

One

An Unfair Advantage

America's Best Kept Managerial Secret

During the past twenty-five years I taught more than a thousand managers, as well as many thousands of other people, to be assertive in training seminars-workshops. The management training was very well received. It was rated by those who were trained in the UCLA Systematic Assertive Management seminar, a constant eight plus out of nine for excellence; applicability of content, relevance and instruction. This data was taken from UCLA's own evaluation ratings. The seminar trained people from all walks of managerial life: From Livermore Laboratory atomic scientist turned managers looking for managerial competence, to newly promoted managers who knew next to nothing about their new job, to police chiefs looking for new ways to deal with centuries old management problems.

One thing about the seminar I noted however, appeared not to follow from the training (but really did!) In spite of its superior ratings by its students, other managers rarely received personal recommendations to the seminar by the managers who had taken it. Very few of the new trainees had known a previous trainee who told them to sign up for it. There was almost no word of mouth. This was unheard of. Manager trainees always told others about the workshops they took - either to brag about how smart they were to take it - or to warn others away from a lemon. The explanation for this odd behavior? The typical managerial trainee who learned to be an assertive manager saw the incredible ease it gave in dealing with managerial conflict between managers and superiors, subordinates, colleagues and collaterals, as well as external people like customers and other company reps. These trainees saw their learning and experience within the workshop as a nuts and bolts approach to problems - directly applicable the next day on the job. They also saw it as a competitive edge over their fellow managers for advancement. With this

perspective, they reasoned, why give the other guy an unfair advantage, which they themselves had just been handed? Why indeed? So no referrals to speak of came back to us at the UCLA seminar.

Why do I bring this teaching anomaly to your attention? Simply to point out that you, like the previous managerial trainees, do indeed have a choice of keeping your knowledge of assertive management to yourself, or sharing it with others. But it can also be to your advantage to think through the comparative payoffs of that choice before you make it.

Your choices in acquiring knowledge

On one hand, you will have a definite advantage over competitors - if you see your contemporaries as such. I always use a particular analogy to explain this point; if there is a pile of money on the table between you and someone else, I can guarantee that the manipulative skill (in making you feel guilty, ignorant, and foolish) of the fellow sitting on the opposite side of the table will be in direct proportion to the amount of money in between the two of you. Given that observation, the odds are, taking only manipulative ploys into account, you are likely to lose most of the time. But if assertive skills are added to the mix, you will never be at a disadvantage - the conflict will be settled on real issues, not on who can more effectively manipulate the other fellow. And if the other side has only manipulative ploys, the issue is lost to them right there.

Pointing this observation out with a real life example, one of the managerial trainees told me, some time after he took the course, that he saved his company a pile of money in dealing with the reps of one of their Japanese customers in Tokyo. His company in LA supplied huge amounts of high quality, optic plastic stock to customers around the world. During a dockyard strike, they were unable to ship the scheduled order for eight weeks - a disaster for the Japanese firm. So the U.S. company sent the shipment to Tokyo by air freight on its own initiative, and avoided its customer taking a big hit in productivity costs. Neither management staff, Japanese nor American, said anything about the cost of the air freight because it was not covered in the sales contract. Two months later, the Japanese management team arrived in LA to negotiate a new sales contract for the coming year. The U.S. management team assumed that it had to assume the expense of the air freight which saved its Japanese customer as a cost of doing business. The manager trainee thought otherwise. He requested to be included on the negotiating team to see if

he could do anything about the air freight matter. As you might guess, the Japanese team - it was found out later - were willing to pay the entire amount of the extra air costs that kept them from having a production scheduling disaster - but were not going to announce that. They waited to see what the U.S. negotiating team would do. The assertive trainee got them to cough up half up front, before allowing any discussion of a new sales contract - which included freight shipment insurance paid for by the Japanese firm. The assertive management training seminar at UCLA saved the U.S. company over fifty thousand dollars in costs - and that was back when 50k was a lot of money. I found this all out over a celebration lunch for his promotion.

Another managerial trainee likened the learning of systematic assertiveness to verbal karate; where you could never be seriously hurt, but in a position to show any manipulative opposition it will always be ineffective, and often doing so in an elegant manner.

The other option to examine before you choose to use the assertive skills you acquire is not the improvement of your own job performance - that is a given - but the people job performance of your subordinates through the assertive skills they learn. If you and your section at work are surrounded by manipulators - and you very likely are, a fact of enculturation, unfortunately - how well will you and your subordinates perform if you are the only one there who is really effective in dealing with social conflict? The number one managerial problem brought up by trainees, incidentally, was dealing with subordinates who did not do what they were told because someone else - a co-worker, a contact person from another section, a technical person, a rep, a customer, talked him/her out of doing what was supposed to be done. Usually this sad state of non-assertiveness - the inability to carry things out on one's own without always having to refer to external factors and justifications (rather than simply do what the boss said to do) - resulted in the now unhappy supervisor having to do the unperformed task him/her self to insure its being done - after the now even more unhappy subordinate had come back and told his boss that what he wanted to do was "impossible, a bad thing, cost too much, unpopular, had been tried many times before and wouldn't work, would screw things up royally", etc., etc.

This very real example of employees not being effective in doing what you want shows one advantage in encouraging your section to learn about the assertive method of dealing with conflict produced by those they deal with day by day. If your subordinates are able to carry out your

directives in doing their jobs without getting bogged down by manipulative others, can you imagine how productive your section can become? And how much will their productivity work for you in enhancing your own advancement?

So the question facing the management trainee who took the assertive seminar is "Not if the skills will help me to advance, but which is the more effective path for me to advance?" Also, in one's advancement up the ladder, eventually one will face another assertively skilled manager. To whom will the step up go? To the manager who can handle adverse conflict with ease? Or the manager who has that skill but in addition, is backed up by a host of subordinates similarly skilled in carrying things out?

This book is written and organized so that it will serve both the reader who chooses to learn for his own direct benefit as well as those who are also interested in the indirect benefits of surrounding themselves with assertively trained subordinates. It is written in the format and sequence of the UCLA Systematic Assertive Management workshop-seminars. Its purpose? Teaching managers how to think for themselves, feel confident about themselves, and to carry out decisions in the face of social pressure.

What We Come Equipped with — Two Animal Options — Fight and Flight — and One Human Coping Skill — Verbal Problem Solving

We are the product of very successful, but more primitive ancestors who made the change from lower animal to human potential. Our pre-human ancestors had primarily two built in coping skills, automatic flight and fight. If one of our ancestors, walking down the jungle trail, was suddenly confronted with a saber toothed tiger, he would automatically turn and run. He ran to the nearest tree and climbed it. If it was too small and broke under his weight, he ran to the next one and climbed that. No complicated strategy or structural design stress analysis was required. No thought was required at all - just find the nearest tree and climb it. If the saber toothed tiger started climbing the tree after our ancestor, he then became angry automatically. Today, you and I innately operate the same way. If we can't run, we fight, because enough of our ancestors convinced enough saber toothed tigers with their display of anger that they were not a cheap meal, thereby passing this tendency down

to us. Our more intellectual cousins, however - those who were not frightened - those deprived of the speed advantage of excess adrenalin - and stopped to esthetically admire the grandeur of the tiger's coat, and how warm it must kept it during cold weather - were gobbled up and didn't survive. Eventually our ancestors, those who did survive, developed their verbal skills in communicating with each other on how to solve the problem of unexpected saber toothed tiger encounters - as well as a myriad of other problems in their primitive world - and passed this skill potential down to us also.

For most of my adult life I have traveled each morning to work in various parts of this world of ours, and I can honestly report that I have yet to come upon a single saber toothed tiger during all that time. In the present world we live in, the animal skills of flight or fight are pretty much useless to us. In fact, we typically get into more trouble when we use them, than if we had not. Instead, we have available to us the greatest gift which our successful ancestors passed down to us; our verbal problem solving potential. Tapping this verbal problem solving potential is what this book is all about and verbal assertiveness is part of verbal problem solving behavior. If you wonder if you are naturally assertive or not, you might take note of the fact that the first independent act most of us made as individuals was to protest the treatment we had received in forcing us to breathe at birth by holding us upside down to clear our lungs and spanking us. This natural tendency to assert ourselves, was of course, inhibited by our early training that turned us into the obedient "good child" who never gave anyone a bad time and did what everyone expected.

