Assertiveness at Work
Delegate Manual - SAMPLE PAGES
WORKSHOP OUTLINE

9.30  Introduction and Setting the Scene
      Knowledge / Skill Checklist
      Ice Breaker: Getting to Know You
      What Do You Want To Get Out of Today?

      Communication Overview
      Why Communication Goes Wrong

11.00 BREAK

      Car Wars Exercise
      Assertiveness, Aggression and Passivity
      Rights & Responsibilities

12.45 LUNCH

      3 Steps to Assertive Behaviour
      Assertive Behaviour: Written Skill Practice

      Listening Skills Exercises
      Importance of Body Language in Communication
      Body Language Exercises

3.00 BREAK

      Preparing to be Assertive
      Assertive Tactics inc. Broken Record and Self-Disclosure

      Assertive role plays

      Some Thoughts on Action Planning
      Knowledge / Skill Checklist
      Workshop Summary

4.45 CLOSE

“Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.”
ANON
KNOWLEDGE SKILL CHECKLIST

In order to ensure that learning objectives are met by the course:

BEFORE THE COURSE: Rate your ability on a competence scale of 1-5 as follows:-

1= No knowledge/skill
2= A little knowledge/skill but considerable development required
3= Some knowledge/skill but development required
4= Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required
5= Highly competent - no/very little development required

WRITE your numerical rating in the 1st column. AFTER THE COURSE: Repeat the exercise, writing your new rating, in the 2nd column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPETENCE</th>
<th>PRE . (1-5)</th>
<th>POST (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understands what communication actually is</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Appreciates why communication often goes wrong between people</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Feels confident to be assertive at work</td>
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<td>4. Understands rights and responsibilities at work</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Knows the difference between assertiveness, aggression &amp; passivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Is assertive with others, utilising the 3 steps to assertive behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Can say no to others with respect, without feeling guilty</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Understands a range of positive body language factors when communicating</td>
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<td>9. Displays active listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Is familiar with a structured approach towards preparing to be assertive</td>
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<td>11. Knows the meaning of broken record technique</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Knows the meaning of Self Disclosure</td>
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</table>

OVERALL COMPETENCE

PERCENTAGE CHANGE (2nd column total minus 1st; divide answer by 1st column total; Multiply answer by 100): %
"Every day, in every way, I’m getting better and better”

FRANK SPENCER
EXERCISE: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. In groups of twos, interview each other and get some facts about them - the job they do, the company they work for and some things about themselves (e.g. hobbies / interests). In addition, explore any ‘unusual’ facts about them - things that everybody else may not know about them. For example:

- Unusual hobby
- Secret ambition
- Something they did as a child that was naughty
- Met someone famous
- Unusual holiday activity
- Embarrassing incident at work

Facts about Partner:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

2. Complete the ‘What do you want to get out of today?’ flipchart.

“I know that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant”

RICHARD NIXON
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS CHECKLIST

Interpersonal skills are something we rarely think about. The purpose of this questionnaire, therefore, is to help you identify and prioritise your interpersonal skills development. By answering the questions as thoughtfully and as honestly as you can and then comparing your answers against the ‘key’, you will understand what you need to learn and how you will benefit when you do learn it.

Read the statements below and rate yourself against STATEMENT below, on a 0 to 5 scale. Then use the PRIORITY column to prioritise your needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected/unhelpful responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>When interacting with others in 'tricky' situations, you sometimes get a reaction you hadn't expected and which makes it more difficult for you to achieve your goals with that person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selling services and ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selling, either to customers or internally, is an important part of your job and is either becoming increasingly challenging or you have never had any training in it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resolving differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To achieve your goals, you frequently have to resolve major differences of opinion with other people internally and/or externally.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiating</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To achieve your goals, you frequently have to negotiate with other people internally and/or externally.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manipulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>You find that other people easily bully, coerce, flatter or 'out argue' you into doing what you'd prefer not to do, or into agreeing to what you'd prefer not to agree.</td>
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</table>
COMMUNICATION METHODS

There is a range of ways that we communicate information at work:

- Face to face (1-1 or group)
- E mail
- Written messages e.g. answering a phone for someone
- Internet
- Meetings
- Presentations
- Telephone
- Voice mail
- Memos and Letters
- Faxes
- Reports
- Video conferencing
- Company newsletter

The method we choose can depend on:

- **WHAT** we need to communicate?
- **WHO** it needs to be communicated to?
- **WHY** do they need the information?
- **WHERE** are they based?
- By **WHEN** do they need the communication?
- **HOW** much feedback is required about the message?
- **HOW** emotive is the topic? (the more emotive to sender or receiver, the more we should go face-to-face)
- **HOW** did they react/respond last time? (e.g. if they ignored your email request for information last time, you may want to pick up the phone this time)
- **WHAT** are the company guidelines on which method to choose?

