

Can reporter find true happiness learning how to be assertive?

By LYNN ORR

Journalists although not my most humble types, do not particularly like to write about themselves. Exposing fears and doubts to what we all sure is a carnivorous public doesn't fit in with the image of the reporter, who above all else likes to make a great show of confidence.

When I told family and friends I was going to an assertiveness class, they were all in agreement. "You should be teaching it."

Perhaps to qualify their reaction, I should admit that I plead guilty at times to fulfilling the stereotype of a temperamental redhead, which is precisely why I learned a lot from this class.

Assertiveness training is not designed to make you aggressive or get you your own way. Based on behavior modification, it attempts to make you feel better about saying no—without excuses or guilt.

I DON'T have too many problems with saying no. I can usually be consistently rationalize, or easily make someone feel as if they never should have broached a particular subject.

I do have problems saying no without excuses. Could you write a story about turtles invading subdivisions?

No. I've never taken a course in zoology.

In the assertiveness workshop at the Northwestern YMCA, Dorothy Kirby, a certified social worker, says, "The day we stop being defensive is the day we grow up."

Reactions to situations can be characterized by four typical responses. The non-assertive type simply becomes a doormat, not being able to say no but always in a position of acquiescence. The aggressive type says no forcefully, usually over-reacting and downgrading others. The indirect type manipulates others by making them

feel guilty, and the assertive type either refuses or accepts the situation without damaging the feelings of others but retaining respect for him or herself.

A typical situation and four reactions to it can exemplify the different responses.

A housewife is asked to babysit for her neighbor's children.

"OK, I'll do it," says the non-assertive type, seething inside because she really doesn't want to.

"I'm not a child-care center," says the aggressive type, alienating her neighbor.

"I'll do it, but that means I won't be able to get everything done I had planned," says the indirect type, which makes the neighbor feel guilty and the indirect type feel as if she's won the round.

The assertive type would simply say, "I won't be able to do it," which answers the question and doesn't manipulate anyone including herself.

Others that we lose contact with our own desires.

In the workshop, we broke into four groups, were presented with a particular situation, and tried to articulate the four responses.

Although we found it fairly easy to be aggressive, non-assertive, and indirect, we found it much more difficult to be assertive. Making excuses and being polite were our big downfalls. "If someone asks

WHAT THE 20 women attending the recent workshop at the Northwest YMCA, Redford Township, discovered is that being assertive isn't that easy.

Most of us are so wrapped up in rationalizing our behavior and trying to please me a question, I believe I have an option," said Mrs. Kirby, but most of the group discovered that we really didn't believe we had options.

If an editor asks, "Can you cover a fashion show?" I can quit. "Would Woodward and Bernstein cover a groundbreaking?"

But to answer the question honestly, I have to question my own motives and decide whether it's important for me to take the assignment or not.

Sometimes it's too easy to see the editor's point of view. "Somebody has to do it," and sometimes it's too easy to convince myself it's a demanding assignment.

WHAT I LEARNED in the workshop is that you can train yourself to respect both the rights of others and yourself. Trying to get others to let you in is not a good enough rationale for doing something.

Mrs. Kirby told her audience, "Whether you are going to have a good time today is up to you. If I spend time trying to get you to have a good day, I won't get my job done."

"The energy will go out of a job if you are trying to get people to like you."

According to Mrs. Kirby, we spend a great deal of time feeling guilty about our reactions. The philosophy behind assertiveness training is that nobody can upset you or make you feel bad about something you don't believe.

One woman asked how to respond to someone who makes derogatory comments. That led to a discussion of button pushing. Derogating your buttons is an exercise in making yourself less vulnerable to the comments of others.

Learning not to react defensively is an essential part of assertiveness training.

For instance, being five feet tall, I have a difficult time dealing with comments like "How's the weather down there?" and "Boy are you short!"

In the workshop, we sat with partners and "pushed" each other's buttons, until we laughed about it instead of getting defensive or angry.

TRANSACTIONAL analysis. "I'm OK, you're OK" is also a part of assertiveness training.

"You don't achieve unless you're an OK person or you come from an OK place," said Mrs. Kirby.

Being OK means you don't disturb the space of others, which in layman's terms means you mind your own business.

If your husband wants to talk back to the television, learn to block it out. We get into situations when we want others to do things our way instead of letting them take

care of their own space.

