Comprehensive Resilience Module

Family Dimension

"Effective Communication"

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force

Effective Communication Overview

❑ As a Soldier, you face conflict both at drill and at home.

These relationships help you build resilience and maintain strength during times of adversity.

During Drill

- You count on a clear Chain of Command for conflict resolution and mission success.
- You expect your Soldiers to obey your orders while your leaders expect you to obey theirs.

At Home

- When faced with a conflict or problem, you cannot solve it by ordering around your spouse or other family member. This can lead to an even greater conflict.
- You must be able to communicate in a manner that engages your family members equally in conversation and work towards resolving the problem, not winning the "battle" or the argument.

Family

No matter how you define "family"— be it your Mom and /or Dad, sister or brother, a spouse, kids, or an Aunt or Uncle-- by communicating effectively with family members, you build meaningful, loving, and supportive family relationships.

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force

Communication Styles

When discussing a problem or conflict we tend to use one of the following communication styles:

- ***Aggressive communication***

- ***Passive communication***

- ***Assertive communication***

- The assertive communication style sets you up to have a productive conversation.
- The aggressive and passive communication styles should only be used in certain circumstances.

Aggressive Communication

People who use an aggressive communication style must have the last word in the conversation.

They tend to talk over the other person. .

They are not in control of their emotions.

They may use accusatory or condescending language such as “how dare you;” “what were you thinking;” “that’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard….”

Consider how aggression can prevent conflict resolution and even escalate a conversation into an argument.

Passive Communication

- People who use the passive communication style are often quiet and withdrawn and may even seem fearful of the other person.

People who use the passive communication style are often quiet and withdrawn from the conversation

+

People who use the passive communication style may seem fearful of the other person

→

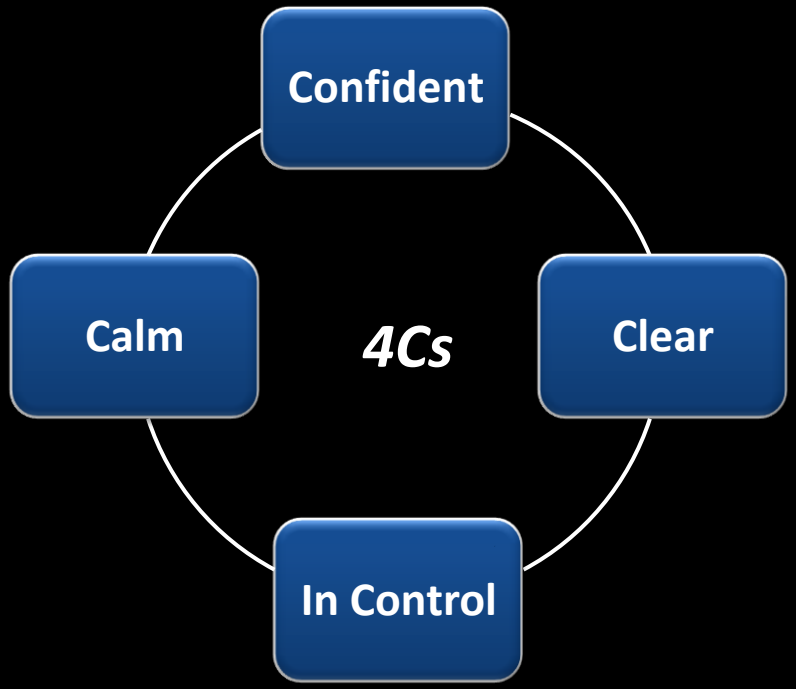
They may attempt to appease the other person rather than communicate their own feelings by saying "whatever you want to do is fine…;

"it doesn't matter to me;"

- Passive communicators are often moody, silent and avoid eye contact with the other person.

Assertive Communication

Assertive communicators remain confident, calm, clear, and in control throughout the conversation.



- ❑ Seeks to understand where the other person is coming from.
- ❑ Questions do not put the other person on the defensive.
- ❑ Keeps the other person engaged in conversation in an effort to work towards a resolution.

Communication Style Examples

- **Scenario: A husband is paying bills while his wife is reading their kids a bedtime story. When he opens the credit card statement, he realizes that his wife has gone over their agreed-upon budget for this month.**

- **Aggressive Scenario:**

Husband: "Did you see this bill? What the hell were you thinking?"
Wife: "What bill?"
Husband: "The one we can't afford to pay in full this month."
Wife: "It's back to school time. The kids needed new sneakers."
Husband: You spend without even thinking first. You can't budget to save your life!
Wife: Don't you even care about the kids?

