

WOMEN *in* RESEARCH *'Small Wins' Series*

Webinar 4: Saying No and Speaking Up

How to Avoid the 'Assertiveness Penalty' and Other Challenges of Female Voice

ARC Laureate Fellows Sharon K Parker & Lynette Russell

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Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Plan for today's "Small Wins" seminar

- Sharon
 - www.womeninresearch.org.au Get evidence and inspiration!!
 - Small Wins concept
 - Today's topic
- Personal insights from:
 - Our website!
 - ARC Laureate Fellow Lynette Russell
- Submit your questions via Slido (using the code **#winr**) and answer our poll
 - ("What stops you from saying "no"?"")
- Set & share your 'small goal'/ new tiny habit on our members-only Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/womeninresearch>)
- Housekeeping:
 - Please mute your microphones and turn off your cameras
 - Need help? Message our support team using the chat function in the event
 - Try to dedicate this time to you by focusing just on the talk 😊

Small Wins in the form of Tiny Habits



Webinar 1 – Step out of your comfort zone – but not too far – for growth
Webinar 2 – Build Tiny Habits without relying on motivation or “will power”
Webinar 3- Recap and Example

See
www.womeninresearch.org.au
for recordings

If you have a big vague goal, like ‘be more assertive’, break it down to a smaller and more specific goal....



What Is Assertiveness and Why Does it Matter?

Passive	Passive Aggressive	Aggressive	Assertive
Emotionally dishonest, indirect, inhibited, self-denying, blaming, apologetic.	Emotionally dishonest, indirect. Self-denying at first. Self-enhancing at expense of others later.	Inappropriately honest, direct, expressive, attacking, blaming, controlling, self-enhancing at expense of others.	Appropriately honest, direct, self-enhancing, expressive, self-confident, empathic to emotions of all involved.
"Others' rights and needs take precedence over mine"	"I subtly make clear that my rights and needs prevail"	"I boldly insist that my rights and needs prevail"	I clearly express that we both have rights and needs"

Benefits of assertiveness for mental health & well-being, relationship satisfaction, and more!



Examples of assertive behavior

- saying "no"
- refusing unreasonable requests
- asking another person to behave differently
- communicating clearly how an event or situation has made you feel (positive and negative)
- expressing an opinion
- pursuing one's personal goals.

WHAT To assert – some tips from Laureates



<https://youtu.be/ZqxDe6jqfjA>

Managing You - Saying No

For more 'themed videos' go to:

<https://www.womeninresearch.org.au/themed-videos>

HOW to be assertive - classic tips

Tips for communicating assertively

Use "I" statements

Be clear and direct:

"I would like you to give me a refund"

"I think what you have done is good, but I would like to see more of..."

Describe how another person's *behavior* makes you *feel*

This makes other people aware of the consequences of their actions:

"When you raise your voice it makes me scared ... I would like you to speak softly"

"When you don't tell me what you are feeling it makes me confused"

Stick to your guns - the broken record technique

This involves thinking about what you want, preparing what you might say, then repeating it as necessary:

"I would like a refund ... Yes, but I would still like a refund ... I've heard what you have said but I still want a refund"

BUT.... The 'Assertiveness Penalty'

Gender role theory (e.g., Eagly, 2004)

- Stereotypical beliefs about men and women linked to the gendered division of labour:
 - women are warm, likeable, etc
 - men as assertive, competent etc.
- Very hard for women to be seen as **warm AND competent**...
- Women tend to be seen as either “warm and incompetent” (‘wonderful but weak’) OR “cold and competent” (e.g., Cuddy, et al., 2008).



“Shrill” ; “Shouts too much”
“the Clinton cackle”



“Too feminine;”

- Benevolent sexism
- Seen as incompetent

Warm, likeable,
sensitive to others,
caring, humble, nice,
caring, nurturing, co-
operative, modest, etc.