"All that stuff your mother told you about a 10-40 ratio in a husband-wife relationship is out," said Mrs. Kirby. "Mind your own 10 per cent is sufficient."

Some of this sounds like common sense that is easily achieved. But assertiveness training gives you the tools and perhaps the confidence to practice common sense.

Eye contact is especially important as well as body posture and gestures. I can't very well get my point across to an editor when I'm sitting and she's standing, or if I'm looking at the ceiling when I'm objecting to a change in phrasing.

Timing seems especially important in one-to-one relationships of the intimate kind. If you want to discuss a change in the household budget or some other volatile subject, perhaps choosing a relaxing weekend moment is better than 11:30 p.m.

By practicing the components of assertive behavior, the goal is spontaneous responses to help you deal with most situations.

HONESTY is the most misunderstood word in personal relationships. Mrs. Kirby told us, "We use the word honest to pass judgments," said Mrs. Kirby.

"Can I be honest with you?" usually precedes some kind of criticism. Telling someone what you think about him is irrelevant and has nothing to do with assertiveness training.

Standing up for your own rights without infringing on the rights of others is what assertiveness training is all about, but learning to practice the fundamentals may not be that easy.

After a long day at the workshop, I decided to be assertive and announce to my family that I was going out to dinner as I was not interested in cooking.

Unfortunately, I think my husband must have taken the course somewhere along the line as he announced that our financial situation dictated that going out to dinner was out of the question. After some assertive discussion, we decided to cook dinner together which, after all, isn't a bad start.

My next goal is asking an editor for a full-time job. What's the assertive response to "No way?"



Reporter Lynn Orr (right) tries her best to learn to say no in an assertiveness class with teacher Dorothy Kirby.

SALE

BOYS' SWIMWEAR

Sizes S,M,L,XL (8 to 20)

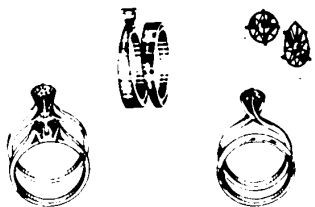
Boxer trunks - 4.75

Knit trunks - 3.75

Get in the swim and enjoy these important savings just as the summer, camp, and vacation fun gets under way. Select from solid color polyester/cotton elasticized waist boxer swim trunks or nylon knit print styles in a variety of colors.

Jacobson's

Children's Store
Woodward at Willits
Birmingham

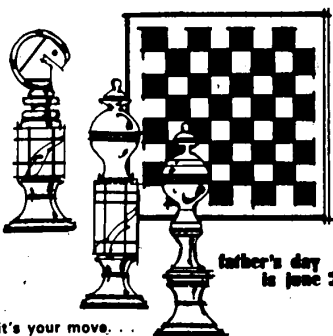


the right ring
for the right girl

At Fredrick's, of course. Where you'll find once-in-a-lifetime rings with all the beauty and individuality that make your relationship with her so special. Select from a unique treasury of contemporary and traditional styles, or let our talented craftsmen create a wedding design just for the two of you. From \$250.

Fredrick Jewelers
of BLOOMFIELD HILLS

869 West Long Lake Road, just east of Telegraph... 646-0973



father's day
is june 20

it's your move... to save on metal chessmen sets from Italy, beautifully crafted brass, nickel plate or silver plate pieces of generous size (some kings are 5 inches high) and handsome design. For yourself, or for the chess enthusiast on your gift list, each set is a collector's treasure and outstanding value. NOW \$ to \$

Jacobson's

WOODWARD AT WILLITS • BIRMINGHAM

Woodward at Willits
Birmingham

Nine selected for Girls State

Nine girls have been selected to attend American Legion Auxiliary Girls' State to be held on the campus of Olivet College in Olivet, June 12 through June 20.

From North Farmington High School will be Carolyn Headlee and Catherine Piche sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of North Farmington and Barbara Majoros sponsored by the City of Farmington Hills.

From Farmington High School will be Kathy VanDeuren sponsored by the Farmington Kiwanis Club, Anne Campbell sponsored by the Farmington Area Jaycees Auxiliary and Elizabeth Globe sponsored by the City of Farmington.

Those from Harrison High School will be Becky Elms and Mary McCaughy sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of North Farmington and Pauline Hess sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 366 of Farmington.