Assertive Behavior: Adult Communication, Problem Solving, and Self-Assurance

At this point you may be asking yourself, "What is assertiveness?" It's a very good question. If we were to assemble a blue-ribbon panel of the top ten clinical diagnostic experts in psychology and psychiatry from prestigious clinics and hospitals all around the country - UCLA, Mcninger, Walter Reed, Jangley-Porter, Mass. General, and others - and parade a group of people in front of them, our panel would easily agree as to which ones would benefit from assertiveness training and which ones would not. But if you asked these same ten experts to define what they were diagnosing - assertiveness versus non-assertiveness - they would

give you ten different definitions.

Assertiveness has not been very well defined or thought through, even in expert clinical circles. One common definition is "Standing up for your rights, while respecting the rights of others." These are grand words but they are tossed around without the specifics that tell you what people's "rights" are in any situation. Another frequently used definition is a negative one: "Assertiveness is not being aggressive." But aggression is also poorly defined. Depending on circumstances, aggression can be angry, childish impulsive behavior, or mature, determined, and motivated behavior. Ask any sales manager if aggressiveness is part of good sales behavior. You will also often hear, "Assertiveness is being different from everyone else, being an individual." This definition suffers when you decide that you like what other people do and how they live. All these commonly used and superficial definitions of assertiveness fail to mention the two elements of being assertive, making one's own decisions about what to do, and carrying out those decisions in the face of social pressure or opposition.

If we can't rely on a clear clinical definition of what assertiveness is, at least we can start with the working definition - and it's not a bad one - offered by my edition of Webster's Dictionary. It says that to assert oneself is to set forth and defend an argument, claim, or position self-confidently. Essentially, our assertiveness is based on the faith we have in our own judgment, even if it runs counter to what is popular, faddish, or "in." When we assert ourselves, we don't have to have a whole battery of Supreme Court lawyers (or the court itself) standing behind us, telling everyone that we are right. Using this definition, one can see that competent, mature, and successful adults will have at least a modicum of assertiveness, simply because they have had a lot of experience in thinking for themselves.

Thirty years ago, Transactional Analysis (TA) became very popular because it offered a useful way of looking at how we routinely, automatically, and unthinkingly behave toward other people: as a critical parent (usually punishing), as an insignificant child (usually good, but also naughty), or as an adult (always straightforward). According to TA, your problems in dealing with another person come about because you interact with him or her as if you were a critical parent dealing with an insignificant child, or vice versa. To correct these problems, TA states that you need to deal with other people on an adult - to - adult level instead of a parent - child level. If you behave like an adult while the other person

behaves as a parent or child, you will feel better about yourself because the critical parent can't make you feel rotten, and you will leave him or her no option except to deal with you as another adult.

According to the tenets of TA, your subordinates have problems on the job because the co-workers and others interacted with him/her as if they were critical parents (criticizing and manipulating), and they respond on the child level. In transactional analysis terms, assertiveness training teaches your subordinates how to respond in an adult way to a bunch of critical parents they have not been able to handle in the past. In TA terms, assertiveness, in fact, is adult behavior.

You know what an adult is and so do I; someone we can rely on when we have to. We could make a long list of the fine points of being an adult, but it would be worthless unless we included the one fundamental upon which all the other points depend: An adult is a socially competent, independently functioning person, able to think for him - or herself, cope with life's problems, and take care of all day-to-day decisions that have to be made, without depending on someone else to do this. By "socially competent," I do not mean being witty, pleasant, and charming, but having the ability to solve the problems other people present us with, including their attempts to talk us into things that are really not in our own best interest.

The personal skills required to live a satisfying and productive adult life are often the opposite of the skills required to be a good child. A socially competent adult uses independent judgment in determining how to behave and what is right or wrong in a particular situation. Competent adults occasionally take chances and must deal with personal mistakes in shaping their lives into what they want them to be. The adult has to know when to be cooperative and when - patiently and, if necessary, stubbornly - to resist the influence and pressure of others. A socially competent adult is rarely deferential to other people, and uses the word "No" very often. How do we learn the ability to say "No", and deal effectively with its emotional aftermath? As Vince Lombardi, the late great coach of the Green Bay Packers, said, "Football games are won Thursday afternoons on the practice field, not Sunday afternoons on the playing field." With training, and practice, both you and your subordinates will come to see assertiveness as a natural attribute, and assertive behavior will gradually become automatic with no emotional consequences to speak of.

Are assertive employees more difficult to supervise?

Managers are often uneasy with the concept of employees asserting themselves. They feel that subordinates are hard enough to control without giving them license to make managers' lives even more difficult. This is a mistaken impression. Teaching them to be assertive is not handing them a loaded verbal gun that will allow them to run amok. Even more important to understand, if you as a manager tell an employee to do something, and it routinely doesn't get done, it is never the employee's assertive qualities that are causing the problem. In fact, teaching an employee to be assertive eliminates many of the ineffective coping behaviors they use in trying to get out of doing things, or to deny that they are at fault. When employees learn to cope assertively with some of the dumb things they do, instead of denying that they did them, they typically make fewer dumb mistakes. Moreover, the mistakes they do make are corrected quickly because time isn't wasted in arguments.

The Key to Getting Your employees to Do What You Ask: Communication, then Consequences

Managers who are frustrated by disobedient or unmotivated subordinates are often the cause of the problem because they either don't tell their employees straightforwardly what is wanted or they don't back up what they say. The key to understanding interactive behavior between two human beings as well as the problems we all experience with this behavior is described by two words: communication and consequences. The psychological concepts these two words represent account for so much in understanding what we do and what we see in other people that five of the chapters in this book concentrate on straightforward assertive communication, while the last chapter is devoted solely to the way consequences back up communications and make them work. As you will see in the last chapter on performance evaluations, both formal and routine, making judgments about behavior payoffs - consequences - is quite important in human interaction.

Before we discuss how to be assertive, we need to face its lack. Let's turn to the next chapter, where we will examine the prime factor causing you and your subordinates to be nonassertive; What you were taught as a good child that allowed other people to manipulate your feelings of guilt, ignorance, and foolishness.

TWO

Manipulation

How to Recognize When You Are Being Emotionally Manipulated — Your Bill of Assertive Rights —

This chapter is about you and your subordinates learning to re-think and cut through your early indoctrination that was used to make you an easily controlled "good child" that pleased adults. One of the strong findings of clinical and developmental psychology is the observation that if a person is emotionally conditioned early in life, especially before age six, such emotional conditioning, especially feelings of guilty, ignorance, foolishness, and anxiety remain through out life unless some reconditioning process intervenes. So the purpose of this chapter, and the rest of the book, is to first make you aware of how you have been conditioned to be emotionally manipulable. In particular this chapter points out the ten most common ways used to emotionally manipulate you - noble concepts such as reasoning, logic, goodwill, etc., used for less than noble purposes that are not in your or your company's best interest. The second purpose is to decondition you to feelings of anxiety, guilt, ignorance and foolishness whenever social conflict arises in your job and in your general life, so not to be emotionally intimidated by other people into doing things you really would rather not do.

Manipulation —

How People Talk You into Doing What They Want — By Making You Feel Guilty, Ignorant, or Foolish

To teach both you and your subordinates how to be assertive and deal with manipulation effectively, using the actual learning dialogues of the manager trainees in the UCLA Systematic Assertive Management course will be helpful. These demonstration/training dialogues through

out this book are transcripts of learning exercises in which the trainees tested their understanding of the concepts. Most of them are composites of various dialogues that are good examples of the material. They have been edited for brevity, content and confidentiality. In this chapter, all the dialogues demonstrate how one can be manipulated. To understand how your employees can be talked into doing all sorts of things by friends and co-workers, etc., even if he or she doesn't want to - such as neglecting duties, bending rules, even abusing drugs or alcohol -- let's first look at how you yourself can be talked into doing things against your own better judgment. Your own response in such circumstances is a fairly reliable indicator of how your employees will respond, since they have learned to behave in the same way as you did as a young person.