“Good communication is characterised by providing employees with information which they want and getting information to them quickly and through the channels they prefer.”

**LOUIS I. GELFAND**
COMMUNICATION METHODS: E - MAIL

When sending:

• In character, e-mail is somewhere between an informal telephone call and a formal letter, but an e-mail can be easily kept as a permanent record - a phone call is more difficult. Avoid slang, careless writing, thoughtless comments, too many dots or exclamation marks

• Consider the recipient - who really needs to know? Is it ‘nice to know’ or ‘essential to their job to know’?

• Talk to your boss about the types of information he/she needs to be copied in on.

• Don’t reply to a group if your message is intended for one individual. Beware of forwarding your reply to the whole group.

• Beware of humour and sarcasm - unless you know the recipient very well.

• Where is the recipient? If they are in the same office area, why not pop over and talk to them instead. Think of how long it takes to ‘talk’ the message compared to having to write it out.

• Don’t use e mail as an excuse not to talk to somebody

• Never e -mail in anger. Calm down first, or consider an alternative method - e-mail can never convey emotion. Face to face can be a much more effective way of getting how you feel across to an individual.

• Indicate the subject of the e-mail, and the purpose, in the subject header, to help the recipient e.g. ‘Leadership Training: Joining Instructions below’.

• Keep to business issues, avoiding personal e-mails and gossiping.
• Re read the message before sending, putting yourself in the shoes of the recipient - what is the tone like? What unintended messages could the recipient see in your e-mail? Am I being succinct enough?

• Beware of download times on attachments.

• Be careful about criticising people and organisations by e-mail. A hasty remark by phone will be forgotten, on e-mail there is a permanent record.

• Avoid writing in capital letters (to some this is the equivalent of shouting, and it makes it more difficult to read).

• If you classify all your e-mails as urgent, people may gradually stop treating them as such.

• Be careful about copying the message to the recipient’s manager - so people may view this as untrusting and underhand.

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
WHAT IS ASSERTIVENESS?

In small groups discuss the meaning of the word ‘assertiveness’ and how it differs from ‘aggression’ and ‘passivity’. You may want to think about people at work who could be described by the 3 behaviours to help understand the differences.

Come up with some descriptions for each and **transfer onto the flipchart paper**. Choose a Spokesperson to feedback at the end of the exercise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertiveness is</th>
<th>Aggression is</th>
<th>Passivity is</th>
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“Behold the tortoise. He only makes progress when he sticks out his neck.”

**ANON**
CAR WARS EXERCISE

Consider whether your behaviour in this situation is - AGGRESSIVE, PASSIVE OR ASSERTIVE.- and tick the appropriate box:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGGRESSIVE</th>
<th>PASSIVE</th>
<th>ASSERTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Consider these typical Responses from people, and again rate what type of behaviour you think they represent by ticking the appropriate box:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>AGG.</th>
<th>PASS.</th>
<th>ASSERT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You shout out ‘Oi’ loudly, and say to yourself “I don’t bloody well believe it.” After giving the driver a dirty stare, you drive on.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. You get out of your car, and walk over to the driver’s car. He winds down his window, and you say “Hello there. I appreciate that you may not have seen me there, but I was about to reverse into that parking space. As I was here first, I’d appreciate it if you could move.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. You wind the window down and shout “You ****** ******, that was my parking spot.” Give him the 2-finger gesture (believe me it’s not the victory sign), and drive off.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. You say to yourself ‘that’s life’ and drive off</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. You get out of your car, and walk over to the driver’s car. He winds down his window, and you say “Excuse me, mate. I was about to reverse into that parking space.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ASSERTIVENESS, AGGRESSIVENESS AND PASSIVITY

Assertiveness is all about …..
- Being honest about yourself and others
- Being confident
- Trying to find solutions
- Listening to and understanding the other point of view
- Expressing what you want, need or feel but not at the expense of others
- Showing genuine empathy
- Being prepared