Competent,
assertive, agentic,
leader, negotiator,
competitive,

“Too masculine”

Hostile sexism /
backlash (e.g.,
being seen as
“aggressive”,
demanding”)



Example Evidence of These Challenges

“Too feminine”

Benevolent sexism/ Seen as Incompetent

When women do act in stereotype-consistent ways, this can be undervalued as its ‘expected’. Eg Women are less likely than men to be recognized and rewarded for altruistic behaviors performed in the workplace (Heilman & Chen, 2005), and the value they concede in negotiation is less likely to be reciprocated by their male counterparts (Wazlawek & Stephens, 2017).



Warm, likeable, sensitive to others, caring, humble, nice, caring, nurturing, cooperative, modest, etc.

Competent, assertive, agentic leader, negotiator, competitive,

“Too masculine”

Hostile sexism / backlash

Women who assert themselves intellectually in group discussions (e.g., speaking up, offering substantive contributions) → elicit noticeable cues of negative affect from others in the group (Butler & Geis, 1990)

Compared with men, women who initiate salary negotiations or behave in an assertive, self-promoting manner in a job interview context, are seen as overly demanding, less socially skilled, and less likeable (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

It is very challenging for women to be assertive, which is one reason why they often are not!

Powerful men speak more; more powerful women do not. (see Brescoll, VL., 2012, Who takes the floor and why? *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

Men receive a boost in their perceived status after expressing anger. Women who expressed anger are seen as lower status and less competent (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). “Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead? Status Conferral, Gender, and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace”. *Psychological Science*, 19(3). 268-275.

Dealing With The Assertiveness Penalty

Ideally, we wouldn't have to deal with this because things would be different, and men and women would be judged by the same standards! Mean time..... We need strategies

1. Convey warmth AND competence (or be assertive and friendly)



Empirical Evidence

..... Dominance hurts women's, relative to men's, likability, as well as outcomes such as hireability. More important, **dominance expressed explicitly (e.g., direct demands) affected women's likability whereas implicit forms of dominance (e.g., eye contact) did not**

Williams, MJ., Tiedens, LZ. *The subtle suspension of backlash: A meta-analysis of penalties for women's implicit and explicit dominance behavior.* Psych. Bulletin, 142(2), 2016, 165-197