Think about the last time you swore you would never agree to do something again, either because you really didn't want to, or it was such a pain that it wasn't worth it. Perhaps last year you served as secretary/treasurer for a committee of your social club, church or temple, PTA, etc., and kept all its records, or used your house for meetings. Deciding to be firm, you have let the organization know that you are not going to do the same thing again.

Demonstration Dialogue #1

How you get conned into something after you swore, "Never again!"

Setting: Just before the first meeting, etc., the committee chairperson calls you, and the conversation goes something like this,

Chair: You know, we are really lost without you.

You: That's nonsense - anybody can do what I did.

Chair: No, really. We can't get anyone to volunteer after everyone saw how nice a job you did for us. [or: No one can make things work like you do].

You: Well, I'm just not going to get involved again. It was too much of a hassle.

Chair: What can we do? We have no one to take your place.

You: (Getting sucked into providing a solution which is really not your responsibility) How about Charlie and his place?

Chair: He has relatives staying with him.

You: Marv is on the ball and has a nice big house.

Chair: His wife is sick.

You: How you and your place?

Chair: My wife is visiting her mother on the Riviera.

You: I don't know what to say.

Chair: I never thought you would let us down like this. Tell you what. Let's go on as before for just a couple of meetings until we get out of this jam, okay?

You: (Grasping at straws) But I'm loaded down with work now and my house is a mess. We're cleaning and painting.

Chair: Don't worry about it. We'll understand. Without you there's no place to meet.

You: (Grudgingly) Okay, but just for a couple of times.

Chair: Of course. You'll have no trouble cleaning it up temporarily for our meeting.

Those couple of times, of course, stretch out into another year because the chair asks you to handle setting up the meetings somewhere else and one crisis after another prevents everyone else from volunteering his or her services/home for the next meeting. Now why, you might ask yourself, do you get into such a mess time after time, bruising your self-respect in the process, when you know exactly what you want to do - or not do? As is very clear, you know how to say no. You do it all the time.

The real problem you face —

Coping with all the confusing verbal garbage dumped on you after you say "No"

The real reason why this happens to you, even when you swear it won't ever again, is that you are emotionally manipulated into feeling guilty about not doing what other people want. A good working definition of psychological manipulation: Manipulation is whatever anyone else does to reduce your ability to think and your right to judge for yourself what is best for you. Although manipulation can take many different verbal forms, it invariably involves making you feel ignorant, foolish, or guilty. You can always recognize manipulation, no matter what its form, by remembering how you felt as a child when you got into trouble. Manipulation makes you feel like a small, dumb kid again, as if mom had just said to you, "Look! If you don't care about cleaning up your room properly, neither do I. I'm just the representative of four thousand years of civilized thought and culture, which somehow, dummy, you missed out on!" Obviously these aren't mom's exact words, but the effect of such words is the point: You feel guilty. So remember, as a rule of thumb, that when people make you feel as if mom just said to you, "I'm just the representative of four thousand years of civilized thought and culture," they are trying to manipulate you emotionally.

You allow yourself to be manipulated - without even knowing that you are being manipulated - because as a child you were taught, in the most well-meaning way, that things like logic, reasoning, responsibility, criticism, caring, understanding, goodwill, and intellectual give-and-take are noble and always to be respected. You were taught that you should always be logical, reasonable, and open to criticism, for instance, because these behaviors, supposedly, are what keep all of us from sinking to the level of animal aggression to resolve conflict. You were not taught that noble concepts such as reasoning, logic and caring can be used for less than noble purposes, such as conning you into doing something you really don't want to do.

When your employees do something, or not, with their co-workers that upsets you, typically it is because they are behaving in the same way you did in that first dialogue - i.e., co-workers or external reps emotionally manipulate them into feeling guilty, anxious, or dumb whenever they don't do what the other person wants. If your subordinate obeys you because he/she has been taught to feel guilty, anxious, or dumb (just as you

were taught by your parents to feel), he/she will behave in that same way with co-workers. This is the only way he/she knows how to behave under these circumstances. For example, the last time a subordinate was supposed to do some work for you, and didn't, citing some excuse or other, something like the following manipulative dialogue between him and a co-worker probably took place.

Demonstration Dialogue #2

How an employee gets talked out of doing what you told him/her to do while you're away.

Setting: Your employee has promised to clean up the paperwork remaining from the sales meetings from last month so it can be sent on to head office on Monday when you return. He/she begins the job, and a co-worker walks in.

Co-worker: What are you doing?

Employee: Cleaning up the sales figures and projections from last month's meetings.

Co-worker: You can do that later. I need your help with the air conditioning guy.

Employee: I can't.

Co-worker: Why can't you?

Employee: Harry (you) will kill me if I don't get this done by Monday when he gets back.

Co-worker: This is really important. Not that paperwork.

Employee: I can't do that.

Co-worker: Why not? Don't you know the difference between make-work like those stats and something important like lack of air conditioning?

Employee: But what if Harry finds out?

Co-worker: So he finds out! Big deal! Do you want to work without air conditioning in here?

Employee: No, but...

Co-worker: What are you - one of Harry's yes-men? A suck-up?

Employee: No. Of course not, but these stats have to be done and sent out by Monday...

Co-worker: Don't be an ass. Just tell Harry that the air conditioning needed your attention when you see him again on Monday.

Employee: Oh ... do you think that will work?

Co-worker: Of course.

Employee: Oh ... Okay.

Co-worker: Good. Then let's go. Harry will thank you for using your brain on this one instead of being a robot just following orders.

Supervisors (including your own, and you, yourself) do not get up in the morning and say something like, "I wonder how I can screw up my employees today?" Yet though they mean well, most managers end up allowing their employees to be easily manipulated. They do this, usually because, first, they were reared that way themselves by their own parents, and second, because allowing employees to be emotionally manipulated is, as discussed earlier, an effective way of controlling their behavior in the short run. But if you can manipulate your employee, so can others. And while your manipulation is generally benign, to protect the company organization and the employee, there is no guaranty that others, either co-workers or outsiders like representatives and customers, will have the same concern for your company's or employees' well-being. A manipulable employee, who has little or no understanding that he or she is being emotionally played upon, is a likely candidate to be talked into doing all sorts of things by others. What a manipulable employee can be talked

into is limited only by the wants of the manipulator.

As a manager, you will also face the problem of your employees manipulating you as soon as they become familiar with you. Most of your employees are slick as smelts in using the manipulation they have learned in their past enculturation. That's when you will hear your secretary tell you that she is "worried about those premature wrinkles and lines you are getting around your eyes (I care about you!) as a result of too much work (for both of us," she doesn't say.) She adds, "Don't you think you should take a break - like a vacation soon? (when I can have the office to myself," she also doesn't say.)" It makes logical sense. After all," she tells you, "(George in Engineering cares about himself and he looks like a twenty year old." (Don't you care?) "And everybody over there thinks he's terrific." "He goes to Hawaii at least once a year, and comes back raring to go. And he makes less money than you!" (Are you too cheap?)

To enable your employees to say no effectively to their peers, outside reps and customers, you have to allow them to learn about emotional manipulation. You can do this by pointing out what manipulation is, with examples like those above, and how this takes away your employee's own ability to judge what is best to do in any situation. The whole purpose of this book can be simply put: We have a lot of automatic habits that allow us to be manipulated almost involuntarily. By learning to be assertive, we can change those almost involuntary habits into voluntary choices, in which we decide for ourselves what is best for us to do, both for the company's interests and our own.

The Prime Assertive Right

The teaching format of this book is based on one principle: Give an idea, then practice on an example. This is the method I have found most effective in teaching people to become more assertive. It combines both role practice, to become familiar with assertive skills, and thinking about the concept to be learned. Teaching your employees how to think for themselves, by helping them practice using their own judgment as to whether they should feel guilty, foolish, or ignorant, is the key to dealing with manipulation. It is so important an idea that I call it the prime assertive right.

