can be adjusted to the particular training needs, as they are editable.
- Videos and external articles are used to explain certain sections of the training content and to present case studies for discussion
- Exercises encourage both group and individual learning and give a practical tone to all the context
- Activities invite learners to investigate certain content such as articles, podcasts, books and more
- Case studies help bring thematics to life
- All of these can be replaced with the suitable, localised examples, by the educators, that best suit the needs of a particular target group, making these resources highly transferable.

06

Links to additional resources

Communication in the Workplace

Marisa Turesky & Mildred E. Warner (2020) Gender Dynamics in the Planning Workplace, Journal of the American Planning Association, 86:2, 157-170 - <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01944363.2019.1691041>

Joanna Wolfe, Elizabeth Powell, "“Facts matter; feelings don’t matter”": Identifying successful interpersonal communication strategies for women in engineering teams" - https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joanna-Wolfe/publication/286778048_Facts_matter_feelings_don't_matter_Identifying_successful_interpersonal_communication_strategies_for_women_in_engineering_teams/links/566db32d08ae62b05f0b4486/Facts-matter-feelings-dont-matter-Identifying-successful-interpersonal-communication-strategies-for-women-in-engineering-teams.pdf

Pearson, Judy C.; Trent, Judith S. "Successful Women in Speech Communication: A National Survey of Strategies and Skills, Contributions and Conflicts." - <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED259412>

Women in Construction

Sandra L. Fielden , Marilyn J. Davidson , Andrew W. Gale & Caroline L. Davey (2000) Women in construction: the untapped resource, Construction Management and Economics, 18:1, 113-121 - <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/014461900371004>

S. Dabke, O. Salem, A. Genaidy, Nancy Daraiseh, "Job Satisfaction of Women in Construction Trades" Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, Volume 134, Issue 3 - [https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/\(ASCE\)0733-9364\(2008\)134:3\(205](https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/(ASCE)0733-9364(2008)134:3(205)



“Every day you must prove yourself and convince – move forward and challenge yourself. And doubt all the time.”

– Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF (2011 – present)



07 Worksheets



Worksheets serve as indispensable tools in the learning process, offering structured guidance and promoting active engagement with the material. They facilitate personal reflection and can be a means for feedback when reviewed by trainers or peers. Their flexibility makes them suitable for both individual and group settings, catering to a wide range of learning preferences.

Worksheet 3.1. Analyse Your Communication Style

Worksheet 3.2. Crafting Assertive Response

Worksheet 3.3. Role Play Activity





Worksheet 3.1. Analyse Your Communication Style – Part 1

Objective: To reflect on and understand your personal communication habits and styles.

Instructions: Read each below statement and rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 5 is "Strongly Agree".

Statements:

I feel confident expressing my opinions in meetings dominated by male colleagues.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

I sometimes feel the need to soften my language to avoid appearing 'bossy' or 'aggressive'.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

I ensure that my contributions on the construction site are acknowledged and valued.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

At times, I feel hesitant to voice safety concerns in fear of being seen as too cautious.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Worksheet 3.1. Analyse Your Communication Style – Part 2

I find it challenging to decline additional tasks even when I am overloaded.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

I actively listen when colleagues speak, ensuring I understand technical details and instructions.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

I often seek feedback to improve my communication with team members.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

I prepare thoroughly before meetings to ensure my points are clear and respected.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Worksheet 3.1. Analyse Your Communication Style – Part 3

Reflection:

- Which statements did you rate highly on?
- Which statements did you rate low on?
- In what situations do you feel your communication style is most effective or challenged within the construction field?

Feedback on Your Responses:

- **Confidence in Meetings:** If you rated yourself lower on question 1, consider seeking mentorship from experienced women in the field or attending confidence-building workshops. Remember, your perspective is valuable.
- **Softening Language:** A lower rating on question 2 suggests you might be adjusting your communication to fit expectations. Practice being direct and clear while maintaining respect.
- **Acknowledgment on Site:** For those who felt their contributions aren't valued (question 3), remember to document your achievements and discuss them during evaluations.
- **Voicing Safety Concerns:** Safety is paramount in construction. If you rated yourself lower on question 4, aim to foster a culture where all safety concerns are welcomed and addressed.
- **Task Management:** If you're struggling to decline additional tasks (question 5), remember that quality often outweighs quantity. Communicate your workload and ensure you're not compromising on safety or quality.
- **Active Listening:** High ratings on question 6 indicate strong teamwork skills. Continue to develop this skill as it's crucial in ensuring tasks are executed correctly and safely.
- **Seeking Feedback:** Regular feedback (question 7) helps in personal growth. If you rated lower, consider establishing regular check-ins with superiors or peers.
- **Preparation for Meetings:** Preparing thoroughly (question 8) ensures your voice is heard and respected. Keep up the good work if you rated this highly.

