

Women in Leadership

International Women's
Day 2025





Speaking with Strength – Assertive Communication





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Our Journey

- **Gender Stereotypes & Assertive Behaviour**
- **The Leader of Today & Assertive Behaviour**
- **Adopting an Authentic Approach to Assertive Communication**
- **Strategies & Tips**





Gender Stereotypes & Assertive Behaviour



Gender Stereotypes – Challenges for Assertive Women



Research indicates that although there are differences in female and male leadership styles, those differences are small.

In contrast, however, there is a large disconnect between leadership stereotypes and gender stereotypes. This mismatch creates unique challenges for women aspiring to leadership roles

Gender & Leader Stereotypes



The traits and characteristics that we typically associate with effective leadership endorse stereotypically masculine attributes like assertiveness, ambition, and competition and simultaneously discount stereotypically feminine traits like collaboration and homemaker.

Because masculine stereotypes align with leadership stereotypes, a man is more likely than a woman to be assessed as a potential and competent leader.

The Double Bind – The Assertiveness Penalty



Gender stereotypes typically prescribe for men to be dominant, competitive and assertive, and for women to be submissive, warm and nurturing.

Studies show that when women exhibit stereotypically masculine traits commonly associated with leadership like assertiveness, they are less-liked when compared with men exhibiting the same traits.

To emerge as a leader, women must adopt traits consistent with leadership stereotypes, i.e. act more stereotypically masculine.

But, when women do act more assertively, they breach feminine stereotypes and suffer a likeability penalty that, in turn, limits their professional success.





Managers are significantly more likely to critique female employees for coming on too strong whereas the same traits are perceived positively in men.

- ❑ Women receive “negative personality criticism”, such as being called bossy or told to “watch their tone” Men, on the other hand, rarely do.
- ❑ Women receive 2.5 times the amount of feedback men do about aggressive communication styles, with phrases such as “your speaking style is off-putting.”
- ❑ Women are described as being “abrasive” far more often than men

**Some people have mentioned they
find you bossy and temperamental**



Try and be a little bit more feminine

**You might want to adjust your tone, its
coming across a bit strong**



You are too easy on your team, stop caring so much



They will respect you more if you behave more aggressively.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE



What experience do you have as a woman trying to navigate the world of work?

Are you too bossy?

Too caring?

Too feminine or not feminine enough??



**Today's Leader – we
have come a long way**





We have come along way . . .