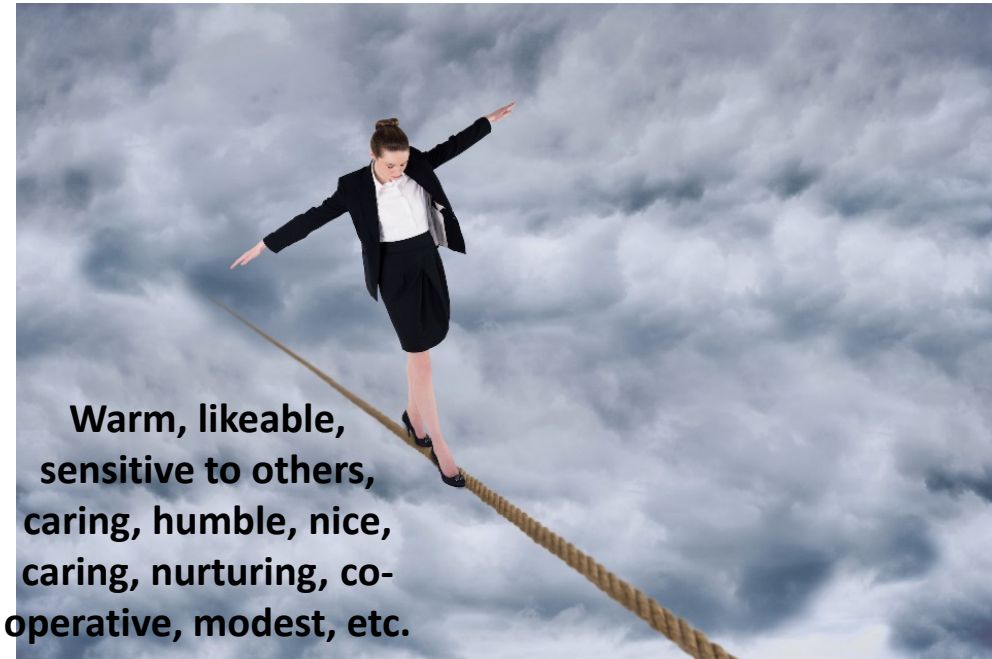
Tips

- Book end assertions with friendly greetings
- Negotiations framed as "asking"
- Combine physically dominant / strong body messages (e.g., clear eye contact, stand tall) with communal messages
- be deliberate about when you exhibit 'masculine' versus 'feminine' behaviors eg "I'm warm Mother ninety-five percent of the time so when I need to be tough, I can be" (CEO)
- Use anger sparingly

Dealing With The Assertiveness Penalty

Tips

- Try to avoid too many qualifiers
“sorry”, “probably” (which reduces perceived competence) – use clear language, eg “I” and be clear and direct.
- Be succinct
- “Say no, but offer other help instead
- Say no to undervalued work by highlighting your valued activities
“I’d love to help but I’m working on major grant application right now. Joe would be perfect for this”



Warm, likeable,
sensitive to others,
caring, humble, nice,
caring, nurturing, co-
operative, modest, etc.

Gender Judo

“a practice, whereby you train yourself to behave in a “warm and nurturing” way with just a sprinkling of Mother Superior, so you can get the respect you need for a cohesive workplace”
(Joan Williams)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/women-work-and-the-art-of-gender-judo/2014/01/24/29e209b2-82b2-11e3-8099-9181471f7aaf_story.html

Women high in "masculine traits" (aggressiveness, assertiveness, and confidence) who were also able to "self-monitor" their behaviour (ie fit into their environment by assessing social situations and adapting their actions accordingly) are more successful – eg 3 times as many promotions as masculine women who were low self-monitors.

O'Neill, O. A., & O'Reilly III, C. A. (2011). Reducing the backlash effect: Self-monitoring and women's promotions. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 84(4), 825-832.



The “Oh, Excuse Me!”: When someone is talking but winding down, start talking over him. If he doesn't stop, say: “Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were finished.” You've done something perceived as masculine — interrupting — but in a feminine way.

2. Frame your assertive message

The Behavior Frame demonstrates you are in control of your emotions.

“I’m going to express my opinion very directly; I’ll be as specific as possible.”

The Value Frame demonstrates commitment to a shared value.

“I see this as a matter of honesty and integrity, so it’s important for me to be clear about where I stand.”

Share your good intent

- Quickly and clearly explain your positive intent before you share your strong opinion.

“I came to speak with you to try to find the best way to solve our inability to match specs, I didn’t come here to finger point or blame.”

Summary

- Assertiveness is about clearly expressing your needs and wants, without overriding/ignoring those of others
- **WHAT** to assert: Reflect in relation to your goals (laureates)
- **HOW** to be assertive: clear & direct communication is key
- **But** there can an *assertiveness penalty* because of stereotypes
- It is hard for women to be seen as competent AND warm
- Strategies
 - 1) Gender judo – convey warmth and competence
 - 2) Frame your messages

Introducing today's panellist



ARC Laureate Fellow Professor Lynette Russell
Monash University

Director, Monash Indigenous Studies Centre
<https://research.monash.edu/en/persons/lynette-russell>

Slido #winr

Over to Dr Georgia Hay



Dr Georgia Hay

Forrest Research Prospect Fellow, Curtin University

Reminder: Set yourself a SMALL GOAL...or tiny habit

Missed our previous webinars? Check them out here!

<https://www.womeninresearch.org.au/blog/categories/small-wins-webinar-series>

Please share your goal on the members-only Facebook group
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/womeninresearch>)

*Many thanks for the suggestions
and advice! A great session and
I'm feeling very empowered!*

*Thanks so much for the
inspiring seminar, it was lovely
to see and hear you today.
Warm regards from Canberra.*

With thanks.....

...to the **ARC and Curtin University** for investing in this project
... to the **Lynette** who so graciously participated in today's webinar
... to the **wonderful team of women** working behind the scenes
... to **you** for attending!



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