Next Steps: Identify one area you'd like to improve upon and set actionable goals for the coming month. Consider pairing up with a colleague for mutual support and feedback.

Worksheet 3.2. Crafting Assertive Responses – Part 1

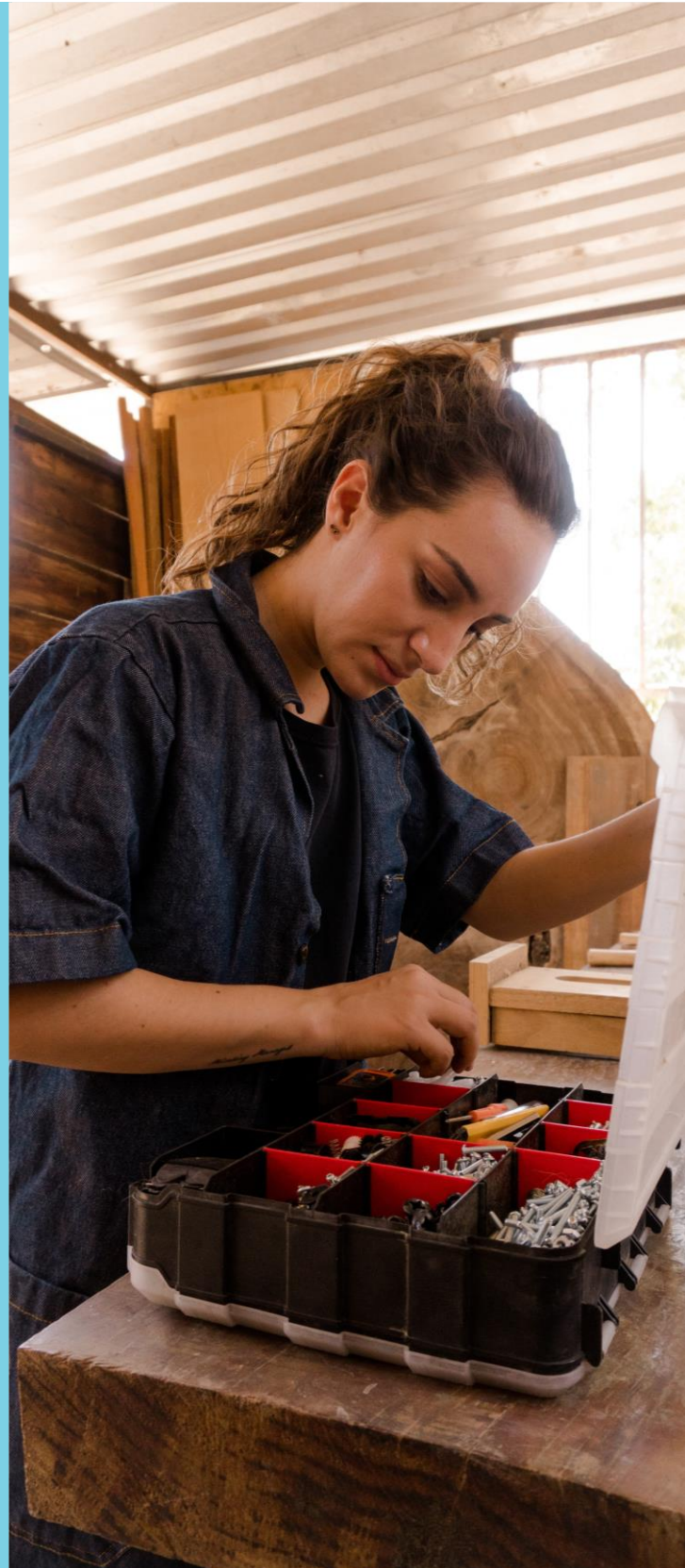
Objective: To help you structure your communication in an assertive way without coming across as aggressive or passive, especially in a construction environment.

Instructions:

Reflect on Your Past: For each scenario provided, recall a similar situation you have encountered. Write down your typical response in the space provided.

Craft Your Response: Using the principles of assertive communication, rephrase your typical response into a more assertive one. This should clearly express your thoughts, feelings, or needs without attacking or dismissing others.

Seek Feedback: After completing the worksheet, discuss your crafted responses with a trusted colleague or mentor. Their feedback can offer valuable insights for improvement.





Worksheet 3.2. Crafting Assertive Responses – Part 2

Scenario 1: A male colleague dismisses your safety concern, saying it's not a big deal.