Today's Leader

**Innovative &
Creative**

Soft Skills

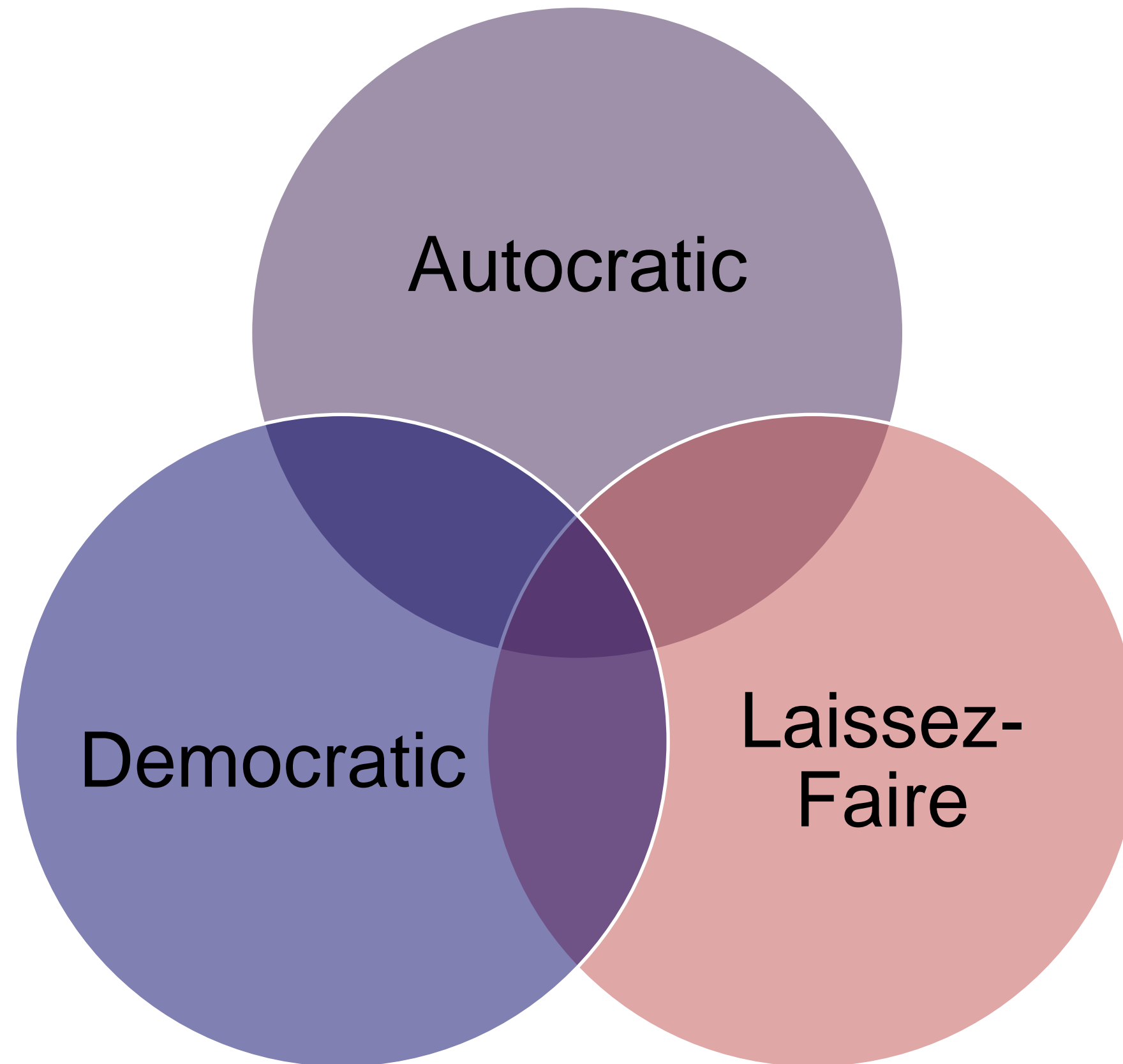
**People
Orientated**

Collaborative

**Approachable
& Open**



Kurt Lewin – Leadership Model





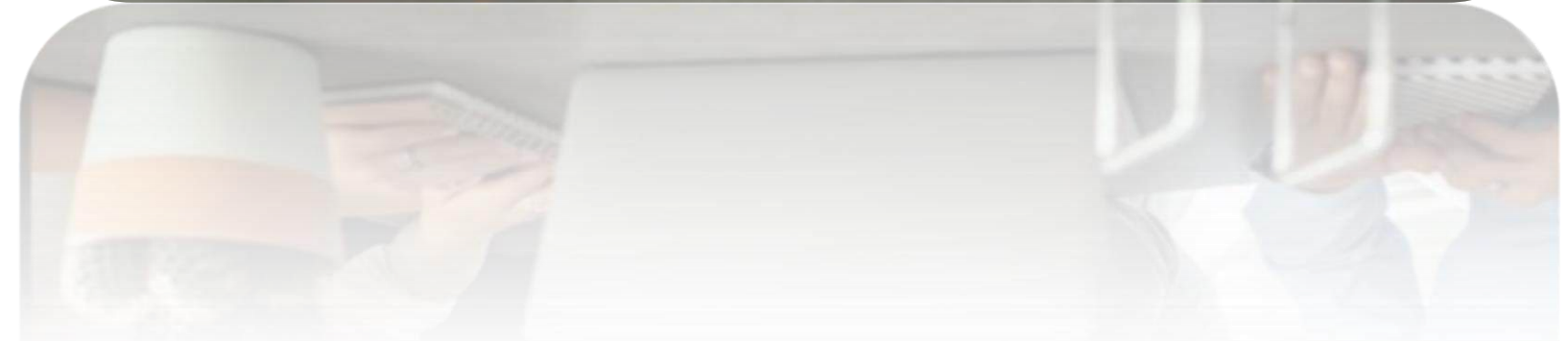
What is Assertive Behaviour?



Assertive Behaviour

When we're assertive we are able to ...

- ❖ Confidently express our needs and wants.
- ❖ Stand up for ourselves, and we're not afraid to speak our minds.
- ❖ Get what we want and need
- ❖ Gain respect and trust from our colleagues and people we work with



You need to be more assertive if



- ❖ You are constantly putting extra hours in and find it difficult to manage your time
- ❖ You feel overwhelmed and or incompetent
- ❖ You avoid speaking up in meetings
- ❖ You let stakeholders/colleagues delegate and dictate what and how you deliver on all expectations
- ❖ You are in a reactive fixed mindset

Aggressive

**Lack of
respect for
others**

Assertive

**Respecting
ourselves &
others**

Passive

**Lack of self
respect**



For women in the workplace, being skilled in productive and assertive communication is especially critical to getting heard, gaining advantage and achieving goals.