Assertive Right I

**You have the right to be your own ultimate judge —
Of your emotions, thinking, and behavior —
And are responsible for the initiation and
consequences of what you feel, think, and do**

What does this right really mean to you and your employees in a practical, non-philosophical sense? It means you and your employees have the ability to recognize when you are being psychologically manipulated, and that you have the right not to accept automatically the negative feelings of guilt, anxiety, or ignorance that a manipulator tries to induce in you.

If the idea of being your own judge of what you do sounds strange to you, don't reject it out of hand without first examining what it means. Many people get upset when first thinking about it, yet can see its relevance and worth through examples. For instance, are you your own judge when you see a physician? If you are like most of us, you know very little about medicine and almost automatically defer to anything the physician says when you don't feel good or are worried about your health. Whether we are sick or not, most of us are as much at ease talking to a physician as we would be in consulting Hippocrates upon his descent from Mount Olympus after a chat with Zeus about golf, real estate, and tax shelters over a three-martini lunch. In that situation, however, you are always your own decision maker, even if you don't feel that you are.

To help you see this, take away the intimidating title of "doctor" and replace it with "auto mechanic." Is your auto mechanic your personal judge simply because he knows more about your automatic transmission than you do? Of course not, and neither is your physician. Both are simply technical experts whom you hire to advise you on the best course of action. You still have to make the decisions on what to do, and you have to take responsibility for those decisions. Must you replace the whole carburetor in your car because your mechanic says "Terrible, terrible - the carburetor is shot. This car has been abused"? (This is guilt induction.) Or can you just have it tuned up? Should you feel guilty because there is some moral mandate that you maintain your car to your mechanic's personal standards - and thereby run up a repair bill limited only

by his estimate of your ability to pay it? With respect to your physician's advice, there is no real difference between dealing with your doctor and dealing with your mechanic. You are still responsible for making your own decisions about your state of health. A technical expert - any technical expert - can only advise you on the best course to take.

If you accept your doctor's advice, this does not mean you have been manipulated. When we are intimidated by physicians and allow them to be the judges of what is best for us, it is not because they ask for that responsibility. We force it upon them. I have worked closely with many doctors and I have not known one who did not encourage his or her patients to be collaborators in the treatment of illness, or who resented any questioning about the wisest treatment. If you feel that your physician is a domineering and intimidating exception, or likes playing God, your own judgment of the inappropriateness of his behavior toward you is the only justification you need to find yourself another physician.

Okay, you may say, but how can you be your own judge when you are in front of a real one in municipal court for a traffic ticket? You may be convinced that your ticket was unfair because the boob in uniform testifying that you broke the law was only trying to fill his quota for the day, yet the municipal judge believes the policeman, fines you, and then admonishes you to be a better driver in the future. In this situation, too, you are still your own emotional, intellectual, and behavioral judge. You can make your own decision as to whether the municipal judge's fining you, and then trying to make you feel guilty, was appropriate or not. However, telling the judge that he doesn't know what in hell he is talking about may not be very wise. If you decide to exercise your prime assertive right and be your own emotional judge, that does not mean you leave your intelligence outside the courtroom door. Your prime assertive right does not say that you have to shout your decisions from the roof tops so that everyone will know them. On the other hand, if you really want to tell the court off, and are willing to take the consequences, you can do so. That decision is no different from telling your auto mechanic that you don't want anything done to your carburetor, and then later being in a pickle because it poops out when you need your car. It's up to you.

As you can see, deciding to be your own emotional judge does not always mean you will make the appropriate, correct, or wise decision. But it will be your decision and linked to how you feel about yourself, not someone else's and linked to how he or she has tried to make you feel about yourself. Happily, most of the time if you make a dumb decision,

you have the option to correct it later.

You may be asking yourself at this point, "But how can I apply this to my employees? Where do I draw the line with them? They are not ready to make certain judgments and take responsibility for them - maybe because they don't want to look at the consequences. And there are some things we should always feel guilty about." With respect to the first part of that question, you are right: Employees don't always know what is best to do, so you will have to tell them (communications.) But you can do so without violating their assertive rights and dignity by inducing guilt. If your employee decides that he doesn't like a chore you assign him, you don't have to insist he like it, just that he do it. Most of us have to do things in life that we don't like, yet we do them because they enable us to do other things we do like. In this situation your managerial authority is all you need. You are still the boss.

As for there being some things we should all feel guilty about, if you assume that to be true, you get onto very shaky ground about which even legal, religious, philosophical, and psychological experts can't agree. Even in such extreme cases as killing someone, we often can't agree that one should feel guilty. There are too many exceptions to hard-and-fast rules: self-defense, unavoidable accident, protecting one's country in wartime, and so forth. If we can't agree on life-and-death issues, what's the sense of insisting that your employees should feel guilty about not liking to do the jobs no one wants to do around the office? Why should any of us feel guilty just because we don't like to do certain things? What we do is what counts, not how we feel about it.

Furthermore, if your employee promises to clean up the paperwork for the home office today because you need to use it Monday, and then forgets to do it, he/she will very likely feel quite guilty, anxious, and foolish on his/her own. You are not needed to induce these reactions. As we shall see later, no matter how angry you may be - wanting to strangle him with your bare hands in the heat of the moment - encouraging him/her to learn how to be assertive will help him/her acknowledge realistic and valid guilt, and then get over it as soon as possible, so s/he can be comfortable with you again and get on with his/her job instead of withdrawing from you emotionally as a way to cope with that guilt.

Your Every day Assertive Rights — How to tell when you or your employees are being manipulated

In order to show you and your employees how to take on more and more responsibility for being your own judge, you first need to understand, in very practical terms, how other people routinely manipulate you. It's usually an hour or so after you are conned into doing something, while you are still stewing over it that you begin to see the manipulative ploys that sucked you in - and come up with good answers to them. "Why didn't I think of that?" you complain. Yet the next time you are manipulated, all the good answers you thought of after the fact desert you. And it wouldn't be much help to remind yourself during a conflict with someone that you are your own ultimate judge. The statement that you are your own ultimate judge is fine philosophically, but not much help in your daily dealings with the people around you. To understand and recognize everyday manipulation for what it is, and then for your subordinates to recognize it too, let's take a look at the most common, everyday ways in which you are psychologically manipulated as spelled out in your Bill of Assertive Rights. These rights overlap and have a common theme, since they all derive from your prime assertive right to be your own ultimate judge.

In encouraging your employees to be assertive, remember that assertive rights are rights that preserve and protect his or her dignity and self-respect. They are not a license to do whatever one wants and get off scot free, but they do release your employees from external manipulation of their personal feelings, including artificially induced feelings of guilt, foolishness, and ignorance. Just as you are responsible for the consequences of being your own judge and asserting yourself, as well as for everything else you do, when your subordinates learn to be assertive, they will also learn what goes along with being assertive: personal responsibility for making their own decisions at work (and elsewhere), and for the consequences of these decisions.

Assertive Right II

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To offer no reasons to other people
To justify your behavior**

When you get into a social conflict (a fancy term we psychologists use for things like arguments, disputes, discussions, and disagreements), as opposed to a legal conflict (with police or judges) or physical conflict (with muggers, assailants, etc.) and you say either that you want or don't want to do something, what is the first thing you are likely to hear from the other person? It doesn't matter whether you are turning down someone else's request, such as lending your house for the community meeting, or asking for something you want, such as telling your spouse that you want to go somewhere different this year on vacation - Bermuda, perhaps, instead of visiting your mother-in-law in Springfield again. Unless you are dealing with an assertive person, you will get one of the standard manipulative responses, with "Why?" as the most likely.

When the other person asks why, we don't answer that we simply feel uncomfortable about hosting the neighborhood association meeting this month. We foolishly try to prove that it is impossible or will be a disaster. That shifting of responsibility for our decisions onto external circumstances over which we have no control (it will rain; my house is too hard to find; there isn't enough room; etc.) is what sets us up for the manipulator. The other person pooh-poohs our excuses and dispenses with them one by one, demonstrating that we really have no valid reasons for refusing. Consequently, we wind up doing what we really don't want to do.

Similarly, there is no common sense rationale for allowing someone who wants to borrow your car, to start asking you to explain why you won't let him or her borrow it. It's your car, not the other person's, yet you wind up feeling that you have to explain why you can't - or, more accurately, won't - lend it.

