

ASSERT YOURSELF!



Module Eight

How to Deal with Disappointment Assertively

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Being Disappointed

It would be impossible to get through life without being disappointed about something. Disappointment occurs when we have an expectation or desire about how we want something to turn out and it doesn't go the way we wanted.

How do you Cope with Disappointment?

There are a number of unassertive ways of responding to disappointment. These include:

- Sulking
- Anger at the thing / person that you see as cause of disappointment. This can include being angry at yourself.
- Depression
- Wanting revenge
- Giving up
- Self-criticism

Take a minute and think of the last time you were disappointed. See if you can remember how you reacted. Write this down.

Situation when disappointed:

What I did:

Now read the descriptions below and see if your behaviour was passive, assertive or aggressive.

Passive Responses to Disappointment

If you respond passively to disappointment you are likely to give up what you were trying to achieve or become overly self critical about why you didn't achieve it. You may feel sorry for yourself and sulk. If others have disappointed you, you may give up on them. All of these reactions can worsen your self esteem and lead to depression.

Aggressive Responses to Disappointment

If you respond aggressively to disappointment you are likely to become angry about the situation or person that led to the disappointment. You may become increasingly resentful towards that situation or person and want to extract some revenge.

Assertive Responses to Disappointment

If you respond assertively you may still feel disappointment when things haven't gone the way you wanted them to. This is normal! However, you will not blame yourself or other people. Nor will you get stuck in negative emotions. You will take responsibility for your part in the disappointment and think through how you can move forward from here. You may need to make some changes; you may need to learn something from the disappointment. There may be nothing you can do differently. Either way you will be graceful in accepting the situation and move forward.

Unhelpful thoughts associated with disappointment

As with the other behaviours we have looked at there are a number of unhelpful thoughts associated with not dealing well with disappointment. Some of these are listed below.

- They should know I don't like it when they do that.
- The world is terrible, I can't bear this.
- That person is bad.
- I can't accept that person for being like that.

- I can't tolerate this.

Can you identify any other unhelpful thoughts that may stop you from responding to disappointment assertively? List them below.

Responding Assertively to Disappointment: More Helpful Thinking

Here are some more helpful and assertive thoughts to challenge any unhelpful thoughts you may have. Remember you can also use Thought Diaries and Behavioural Experiments (see Module 3) to help you come up with more helpful and assertive thoughts.

- It is undesirable to be treated unfairly, but it is not awful.
- I can stand this hurt and frustration and I can do something about the situation.
- I accept how the other person is. They may have been rejecting one aspect of my behaviour not me as a whole person.
- It is best to openly express my feelings; the consequences may not be as bad as I think.

See if you can think of any other assertive thoughts about being disappointed. If you identified your own unhelpful thoughts see if you can identify more helpful thoughts to challenge these.

Module summary

- We are all disappointed at some time in our lives
- As with other unassertive behaviour how we think about being criticised can lead us to respond in a passive or aggressive way. We can change this thinking to more assertive thinking.

Coming up:

The next module shows us how to respond to compliments assertively and how to give compliments.

ABOUT THIS MODULE

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BACKGROUND

The concepts and strategies in the modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT is a type of psychotherapy that is based on the theory that unhelpful negative emotions and behaviours are strongly influenced by problematic cognitions (thoughts). This can be found in the following:

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