For nine days the girls attending American Legion Auxiliary Girls' State will play the role of junior politicians and build a unit of government, electing from their own representatives, city, county and state officials for a model state.

Under the sponsorship of the American Legion Auxiliary, the girls will be assigned to cities, petition for offices, form party platforms and caucus their way into a whirlwind week of self-government.

At the close of their session, three girls will be selected to represent Michigan at Girls' Nation held at the American University in Washington, D.C. this summer.

Club Circuit

FARMINGTON WOMEN'S CLUB, the oldest women's club in the Farmington area, met this week for its annual President's Day Luncheon in Forbidden City.

The event is a tradition for members who use the day to honor their past presidents and incoming president.

President of the club now is Margaret Williamson.

met by President Gerald Ford to be the U.S. attorney in eastern Michigan. The meeting is open to the public.

FARMINGTON AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets June 9 at 7:30 p.m. in Farmington High School, 3288 Shawansee, Room W-1-G.

The club meets the second Wednesday of every month, and its meetings are all open to all persons interested in amateur radio.

FARMINGTON REPUBLICAN CLUB meets June 9 in Botolph Inn to hear speaker Philip Van Dan. Dinner, which is optional, begins at 6:30 p.m. The business meeting and program begins at 8 p.m.

Van Dan heads U.S. Senator Robert Griffin's Detroit office and has been nominated by President Gerald Ford to be the U.S. attorney in eastern Michigan. The meeting is open to the public.

Mercy student is science winner

Lynn McKinley, 17, of Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy High School, recently won fourth place in the International Science Fair conducted in Denver, Colo.

The Denver competition included 480 winners from 200 regional fairs throughout the country.

She was a contestant in the botany competition.

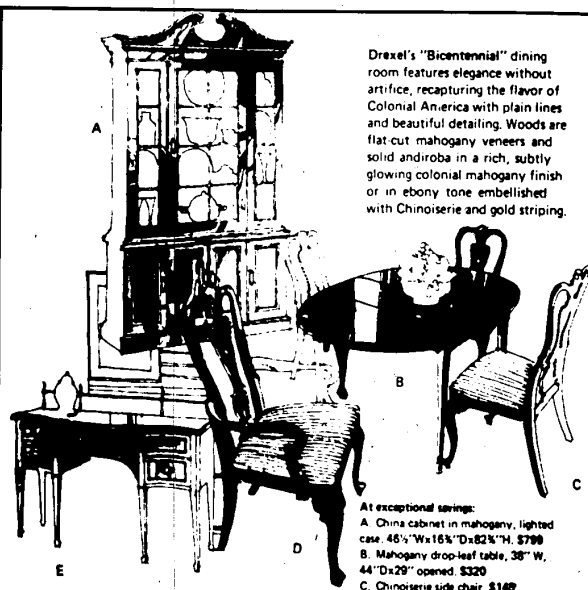
Marvin Williams retires in May

Marvin Williams of Farmington will retire May 7 from Western Electric's installation organization after 16 years of service. He is working in the Grand Rapids area as an installation supervisor.

Williams and his wife Ruth plan to move to their condominium in Florida.

Eggs have iron

There is more iron in three large eggs than in three ounces of drained tuna.



Drexel's "Bicentennial" dining room features elegance without artifice, recapturing the flavor of Colonial America with plain lines and beautiful detailing. Woods are flat-cut mahogany veneers and solid andiroba in a rich, subtly glowing colonial mahogany finish or in ebony tone embellished with Chinoiserie and gold striping.

At exceptional savings:
A. China cabinet in mahogany, lighted case, 46 1/2" W x 16 1/2" D x 82 1/2" H, \$799.
B. Mahogany drop-leaf table, 38" W, 44" D x 29" opened, \$320.
C. Chinoiserie side chair, \$149.
D. Chinoiserie arm chair, \$185.
E. Sideboard, 64" W x 20 1/2" D x 48" H. With rail, \$605. Without rail, \$500.

Jacobson's

Birmingham
Woodward at Willits

Bloomfield Plaza
Telegraph at Maple

SHOP JACOBSON'S THURSDAY AND FRIDAY EVENING 'TIL MIDNIGHT 3 HOURS FREE PARKING... WHEN YOU MAKE A PURCHASE