This begins with awareness and use of the three integral and interconnected components of communication—or the three V's



The Three V's

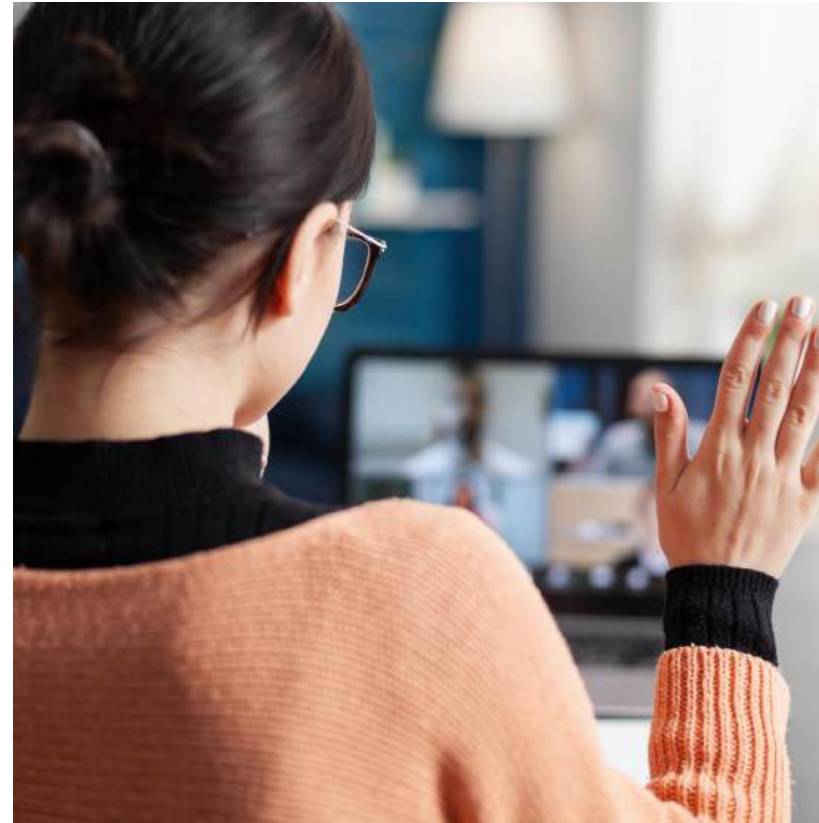
- ❖ **Verbal**—what you say; your words, phrasing and sentence structure.
- ❖ **Vocal**—how you say it; your tone of voice, volume, pitch and pace.
- ❖ **Visual**—your body language, facial expressions, gestures and overall appearance



What is Assertive Communication?



