

Therapist Guide: Assertive Responding Worksheet

Purpose & Rationale

This worksheet is designed to help clients recognize the beliefs that support assertive behaviour, practice assertive communication, and reflect on the outcomes. Assertiveness training is an evidence-based intervention for improving self-esteem, boundary-setting, and interpersonal effectiveness. The worksheet supports clients in challenging unhelpful patterns such as passivity or aggression by building confidence in respectful self-expression.

When to Use

- With clients who struggle with saying “no,” setting boundaries, or expressing needs.
- With individuals who default to passive or aggressive communication styles.
- When working on social anxiety, relationship difficulties, or self-advocacy.
- As part of CBT, DBT, or social skills training.

How to Introduce It

1. **Psychoeducation about assertiveness:** Explain that assertiveness means expressing needs and feelings openly, honestly, and respectfully, balancing one’s own rights with those of others.
 - Example: *“Assertiveness isn’t about being pushy; it’s about being clear and respectful while standing up for yourself.”*
2. **Beliefs that support assertiveness:** Encourage clients to fill in the statements:
 - *“I am...”* (e.g., “worthy of respect,” “allowed to ask for what I need”)
 - *“Other people are...”* (e.g., “entitled to their opinions,” “capable of handling my requests”).This helps them identify empowering and balanced beliefs.
3. **Role-play or recall situations:** Ask clients to think of specific situations where assertiveness would be useful. Have them write down:
 - The situation (e.g., declining an extra work task).
 - A possible assertive response (e.g., “I can’t take this on right now”).
 - Assertive nonverbal behaviours (e.g., calm tone, eye contact, relaxed posture).
4. **Practice and reinforce:** Role-play these scenarios in session, encouraging the client to practice both verbal and nonverbal elements. Provide feedback and highlight effective moments.
5. **Reflection:** At the end, clients complete *“What I have learned about being assertive.”* This consolidates learning, builds confidence, and increases generalization to real-life situations.

Therapeutic Goals

- Identify and strengthen beliefs that support assertiveness.
- Differentiate between passive, assertive, and aggressive communication.
- Build confidence in expressing needs directly and respectfully.
- Practice and reinforce nonverbal cues that communicate confidence and openness.
- Encourage reflection to support integration of skills into daily life.

This worksheet is most effective when paired with **in-session practice** (e.g., role-play, modelling, feedback) and **between-session homework** where clients apply assertiveness skills in real-world situations.