Quotes from assertive people
- “I’d like to tackle the task in this way. How does that affect you?”
- “I know we’re really stressed at the moment. However I’ve stayed late the last 3 evenings, so I want to go home on time tonight”
- “I understand what you are saying, however I’ve got to go. Can we tackle the problem in the morning”
- “I appreciate that we normally go out to the pub on a Thursday night, however I want to stop in tonight”

Aggressiveness is all about …..
- Getting your own way (at the expense of others)
- Making sure you come out the winner
- Not listening to others
- Giving no consideration to others

Quotes from aggressive people
- “Just do it.”
- “I don’t agree with you”
- “That’s stupid.”
- “Surely you don’t believe that”
- “It’s your turn to go to the coffee machine.”
- “It’s a load of rubbish - typical of the finance department - they haven’t got a clue.”
- “I’d like it done by 2.30”
- “No, I don’t want to go out for a drink tonight.”

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A right is something to which we have a just claim. It is key to assertive behaviour - expressing what we want, need or feel but not at the expense of others i.e. not violating other people’s rights.

With rights come responsibilities too. For example:

- I have the right to make a mistake from time to time. I also have the responsibility to acknowledge the mistake, to put it right and to learn from it.

- A right to a fair hearing of opinions, views and ideas. A responsibility to put my views clearly and with balance.

The exercise overleaf may help you think through rights and their relevance to you at work.

“Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.”  

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
Can’t Thinking Can

• I tried it once and it did not work • At least I am one step nearer to finding a way of doing it. What shall I try this time?

• I don’t know how to do that • Now how can I do that? Who can I ask for help?

• They can do it better than me • If they can do it, so can I.

• Someone ridiculed my last effort • I will show them and myself that I can do it.

• I will never be able to do that • It’s just a matter of finding the best way for me.

Other Tips for Positive Thinking

• Expect to feel nervous/anxious/lack of confidence

• Don’t expect immediate success

• Remember all the other things you do well

• Accept and believe honest feedback (good or bad)

• Find the courage ‘to have a go’

• Learn from mistakes - even the best people make mistakes
• Recognise personal capabilities and limitations - We can’t all be good at everything

• Set achievable goals and strive to achieve them

• Think how you’d feel after achieving something

• For every situation think what is the worst thing that can happen? - it’s not half as bad as you might think

• Use positive words / phrases;
  – “What I can do for you is……”
  – “Certainly!”
  – “You can be confident that..”
  – “I can assure you …”
  – “I'll do that personally for you”
  – “I have a solution”
  – “I will...”
  – “I am positive..”
  – “I will investigate this now for you...”
  – “Thank you”
  – “I can confirm that...”
  – “I am delighted to...”

• Avoid negative self-talk. Miserable thoughts drain you of energy and affect self-esteem. Change negatives into positives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative:</th>
<th>Positive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’ve always been useless with computers”</td>
<td>“I do find computers a challenge but look at how I picked up that new software a few months ago. I might have been slow but now people come to me for advice – that can’t be bad”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Always look on the bright side of life”

MONTY PYTHON
## ASSERTIVE SKILL PRACTICE

Using the 3 steps to assertive behaviour, write assertive responses to these scenarios:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIO</th>
<th>ASSERTIVE RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You want to go to the department meeting. Your manager says to you: “John, as everyone can’t go the meeting, would you mind staying and answering the phone.” You do mind.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Your boss comes up and says: “I’ve been waiting a week now for that analysis report you were doing. Can’t you cope with your workload?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. At a daily briefing with the team, Cherry (your manager) comes up with an idea, which you yourself had mentioned to her only 3 days ago. The problem was that she indicated that it was her idea. You are annoyed about this, and want to tackle her after the briefing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. A colleague asks you for your computer password as he’s forgotten his. You feel uncomfortable about doing this. You respond:</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. You have been with the organisation 12 months. Having coffee with a colleague who was on the same induction as you, you discover she’s had 3 appraisals. You’ve only had one. You want to tackle Mo, your line manager, about it.</td>
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</table>
POSITIVE WORDS AND PHRASES

Dictionary says - Positive = “expressing certainty or affirmation to emphasise what is good”

Positive Words and Statements - these are the things our customer wants to hear

- “What I can do for you is......”
- “You can be confident that..”
- “I can assure you ...”
- “Immediately”
- “I’ll do that personally for you”
- “I have a solution”
- “I will...”
- “I am positive..”
- “I will investigate this now for you...”
- “Thank you”
- “I can confirm that...”
- “I am delighted to...”
- “The good news is ......”
- “The product I would recommend for you is...”. 
- “From my experience, I would suggest ......”
- “That’s not a problem”

Any favourites of yours to add to the list?:

- 
- 
- 
- 

“It takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile.”