In situations like these, relying upon external circumstances - reasons over which you have no personal control - is about as effective as telling the manipulator, "I would like to help out, but God handcuffed me this morning and I can't reach into my pocket to give you the car keys." The manipulator will simply reply, "No problem! I just talked to God. And He gave me the keys to the handcuffs." This automatic "reasoning"

response on your part suits the manipulator to a tee, as the following manipulative dialogue illustrates.

Demonstration Dialogue #3

How You Get Manipulated into Lending Your Car Because You Believe Reasoning Will Resolve Conflicts.

Setting: You and I are friends and co-workers who live near each other. I jog up to your home on Saturday morning, where you are watering the lawn while your car sits in the driveway.

Me: Hi! Busy?

You: Sort of.

Me: Good. Then you wouldn't mind if I borrowed your car this morning, would you?

You: (Really not wanting to lend your car) Well ... I have some errands to run.

Me: When will you be back?

You: Not until late this afternoon.

Me: Terrific. That would be fine with me.

You: Well ... I have to go quite a distance and may not get back in time for you.

Me: Are you going downtown?

You: No.

Me: I'm not going there either. Where are you going?

You: Uh ... to Malibu.

Me: Terrific. That's exactly where I have to go. Tell you what, I'll

drive us both there, let you off, and pick you up when I'm done.

You: I just can't lend you my car.

Me: Why not?

You: My insurance doesn't cover anyone else but me. (God just handcuffed me.)

Me: No problem. My insurance covers everything from a semitractor to a Boeing 707. (I just talked to God and He said it's okay.)

You: But my brakes are bad. (God handcuffs.)

Me: No sweat. My brakes are lousy too. I'm used to that. (God unhandcuffs.)

You: I forgot ... the spare is flat. We can't use the car. (God taketh away.)

Me: No problem. I'll take it down to the service station now and get it fixed. On me! (God giveth back.)

You: Look, why don't you just take the car, do what you need to do, and leave it in the driveway for me when you're done?

Me: Oh? ... Okay. But I'd be happy to drive you to Malibu....

You: No, you take it (grumble, grump, moan).

You were trained in early life to automatically feel and respond this way - and up to now, very likely your employees have been trained to do the same thing because we all assume that reasoning is a good way to solve mutual problems. That assumption is true if the parties in the conflict have mutual goals - e.g., the best way to get the upright piano out of the moving van and into the upstairs sitting room. But when the parties have different goals - e.g., you want the least damage to your home in moving the piano, while the driver of the van wants to make another delivery in the next forty-five minutes - reasoning becomes manipulative.

With these different goals, you will say what route you want to take, the driver will ask you why you want to do it that way, and then he will give you "better" reasons for doing it his way - which is to shoot it in through the upstairs front window with the furniture catapult he mounted on the back of the moving van and wants to try out.

When you were a child and your parents disagreed with you it would have been much easier and better for you if they had simply asserted their parental authority, said that you couldn't do what you wanted, and stuck to their guns when you gave them back chat. Instead, you were asked why you wanted to do such and such, and then your reasons were shot down by them with "better" reasons why you shouldn't do what you wanted. So what gets done is more often determined by who can come up with the better reason, than what will work better.

Years ago, management theory told you that you should always give your subordinates a reason for why you want something done. And in good faith, you probably followed this advice in spite of your own experience as a younger subordinate worker. I always ask management training groups, "When you were younger did you believe all the 'reasons' higher management gave you on why you were getting screwed? And what makes you think your subordinates today believe your 'reasons' on why they are going to be unhappy any more than you did when you were in their shoes?" It's much more efficient in the long run (as we shall see in the next chapter) to tell your subordinates to do things simply because you want them to do it. After several assertive discussions with them, an amazing thing happens. They start to listen to you. They realize that you mean what you say, and also learn that they can't manipulate you into changing back because of the excuses and arguments they give you.

Assertive Right III

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To judge whether you are responsible
For finding solutions to other people's problems**

As a child, you were trained to be responsible, and that's admirable. But in training you to be responsible, your parents didn't follow through and also teach you that when things go wrong, or a problem exists, you're not necessarily at fault. Try to remember: As a child, how many times

did you respond to mom or dad with "Gee, too bad. But that's not my problem," and get away with it? Because we were trained never to duck out of responsibility, other people very often use this desirable characteristic to manipulate us. The word "we" is a tip-off to this manipulation. At the office, for example, an associate may say to you, "We decided that everybody has to take a turn supervising the management interns at least twice a week. Do you want Mondays-Tuesdays, Wednesdays-Thursdays, or Tuesdays-Wednesdays, Thursdays-Fridays?" When this happens, it may be in your own best interest to ask, "Who's we? I didn't decide that." Or at home, when your next-door neighbor says "We have a problem with our fence," you can usually assume that your neighbor wants to do something to your perfectly good but ordinary fence, for which he wants you to share the cost. In this type of situation, you may find it wise to say, "Gee, I don't have a problem with the fence. What problem do you have with it?" As you will see in later chapters, you can then prompt the manipulator to spell out what is bothering him or her so you can decide if there really is a problem with the fence.

In the following dialogue, you can see how your employee will respond to manipulation that makes him feel responsible for someone else's problem.

Demonstration Dialogue #4

How a co-worker is manipulated by a friend out of studying because he has been taught to be responsible.

Setting: Your subordinate is studying for one of his MBA exams and his friend wants him to go to the beach.

Co-worker: It's a beautiful day out there. Let's go to the beach this afternoon after work.

Employee: I can't go to the beach today.

Co-worker: Why not?

Employee: I have an important exam for my MBA tomorrow and I have to study for it.

Co-worker: You're good at that stuff. You don't need to study!

Employee: I'm not that good.

Co-worker: Sure you are!

Employee: You think so?

Co-worker: Sure!

Employee: I'd like to get a good mark. They remember those things you know.

Co-worker: What for? Once you got the MBA that's it. It's like your driver's license. Who cares how well you did on the test. Just pass it. Are you a compulsive?

Employee: No, I'm not.

Co-worker: Then what are you studying so hard for when you could be playing volleyball down at the beach with the group. Besides Jane will be there and I think she really digs you.

Employee: If I don't study, I'm afraid I might not do well tomorrow.

Co-worker: You got nothing to worry about! I already told everybody we'd be there at four. We have to go to the beach.

Employee: Why?

Co-worker: If we don't show up, the rest of the group can't play as a team. The bunch from Xerox are scheduled to play us there.

Employee: But I have to be sure of this exam.

Co-worker: If you don't come, what am I going to tell them? Especially Jane? They can't play because of you?

Employee: Oh, okay.

As in this example, our feelings that we are responsible to others in

everything we do results in manipulation of those feelings as soon as others find out we feel that way.

Assertive Right IV

You and your subordinates have the right — To change your mind

Very few of us like it when someone else changes his or her mind and screws up what we want or have planned to do. Thus when you find out you have made a poor decision and it is not in your own best interest to carry out an agreement, you can count on the other person - either a subordinate or customer - trying to manipulate you into not changing your mind. This manipulation is based on the assumption that if you want to change your mind, some thing must be wrong. If there is nothing wrong with the agreement that you now want to change, that means there must be something wrong with you personally.

Most of us feel guilty in this situation simply because we have been indoctrinated in this assumption all our lives. As adults, however, we often should change our minds, not necessarily because of hard, demonstrable evidence, which we rarely have, but based on our personal experience of how such things tend to work out. Usually, it is our prior experience that gives us an uncomfortable feeling about our initial decision, and in many cases the uneasy feeling turns out to be a good predictor of what will happen.

Yet, when we get this feeling that things are not right, we are likely to put it down to irrational anxiety or our own personality weakness. Thus, when we want to change our minds and the other person asks why, we avoid saying that we simply feel uncomfortable about our initial decision. Instead, we fall into the trap of trying to justify our change with external, rational reasons. When this effort fails, as it will, we sometimes admit reluctantly that we feel very uncomfortable about what was agreed to. The manipulator then tells us we shouldn't feel that way. You really have a problem. You need professional help because e.g., what you want to do is sick (neurotic, flaky, weird, etc.). You can see this manipulation work in the following dialogue.