Your typical response: _____

Craft an assertive response: _____

Scenario 2: During a meeting, a team member interrupts you while you are presenting.

Your typical response: _____

Craft an assertive response: _____

Scenario 3: A contractor suggests a method that you know is inefficient based on your experience.

Your typical response: _____

Craft an assertive response: _____

Scenario 6: During a project discussion, your idea is overlooked but later praised when a male colleague suggests it.

Your typical response: _____

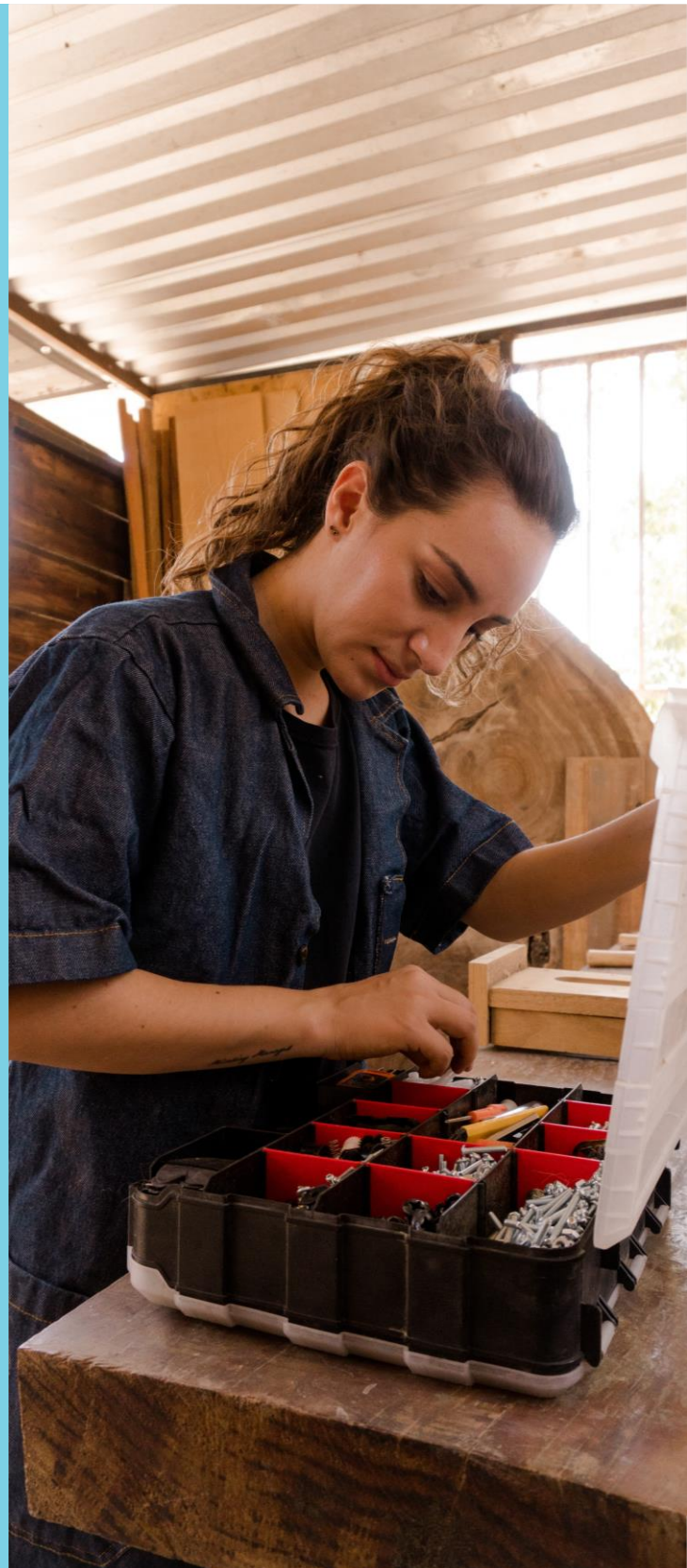
Craft an assertive response: _____

Worksheet 3.2. Crafting Assertive Responses – Part 3

Feedback Tips:

- **Be Direct, yet Respectful:** Clearly state your feelings or needs without belittling the other party.
- **Use "I" Statements:** This makes the response about your feelings or perceptions, rather than placing blame.
- **Stay Calm:** Even if the topic is heated, an assertive response is most effective when delivered calmly.
- **Practice:** Regularly practicing these responses can help them become more natural in real situations.

Next Steps: Review your crafted responses with a trusted colleague or mentor for feedback. Regularly revisit and adjust as needed to fine-tune your communication skills.