ANON
BODY LANGUAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

People can tell a lot about someone even before you say one word. What could these body language be saying? Complete the sheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BODY LANGUAGE TRAIT</th>
<th>MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A nice smile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scanning eye contact when talking to two or more people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Someone who doesn’t blink very much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Slight frown on their face when you are talking to them</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Leaning forward to emphasise a point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Clenched fists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Looking at your watch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Hesitant, low volume voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Twisting strands of hair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hands on hips when talking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Having a conversation with someone 18 inches away from you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A strong smell of peppermint</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Non-directive

Directive

Telling what to do
Solving someone’s problem
Giving advice
Offering advice
Asking questions
Helping another solve own problem

PUSH

PULL
DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Different people like to be persuaded in different ways. Take the four people below for example.

Alan wants you to:
• Make things enjoyable and fun
• Indicate that people will like it and by implication like him
• Show how it gives new insight and perspectives
• State how it will help people grow and develop
• Show how it will enhance relationships

Karen wants you to:
• Indicate its practical results for people
• Show how it provides immediate results
• Give examples of the benefits to be gained based on real evidence
• Show respect to her and others in your meetings/interactions

Mark wants you to:
• Discuss the reasons behind the theory
• Demonstrate how it fits his overall strategy
• Indicate its broad and far reaching possibilities
• Be a credible source of information

Julie wants you to:
• Show her that it works, allowing her the chance to try before she buys
• Indicate that it will save her time and money
• Show her the results can be measured
• Answer all her questions

“Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.”

DOUGLAS ADAMS
ASSERITIVE PREPARATION

You may want to think about some questions to consider before you tackle the person / situation assertively:

1. What do you want to achieve?

2. What is the range of things the other person could offer?

3. What would you be prepared to accept? (In other words what is your fall-back position)

4. What are the facts and figures behind the situation?
   - When did it happen?
   - How many times?
   - Over what period of time?
   - What is the effect on the customer/department/individual/company?
   - What evidence can you provide?

5. Who are you tackling? In terms of personality and style of working, what approaches may help you to influence them?

6. How will you approach the conversation? What will tune them in? What words will you use? What tactics will you use?

7. What objections may they come up with?

8. How will you overcome these objections?

9. When is the best time to tackle them?

10. Where will you tackle them?
## ASSERTIVE PROCESS

**Start**

- Provides small talk / refreshments.
- Thanks them for the opportunity to discuss issue.
- Explains **why** they are meeting.
- Explains **how** long the meeting may take.

**Middle**

- Explains any facts/figures around the situation.
- Confirms understanding of situation with other party.
- Asks them for their solution/approach.
- Actively listens.
- Attempts workable compromise.
- Uses range of assertive tips/tactics.
- Overcomes any objections.
- Demonstrates positive body language.

**End**

- Summarises what was agreed.
- Agrees a review date.
- Thanks them for their time.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Development Areas</th>
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</table>
CAR WARS EXERCISE: Solutions

1. Aggressive. Even the dirty stare’s intent is of ‘I’m not happy with you’.

2. Assertive. Bit of me, and a bit of you. Trying to see it form their point of view as well as stating own view. Then trying to get a workable compromise.

3. Aggressive!


5. Aggressive, bordering on assertive. ‘Excuse me, mate’ can be said (and received) politely (assertive) or sarcastically (aggressive).

In the Car Wars Exercise, all 3 behavioural styles can be appropriate. It is how the communication is received is the key. Our reaction to this situation can depend on a range of factors including our mood, how we perceive danger and our attitude to this particular character, as he is described.

At the outset, if we ignore the perceived character traits of this driver, we still can’t be sure that our perception of the situation is right e.g. we don’t know whether our brake lights are working for him to see we are reversing. For all we know he could have thought we were picking up somebody from a house in the street, and was about to thank us for not taking a valuable parking space!

“If people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn’t seem so wonderful after all.”
MICHELANGELO

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PERSONAL PLEDGES FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>START</th>
<th>STOP</th>
<th>CONTINUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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</table>

Answer the simple questions - what will you **START** doing? What will you **STOP** doing? What will you **CONTINUE** doing more of?

“Training that brings about no change is as effective as a parachute that opens on the first bounce.”

ANON