Emphasis on clarity
& honesty



Expressing oneself
effectively



Standing up for ones
rights whilst
respecting others



A Balanced Approach to Communication



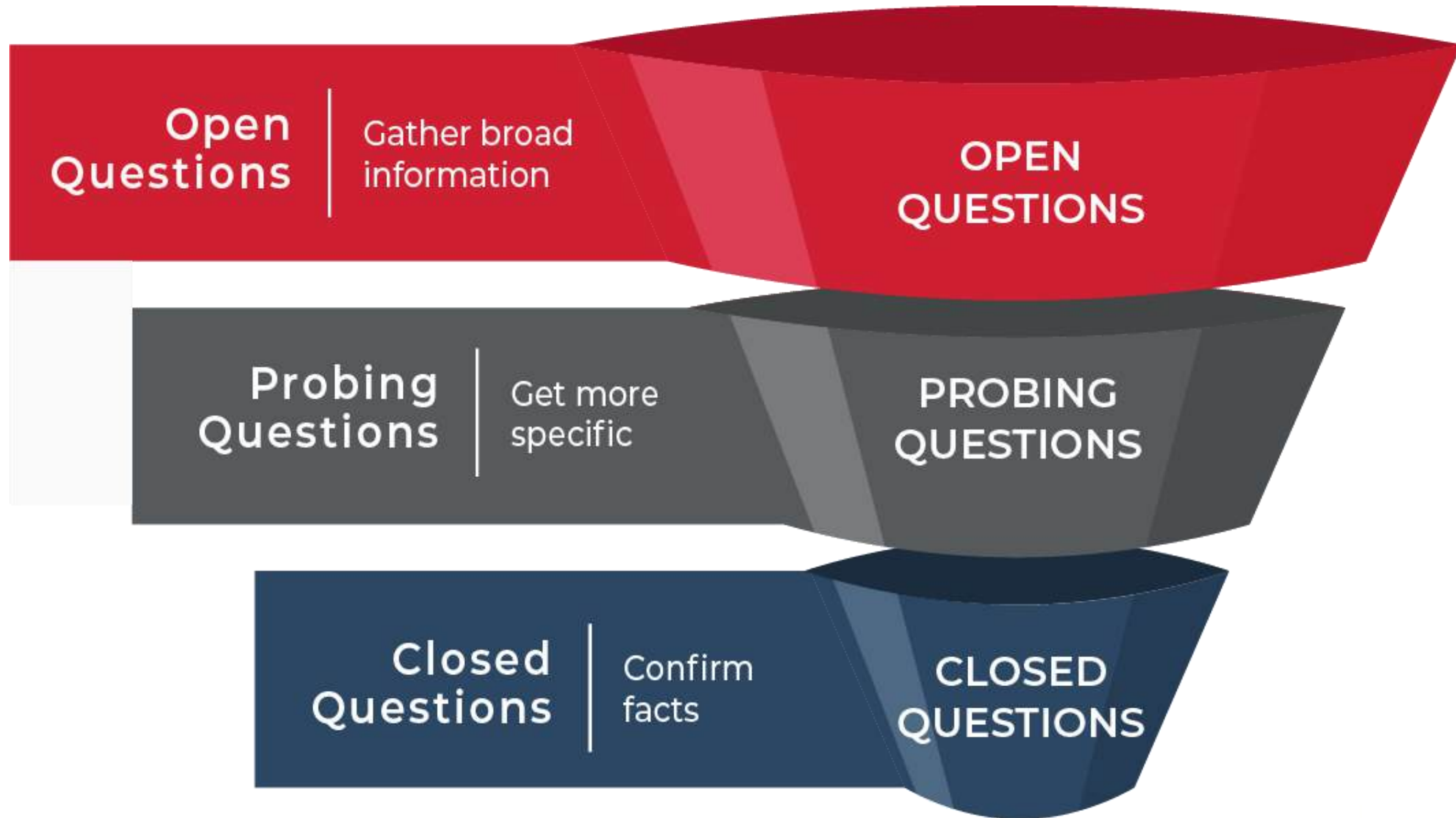
Assertive Communication



- ☐ Active Listening
- ☐ Effective Questioning
- ☐ Clear , concise and efficient use of language
- ☐ Self Awareness & Self Regulation
- ☐ Empathy
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Integrity
- ☐ Open to Constructive Feedback



Questions





Strategies & Tips



Tips on Communicating with Impact



- Understand your audience
- Use emotional intelligence
- Set a goal for your email/conversation/meeting
 - Aim – Objective – Outcome
- Use active voice and “You” “We” and “I”
- Avoid jargon and unnecessary phrases
- Be aware of the language and every day phrases you use



Sorry to bother you

I'm just emailing

I'm not sure if its possible but . .
.

I don't think

I'm sorry but . . .