Demonstration Dialogue #5

How a manager is manipulated out of rescinding a bad decision or directive because he/she is manipulated into believing it might be wishy-washy to change one's mind.

Setting: The manager calls in a subordinate to pass on the recall of a change in work scheduling.

Manager: I've been thinking it over, and I've decided to rescind that change in work schedules I put out on Friday.

Subordinate: Why?

Manager: Well, Some of the employees have sent in memos saying they think it is a bad idea.

Subordinate: Okay Charlie, but most of them think it's one of the best moves you've made.

Manager: Really?

Subordinate: Yes. They really like it.

Manager: Okay. But I'm really concerned with what the people who memoed in are saying.

Subordinate: Who memoed in? Harry?

Manager: I don't think I should say who did.

Subordinate: I'll bet it was Harry, wasn't it? He's bitches about everything.

Manager: It was more than just Harry. Some others complained too.

Subordinate: If you listen to people like Harry, you'll never be able to do anything right around here.

Manager: What do you mean?

Subordinate: Well, Charlie... Harry complains about everything and you can't listen to just him.

Manager: But it was more than just Harry.

Subordinate: Yes. But there is word going around that you always cave into Harry.

Manager: I don't always cave into Harry.

Subordinate: That's just what I heard. And if you change your mind this time, I know they'll say you are wishy-washy.

Manager: Who said I was wishy-washy?

Subordinate: I don't want to say anything about that, Charlie.

Manager: Well, we'll see about that. The new schedule stays in place. Wishy-washy! Hump!!! I'll show them.

Subordinate: None of them will call you wishy-washy now Charlie.

In this last manipulative dialogue, the subordinate seems quite level-headed, commonsensical, and reasonable, while the manager seems like a neurotic wimp. That perception is a result of the manipulator's setting things up to seem that way. That perception is also totally irrelevant. The manager, like yourself, has concerns that are worrisome, even if they are irrational. When we worry about something, the most common mistake others make is to try to get us to cover up our worries and ignore them. If, for instance, you have an appointment with a physician for an examination next week and express your worry about it to someone else, the most likely response you will get is "Don't worry! Everything will be all right."

That response is well intentioned but useless. The best way to cope with - and, ideally, get over - worries (irrational or not) is to talk with someone who will really listen to you about what causes them. If the subordinate in the schedule rescinding dialogue had been less self-concerned and manipulative, and had allowed the manager to talk about his/her worries, he/she might even have decided that continuing with the

new schedule was a better idea than rescinding it. But it would have been the manager's decision, not the subordinate's, with much happier results than still being worried about the schedule, inhibited from honestly saying so, and feeling like a fool to boot.

When your employees try to change their minds, they are subject to this same manipulation by their peers, as the following dialogue illustrates.

Demonstration Dialogue #6

How an employee is manipulated by a co-worker into still covering for him/her on training trips to the plant floor because he/she was taught to honor his/her agreements.

Setting: Your subordinate is talking to a co-worker about changing the coverage agreement.

Employee: I've changed my mind about covering for you on Fridays when you go to the plant floor this month.

Co-worker: Why?

Employee: Last time I did this it wasn't any fun. It really screwed up my schedule on Fridays.

Co-worker: We talked about this before! I really need coverage on Tuesdays and Fridays, otherwise I can't get this training.

Employee: That's not my fault.

Co-worker: Yes it is. You agreed you would cover for me.

Employee: That's not fair!

Co-worker: It certainly is! Is there something wrong with you? Do you always renege on your commitments? Just change your mind like that?

Employee: No. I just can't get things ready for Monday if I cover for you on Friday.

Co-worker: That's not my fault. You shouldn't have agreed in the first place if you weren't going to follow through.

Employee: Well, I'm worried about Fridays.

Co-worker: You shouldn't be. It will work out fine.

Employee: I don't know... Can't you get someone else?

Co-worker: Not this late. If you wanted to change your mind, you should have done it earlier.

Employee: I know, but I didn't want to upset you about it.

Co-worker: You've upset me enough now with this.

Employee: I don't know how I can cover for you.

Co-worker: If you don't want to cover for me on Fridays, find someone else who will.

Employee: That's going to be difficult.

Co-worker: You've got all month to do it in. You're not going to fink out on me this Friday, are you?

Employee: No. I guess not...

Co-worker: Good. I'm counting on you to do the right thing.

Employee: Okay...

As a result of what happened in that dialogue, the employee faces another series of work stress and likely failures to produce because of over-commitment.

Assertive Right V

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To make mistakes —
And be responsible for them**

Most of us behave as though erasers for correcting errors do not exist, as if making mistakes is not part of living. When we make a mistake, we do one or all of the following three things. We deny that the mistake was important: "I know that when I leaned on the Empire State Building it fell over, but it wasn't the tallest building in the world anymore, and it was really old anyway! It would have had to come down sometime! Or we deny responsibility for the mistake: "It wasn't my fault—someone shoved me!" Or we deny that a mistake even occurred: "George told me to do it. It must be part of urban renewal for this area of Manhattan."

The source of this consistent, maladaptive pattern of responding to mistakes is clear. When you were a child and did something wrong, your father very likely said something like "Who did this?" and you innocently said, "Me." Your father then did or said things that made you feel stupid, careless, or irresponsible. As a fast learner, the next time your father asked "Who did this?" you probably said, "Not me!" Your father then said, "Oh? Okay," and walked off looking for someone else to blame.

In teaching adults how to cope assertively with their mistakes, I tell them that they can freely admit to errors, and then correct them, if possible. I ask them to do this without the traditional "I'm sorry" added on. "I'm sorry" is so overused that it does nothing to calm down the person who is irritated by your mistake. I remember once lecturing to a class at UC La Jolla, bumping into something behind me, then turning and automatically saying "I'm sorry" to the air-conditioner. If you use "I'm sorry" as routinely and as meaninglessly as the rest of us, and if you really do want to apologize, you will get a much more positive reaction from other people if you tell them how you truly feel: "I really feel bad about this."

We continue to deny responsibility even after we mature, because we feel that if we make a mistake, we owe someone "something." The person who tries to manipulate you into doing that "something" will agree with you and automatically use your guilt feelings against you. The following dialogue illustrates how you can be manipulated into never quite making up for a foolish mistake, no matter how much you do to make amends.

Demonstration Dialogue #7

How you are manipulated by a friend into bending over backward to make up for a dumb mistake.

Setting: You and I are old friends and co-workers. You were supposed to pick me up at work and drive me to a dental appointment at noon. It's one o'clock when you finally show up.

Me: Where the hell were you?

You: What do you mean, where was I?

Me: You were supposed to pick me up at noon, and now it's one o'clock!

You: Pete, you expect too much of me. I've been busy all morning doing some of your work, I might add - and you're upset about my forgetting to pick you up. Big deal!

Me: Big deal? My tooth is killing me and it's no big deal? I could have made my own arrangements to get my tooth fixed, but you said you would make an emergency appointment with your brother, the dentist - who also needs the business.

You: Oh! ... I'm so sorry - I forgot all about that!

Me: You're sorry. That does me a lot of good!

You: Please, let me see what I can do. Let's go in and I'll fix it so you can see him at five. I'm sure he'll do that for me.

Me: Okay. But how can I get there? You were supposed to pick me up because my car is at the mechanic's getting fixed.

You: No problem. I'll take you there at five.

Me: Can you wait for me? I'll need a ride to the garage afterward.

You: Sure, I'll wait for you. Then I'll drive you to the garage.

Me: Well, that makes up for some of the problem you caused with your forgetfulness.

You: Good. I feel much better now. Where's the garage?

Me: Lompoc [70 miles north of the dentist's office].

You: Lompoc? Where's that?

Me: Just a stone's throw up the freeway. We'll be there in no time.

You: Oh ... okay.

Assertive Right VI

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To say "I don't know"**

There are two correct answers to every question. Suppose I ask you to tell me the square root of 4.362. One correct answer is 2.0885. The other, equally correct and truthful, is "I don't know." In my doctoral oral exam, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the only correct answer for speculative questions outside my trained field of competence was "I don't know."