- **Passive Scenario**:

Husband: I see we got the credit card bill.
Wife: What bill?
Husband: The one from September.
Wife: Uh huh.

Assertive Communication Style Example

- **Assertive Scenario**:

Husband: Is this a good time to talk?

Wife: Uh….Can it wait until the kids are in bed?

Husband: Ok. (**then later after kids have gone to bed**…)

Husband: We got the credit card bill for this month and it's more than it's supposed to be.

Wife: Well, it's back to school time. The kids needed new shoes for school.

Husband: Yeah, I'm just worried that we won't be able to pay it all this month, and then we'll be slammed with a finance charge. It doesn't fit the budget we agreed on.

Wife: The kids still need shoes.

Husband: Well,]I'd appreciate it the next time there's a big expense if we could at least agree about it ahead of time so there aren't any surprises at the end of the month.

Wife: I'm sorry honey. We just forgot to put the shoes into the budget, and the kids needed them.

Later in the week the couple worked on a new budget together.

Benefits of Assertive Communication

- Employing the four Cs and seeking to understand the other person's point of view allows you to have a productive conversation.
- Using assertive communication to resolve conflicts, works to build a stronger, more unified family relationship

Assertive communication keeps both parties of the conversation:

Prevents the discussion from escalating into a fight or ignoring a situation that needs to be addressed

Communication Styles Activity

- **In each of these conversations, a Soldier is upset that his brother keeps cancelling plans. He wants to spend more time with him before he deploys.**

- **Part #1-For each conversation, you will:**

1. Identify the type of communication style used as either aggressive, assertive, or passive
2. List three things the Soldier did that demonstrated the particular communication style
3. Reflect upon why this communication style was or was not effective

- **Part #2-From the moment the discussion begins, observe the Soldier's behavior. Consider the Soldier's:**

1. **Voice tone and volume**
2. Facial expressions and posture
3. Body language and hand gestures
4. Chosen words
5. Ability to remain calm, confident, clear and controlled

- **Part #3-Then, write down your observations and compare with others in your group.**

- **Conversation One**

Soldier: "You can't even spend a couple of hours to play basketball with your bro? Have a great time with your girlfriend."

Brother: "Look dude, I forgot I made plans with her. She's leaving for school soon."

Soldier: "You're such a loser!"

Brother: "Bite me, and actually, you are the loser!"

Communication Styles Activity II

- **Observe the second and third conversations in which the Soldier talks to his brother about cancelling plans to hang out. Just as the previous conversation, observe the Soldier's behavior.**

- **Conversation Two**

Soldier: "So, I guess you're not coming to shoot hoops."
Brother: "No way, but maybe tomorrow. Sound good?"
Soldier: "Whatever. It's not a big deal."

Finally, observe the third conversation in which the Soldier talks to his brother about cancelling plans to hang out.

- **Conversation Three:**

Soldier: "Hey, do you have few minutes to talk before your date?"
Brother: "Sure."
Soldier: "Why do you keep cancelling our plans, man?"
Brother: "It's just a game of basketball. You won't even miss me."
Soldier: "It's not about the game. I just thought we could spend some time together before I deploy again."
Brother: "Oh, sorry dude. I didn't realize it was so important to you. My girlfriend's about to leave for school tomorrow and this is the last time I'll get to see her before she goes."
Soldier: "So, how about we make plans for a round of golf tomorrow. Does that work better?"
Brother: "Yeah, looking forward to it."

Communication Styles Challenge

- **Here's your challenge….**

❑ First, take some time to reflect on your own communication style. Consider how you have handled conflicts with your family in the past.

- Do you find yourself taking an aggressive or passive style of approach?
- How could the situation have ended differently if you had used a more assertive style of approach?

❑ Next, identify a situation in which you can practice using effective communication to resolve a problem or conflict.

- Prior to engaging in the discussion, write down your approach for remaining confident, clear, calm, and controlled.
- Consider what questions you might ask to understand the other person's point of view as well as how you prevent yourself from falling back into an aggressive or passive communication style.

❑Finally, engage in the discussion.

Take Away

- When discussing a problem or conflict with your family, always remember to:
- Effective communication is a skill that takes practice.

Seek to understand the other person's point of view

Remain confident, calm, clear, and in control throughout the conversation

Engage the other party as an equal in the conversation

Ask questions that are focused on resolving the problem

Refrain from using a aggressive or passive communication style

- By learning and practicing effective communication, you will build deeper, more meaningful family relationships that give you the strength and resilience you need to pull through the toughest of times.

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force