Can someone

Emotional Intelligence



5 C's of Communication

Clear

Concise

Correct

Cohesive

Courteous



BLUE

Bottom Line Up Front





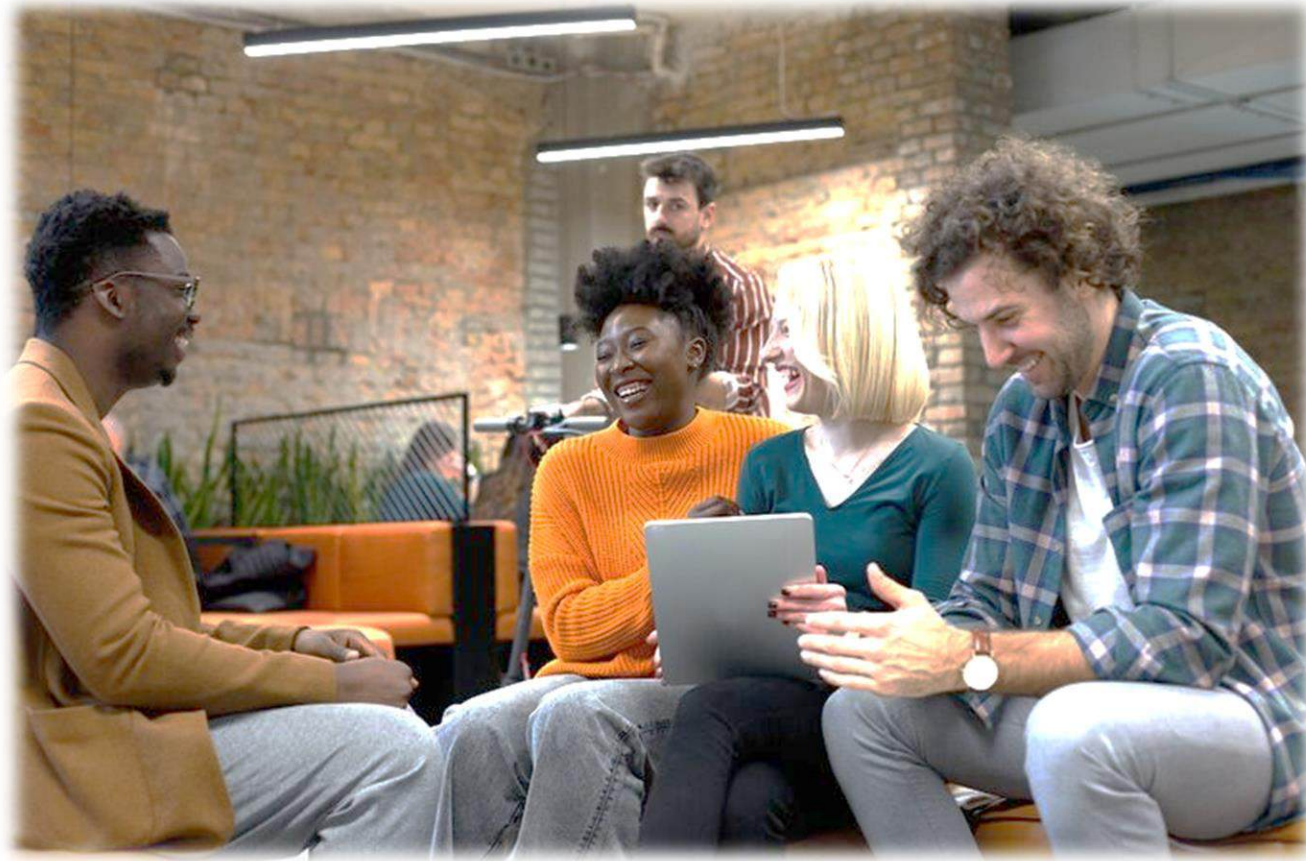
Constructive Feedback

In order to be a good and assertive leader you have to hone the skills of both giving and receiving constructive feedback.

Feedback should be a two way street.

Always view feedback as an opportunity to develop and grow whether it be an individual or yourself.





Understand your influence style

It all begins with self-awareness. What's your dominant style? Do you tend to apply the same approach to every situation and individual? Understanding your natural inclination is a good place to start.

Use Situations to your advantage

Be aware of different situations and how they may need a different approach. Take note of a situation and come up with a plan to help it suit you and your leadership style



Develop & Adapt

Constantly self reflect on your actions and interactions with others. Develop and grow from learning through your own experiences and the experiences of others

Prepare and Practice

Prepare for the unknown.

Be acute to different personality traits and how to deal with them . Know what makes someone 'tick'.

Behaving assertively can help you:



- ❑ Gain self-confidence and self-esteem
- ❑ Gain a sense of empowerment
- ❑ Understand and recognise your feelings
- ❑ Earn respect from others
- ❑ Improve communication
- ❑ Create win-win situation
- ❑ Improve your decision-making skills
- ❑ Create honest relationships
- ❑ Gain more job satisfaction



Your Personal Action Plan



A skill you already possess that aids assertive communication



Something you learnt or were reminded about during the webinar that will help you be more assertive



Something you are going to work on to become a more assertive communicator

Resources

Gender, and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace". Psychological Science

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02079.x>

Why Men Call Forceful Women 'Hysterical' And Try To Silence

Them <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2017/06/15/gender-bias-at-work-why-men-call-forceful-women-hysterical-and-try-to-silence-them/#3a690ea3ea2a>

Cooper, M. (2013). For Women Leaders, Likability and Success Hardly Go Hand-in-Hand. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from

<https://hbr.org/2013/04/for-women-leaders-likability-a>

Why being assertive is an essential skill for women in the workplace

<https://irishtechnews.ie/assertive-is-an-essential-skill-woman-in-business>

The Science of Women in Leadership – TedTalks

<https://youtu.be/FVzHBWoIGew>

Assertive Advice from Women in Leadership

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/assertiveness-advice-from-1-remarkable-women-philips-ivna-curi-mba/>

Amanda Blanc – "They said I wasn't the man for the job"

<https://youtu.be/rwcFOBKM1cY>



Thank You

Women in Leadership
Mini-Programme