As a child, unfortunately, whenever you were asked a question and said "I don't know," you were made to feel like a fool, as if you were supposed to know the answer to anything asked of you. In school this continued, to see if you remembered what you were taught. When you said "I don't know" to the teacher, you were given a zero on that question, as though it were an incorrect answer. While this may sometimes be useful in the limited area of school performance and memory testing, it is a very distorted viewpoint with respect to the rest of your life. There is nothing to be embarrassed about when you don't know something. If it's important, you can always find out the answer.

As a result of your childhood experiences, if you are like most of us, you learned an automatic emotional response that prompts you to feel dumb, anxious, and guilty whenever someone asks you something you don't know. Even though we realize intellectually that we don't have to know everything, we still feel uncomfortable when we are asked for an

answer we do not have.

We are likely to be asked all sorts of things we don't know when other people try to manipulate us: "What would happen if every Tom, Dick, and Harry did ... ?" "Don't you know that ... ?" "What kind of person does ... ?" and so forth. Very often the manipulator will try to set you up in order to "sandbag" you, asking a question to which he or she already knows the answer. The intent is to make you feel stupid, thereby compelling you to go along with the manipulator's way of doing things.

In dealing with questions other people throw at us, we usually do not discriminate between questions that have factual answers and those based upon the arbitrary judgment and motives of the person asking the question. Most of the time we automatically let the questioner be the judge of what the appropriate answer is, and we try to give an answer that will fit the manipulator's "reasoning" to show him or her that we are not dumb. Very few of us feel comfortable simply saying "I don't know," though that answer avoids the whole manipulative - counter manipulative sequence intended to talk us into conforming to the other person's wishes.

As the following dialogue shows, our learned belief that we always have to know the answer to every question can be used to emotionally maneuver us into doing what a manipulator wants.

Demonstration Dialogue #8

How you are manipulated into not returning merchandise because you don't have all the answers.

Setting: A colleague and I demonstrate this type of manipulation to a group of managers learning to be assertive. My colleague comes into my boutique, Pierre of Beverly Hills, on Rodeo Drive, to complain about a purchase.

Me: Why, Ms. Vanity! How good to see you again! What brings you into Pierre of Beverly Hills again so soon?

Colleague: Pierre, this outfit I got from you on Friday just isn't right.

Me: Oh? What's the problem?

Colleague: (Giving a slew of answers to that question) It's too outré. And too loose around the waist. The color doesn't work. It's just not me.

Me: Do you know that this outfit has been judged by haute couture experts around the country as likely to set off a new wave in clothes?

Colleague: (Getting intimidated) Well ... I thought I heard something like that...

Me: I'll bet you haven't seen the issue of Vanity Fair with Demi Moore on the cover.

Colleague: (Still intimidated) I think so....

Me: Obviously you haven't. Otherwise you would know that she's wearing the same outfit you have on. The same color and accessories.

Colleague: Really?

Me: Of course! Within two months there will be hundreds of women wearing it. Right now you are at the cutting edge of high fashion. You're weeks ahead of everyone else.

Colleague: Really?

Me: Where do you live?

Colleague: Manhattan Beach.

Me: You're six months ahead of everyone else.

Colleague: Gee, Pierre, I don't think it will work for me.

Me: You have been asking your husband what he thinks about it, haven't you?

Colleague: Well ... only sort of.

Me: Who knows more about high fashion - your husband or Pierre of Beverly Hills?

Colleague: You?

Me: Of course I do! This is the twenty first century. Get with it! You can't go along with everything he tells you. You have to learn to assert yourself. If he said you should jump off a cliff, would you?

Colleague: No...

Me: Well, there you are.

Colleague: But, Pierre, it's too loose below the waist.

Me: If you wore it any tighter, you would get gangrene! Do you know why it was designed that way?

Colleague: Uh ... (Trying to think of an answer)

Me: I thought so. This is to get away from the trend of trying to look like a hooker advertising her wares. Not even a high-class hooker. A cheap one!

Colleague: Oh.

Me: Tell you what you should do. Don't give up on being fashionable and avant-garde. Wait for a while until you see how popular this style becomes. Then come back and I'll tell you what I think.

Colleague: You think it will be popular in two months?

Me: Without a doubt! But you will have to wait longer for Manhattan Beach to get with it.

Colleague: Okay.

Me: Trust me. You will be way ahead of the rest of the moos out there.

To be successful, you don't have to know everything or every consequence of every action you take in life. In fact, you can't. So when you or your subordinates are questioned manipulatively, each can say "I don't know" and, with practice, feel quite comfortable about it.

Assertive Right VII

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To decide if you need the goodwill
Of others in order to cope.**

All of us like to be liked. We like people to feel friendly toward us. It makes us feel good about ourselves and other people. But while having other people like us - having their friendship and goodwill - is important in life, in most situations it is not essential to our well-being or success. In reality you can probably count on the fingers of one hand (both hands if you are really lucky) the number of people who sincerely care whether you are happy and successful. Since we do want to be liked, we tend to confuse this desire with the necessity of being liked. Consequently, if anyone threatens to remove his or her goodwill, that threat, even if subtle, makes us anxious.

You can recognize this way of manipulating you when the other person says things like "I thought we were friends ... I could count on you ... things would never come to this," or by doors slamming, pots banging, frowns and dirty looks, even unusually prolonged silences. If you act as the manipulator wants, then goodwill is restored. In short, this type of manipulation is crass emotional extortion. If you give in to it, you guarantee that person will use it again on you in the future. If you do not respond to it, the manipulator will use it less and less with you, because there is no payoff for doing so.

Women are particularly vulnerable to - and, ironically, also adept at - this type of emotional manipulation. They are vulnerable because traditionally women have been trained to focus on relationships, and therefore are caring - oriented. The vast majority of women feel that it is their responsibility to generate caring relationships with other people, particularly with family and spouse. A woman consequently sees the possible removal of caring as a threat to her own image and success as a person. Women are also adept at this manipulation because of their sensitivity to the importance of caring. As you can see in the following dialogue, the withdrawal of goodwill and its reinstatement in reward for compliance can be used on you or your subordinates in almost any situation.

Demonstration Dialogue #9

How you are manipulated out of asking for a salary raise because you need other people's goodwill.

Setting: You go into your boss's office to ask for a raise.

You: (Knocking on the door) Can I talk with you for a minute?

Boss: (Smiling and getting up with arms outstretched in "friendship") Of course! My door is always open for you. Come on in and make yourself comfortable. By the way, my family wanted me to say how impressed we were with your kids at the barbecue over at my place last weekend. I think they are just great. You should be proud of them.

You: (Beaming from ear to ear) Thanks, I am. We all enjoyed your hospitality very much.

Boss: What can I do for you?

You: Well, I've been with this company for five years now, and I think I deserve a raise.

Boss: (Frowning, withdrawing behind the desk, and dropping the friendly attitude) A raise?

You: Yes, I have really worked hard for this outfit and I think I deserve one.

Boss: (In a very serious and stern tone, like a parent talking to a naughty child) Look, I like you. And the reason why is that you're not like the rest of the hustlers around here. You know what I'm talking about. They are only looking for an angle, the fast buck! You're not like them. You're a company person. That's what makes you so terrific to work with.

You: Yes but I think I deserve a raise.

Boss: (Looking at you with shaded eyes) Don't worry about a raise, or even think about it. (Slyly glancing to either side to see if anyone's around, and whispering) We have plans for you in this company.

You: Really?

Boss: (Smiling and friendly again, while leading you to the door) Wait and see. Oh - and listen, we're having another barbecue at our place next month. We want you and your family to join us again.

You: Gee, thanks.

Boss: Don't mention it -- especially to them out there.

You: Okay.

Boss: Swell. And remember, my door is always open to company people like you.

Assertive Right VIII

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To be illogical in making decisions.**

Our Western culture teaches us from childhood to use logic as a basis for deciding things. The noble intent of this education is to increase our percentage of good decisions by basing them on something more substantial and reliable than whim, guesswork, superstition, or luck. Unfortunately, despite all this fine training in logical thinking, few of us realize that logic is also routinely used to manipulate us by "proving" that we are wrong and the other person is right, and that therefore we should do what the other person wants. We are trained and indoctrinated that was as children so much that if I were asked to explain logic to a six year old, and I said "Logic is what other people use to prove that you are wrong," he or she would understand what I meant.