Worksheet 3. Role Play Activity – Part 1

Objective: This worksheet is designed to provide an interactive way to practice assertive communication, especially in a construction environment. By simulating real-life scenarios, you can hone your skills in a controlled setting, preparing you for genuine interactions in the workplace.

Instructions:

- **Pair Up:** Partner with a colleague. Decide who will play the role of 'Speaker' and who will be the 'Responder'.
- **Select a Scenario:** Choose one of the provided scenarios below. The 'Speaker' will act out the situation, and the 'Responder' will use assertive communication techniques to respond.
- **Switch Roles:** After completing the first scenario, swap roles and pick a new situation. This ensures both participants get to practice assertive communication from different perspectives.
- **Review & Reflect:** After acting out the scenarios, discuss what went well, what challenges arose, and how you can improve. Take notes on key learnings.



Worksheet 3. Role Play Activity – Part 2



Scenario 1: As a woman in construction, you suggest a more efficient way to handle a task, but a male colleague brushes it off, saying, "We've always done it this way."

Speaker's Role: Dismissive colleague

Responder's Role: Woman suggesting a change

Discussion Points: _____

Scenario 2: A safety concern you've raised is being overlooked. A male supervisor comments, "We don't have time to address every little thing."

Speaker's Role: Supervisor downplaying a concern

Responder's Role: Woman raising a safety issue

Discussion Points: _____

Scenario 3: A co-worker often interrupts you during meetings, making it difficult for you to share your expertise on a topic.

Speaker's Role: Interrupting colleague

Responder's Role: Woman trying to contribute to the discussion

Discussion Points: _____

Worksheet 3. Role Play Activity – Part 3

Notes & Reflections:

Scenario chosen:

Detailed Description of Interaction: Describe the flow of the conversation, including specific phrases or statements that stood out.

What went well: Elaborate on the moments during the role play where assertive communication was effectively employed.

Challenges faced: Detail any instances where it was difficult to maintain assertiveness, or where communication broke down.

Areas for improvement: Reflect on the areas where you felt less confident or where your response could be fine-tuned.

Key Takeaways: List any important lessons or insights gained from this role-playing exercise.





Stay creative and purposeful in your training!

Add new methods to your training scenario. Here some useful and interesting examples are proposed.

Teaching and learning activities

Carousel brainstorm: Small groups of students rotate around the classroom, stopping at various "stations" for a designated period of time (usually 1-2 minutes). At each station, students activate their prior knowledge of a topic or concept and share their ideas with their small group. Each group posts their ideas at each station for all groups to read.

Pretest: To activate students' prior knowledge, a pretest can be given to students that consists of questions related to new content for the students. The students are instructed to make the test without preparation. The test can contain one or two comprehension questions or a number of multiple choice questions.

Focused freewriting: Focused freewriting is writing about a particular subject or question which has been posed. It simply means putting pen to paper and writing whatever comes into your head. It is a useful tool for generating ideas and discovering attitudes. A pre-lesson brain dump: Writing-to-learn activities can be used before a learning experience to get students to 'warm up' by thinking about what they know or think they know or feel about a new topic.

Fishbowl discussion - A fishbowl conversation is a form of dialog that can be used when discussing topics within large groups. The advantage of fishbowl is that it allows the entire group to participate in a conversation. Several people can join the discussion. Four to five chairs are arranged in an inner circle. This is the fishbowl. The remaining chairs are arranged in concentric circles outside the fishbowl. A few participants are selected to fill the fishbowl, while the rest of the group sit on the chairs outside the fishbowl. In an open fishbowl, one chair is left empty; any member of the audience can, at any time,

occupy the empty chair and join the fishbowl. In a closed fishbowl, all chairs are filled. The moderator introduces the topic and the participants start discussing the topic. The audience outside the fishbowl listen in on the discussion.

Assessment and feedback practices

Intervision sessions - Smaller groups of participants with similar backgrounds exchange experiences without the guidance of a facilitator

Supervision sessions - A group session after a training where a (large) group of participants are able to exchange experiences with each other. This happens under the guidance of a facilitator who has the required expertise in that field.

Peer assessment - Activities that require students to assess their peers' performances against applicable criteria; extend to offer specific suggestions for improvement.

Co-assessment - Both the lecturer and the students have a role in the assessment process.

Educational technologies

Mobile response systems - In order to actively involve all individuals of a group of students during class, you can ask questions by means of personal response systems. Students are able to respond simultaneously and individually with digital (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot) or analogue clickers.

Wiki - A collaborative tool that allows students to contribute and modify one or more pages of course related materials. Essentially, a wiki is a web page with an open-editing system.



At its core, assertiveness is about the courage to express difference.

Julie de Azevedo Hanks