The logical system we are trained to use is called Boolean or binary logic, a fancy name for yes - no, 1 - 0, up - down, in - out, black - white, left - right, etc. If something's not up, it has to be down; if it's right, it can't be left. This binary logic does not allow for shades of gray. But human beings, even though we respect logic in our lives, and rightly so, don't fit nicely into neat binary, yes - no categories. We often have conflicting motivations that logic can't handle, like planning to lose three pounds this week, yet still wanting a fat burger with all the trimmings for

today's lunch. What makes matters even more complex is that you and I are smart enough to arrange things so we get away with it — having our fat burger and still losing three pounds.

Logic says that since weight loss is based on less intake of fatty, salty, and starchy food, one should not eat a fat burger and expect to lose weight. But we can. Thus, reality shows us that this simple logic is not infallible. Yet, when we get into conflict with another person over an issue and that person uses logic selectively to convince us we are wrong, we buy it because of our ingrained respect for logic. It's as if the manipulator is moving along in front of a huge smorgasbord of facts making a selection of things for us: "Fact one... 'That's a terrific argument,'" he says, placing it on the logical plate he intends to feed us. "Fact two ... No way! Forget that! Fact three?... Hmm... maybe. Fact four... right on! Fact five... Can't hurt. Fact six... Nooo... not really," and so on. The following dialogue points out this manipulative use of logic.

Demonstration Dialogue #10

How a mother logically manipulates daughter into studying instead of going on a date, and how anyone else can logically manipulate daughter into going on a date instead of studying.

Setting: Teenage daughter wants to go out on a date tonight but has a test tomorrow morning. Conversing with mom, her intention not to study tonight comes up.

Mom: You're going out tonight?

Daughter: Yes. Animal is picking me up at eight.

Mom: That could be a mistake.

Daughter: Why?

Mom: Look at it this way. You want to go to college, don't you?

Daughter: Sure.

Mom: The better your grade point average, the better chance you have to get into UCLA or Berkeley, right?

Daughter: Right.

Mom: That means you want your grade point average to be as high as possible, right?

Daughter: Right.

Mom: I won't even mention that disastrous B-minus you got in nuclear physics last year. So, it's only logical you have to concentrate your efforts in classes where you have a good chance to make high marks, right?

Daughter: Right.

Mom: Therefore, you have to concentrate on differential calculus this year, right?

Daughter: But I'm fine in calculus!

Mom: That's what you said about quantum mechanics last year. If I remember correctly, you only got a B on your last calculus test, right?

Daughter: Right.

Mom: Therefore you could do better, right?

Daughter: Right.

Mom: To do better, it's only logical that you study calculus tonight instead of going out with Animal, right?

Daughter: I guess so...

Mom: It's not me who's telling you this, but plain old logic. You decide what's best for you by being logical.

Daughter: Okay, mom. You win.

Mom: It's not me. It's only logical that you should study.

Now mom's intent in this manipulative dialogue seems noble: to

help her daughter get better grades and be successful and happy. It also may be that she doesn't like her daughter going out with Animag. Mom's intent is irrelevant. She has still manipulated her daughter's decision-making process using selective logic. It may be that her daughter has an overall A-minus average, which means upping her grade point average would be like trying to gild the lily. Or her average could be so low that trying to improve it would be as meaningful as rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Again, this is unimportant. What is most important here is that mom was able to manipulate daughter into studying, whether she needs to or not.

If mom can easily and logically manipulate daughter into studying, then someone else just as easily and logically, can manipulate her into not studying, whether she needs to or not. One of the major findings of teaching high school students to be assertive, was that the students trained to be assertive had significantly higher overall grade point averages, and fewer attempts by peers to pressure them compared to matched controls. These results indicate that if youngsters are allowed to make up their own minds after they have been taught how to resist manipulation, they will decide what is important themselves, and most will choose to study and improve their grades. The same observation applies to yourself and your subordinates, to your and their work habits and route to advancement.

Assertive Right IX

You and your subordinates have the right — To say "I don't understand"

As children, you and I exasperated adults because we were often slow in learning things - which is to say we didn't learn things as fast as adults wanted us to. I'll bet that as a child you could count on one hand the number of times an adult responded to your confession of "I don't understand" with "That's okay. Don't worry about it. You'll catch on eventually." Exasperation was shown when we made mistakes in learning anything: our homework, chores, and things in general, but especially when learning complicated and subtle social customs. We were expected to know how to behave appropriately toward adults without having this behavior spelled out to us.

This common experience as children trained us to be psychologi-

cally sensitive to the expectations and wants of our parents, family, relatives, teachers, friends -- without them having to spell out to us what was wanted. We were supposed to be able to read minds and give people what they wanted to see or hear, even if they denied having such expectations. In other words, we were supposed to understand intuitively (without being told) the real meaning behind the classic guilt inducing denial supposedly favored by the stereotypical Jewish mother*: "Don't worry about me. Enjoy yourself. I'll get by somehow." (*by which many Jewish mothers are irrationally labeled.)

Now that we are adults, other people expect us to read their minds when they are not assertive enough to tell us what is bothering them. You are supposed to understand when something is wrong without the other person's having to tell you, and then understand how you are supposed to make up for upsetting him or her.

For example, many of us have experienced the situation of welcoming an older relative into our home on an extended visit. Things go swimmingly for a few days. Then, as you are doing something in the kitchen, chatting away with your relative, you turn around to find he or she has disappeared. Puzzled, you search the house and finally locate the person sitting rigidly in the guest room, staring off into space. You ask, "What's wrong?" and you invariably get the reply "Nothing. Nothing at all!" But it's clear that something is definitely wrong, and you are supposed to be sensitive enough to know what it is.

Who knows what upset that relative, who is now trying to manipulate you into making up for upsetting him or her? You may have been chatting about taking your child to parents' night at school next Friday, while your relative wants to go with you and your spouse to see a new play opening that same night, but is too unassertive to tell you exactly what is wanted. Or you may have been preparing Southeast Asian pol lau mac for dinner because it's your spouse's favorite, and you should have known that your relative wouldn't like it.

Now recognizing this emotional manipulation for what it is, you might feel like saying sarcastically: "Thank God! I thought you were going senile." A better response coping with this chilling silent manipulation is "I don't understand. You look very upset. Did I do something to cause it?" If that doesn't get straightforward communications going again, then try "Okay, when you feel better, come back to the kitchen and we'll pick up where we left off." This response gives the manipulator no payoff for the manipulation, yet does not start a fight.

Unhappily, instead of this more assertive response, the typical behavior sequence usually includes one or more of the following:

(1) pleading with the relative to let you know what's bothering him or her; (2) getting into a fight while not being exactly sure what's being fought about; (3) making up to the relative while not knowing how to, or what is being made up for; and/or (4) getting silently angry and resentful and vowing never to have this person in your home again.

This over-sensitivity to the wants and expectations of others also can have a seriously negative effect on academic performance as kids go through school. All children know what any teacher would like from them, even if this is unrealistic and the teacher knows it: Teachers like to see instant or at least very rapid understanding of the material taught. This desire is not entirely altruistic: When pupils do not understand their teacher, it may mean that the teacher is not a very good teacher. I have yet to meet a teacher who is not sensitive to how well or badly he or she communicates with students, though teachers who are not very good are likely to keep this self-awareness to themselves. Because all of us were indoctrinated to develop this sensitivity to what the teacher really wants, kids can feel helpless when they don't immediately understand new ideas and concepts given to them. When the teacher asks the class, "is there anyone who doesn't understand this?" the typical child gives the teacher what he or she really would like to hear - dead silence. At the same time, the child is hoping that someone else will raise his or her hand and ask the teacher to explain it again. Unfortunately, this rarely happens, since children have also learned that when they confess ignorance, the rest of the class mimics the usual adult reaction: exasperated disdain. Your children recognize that they face negative feedback from other children when they admit they are less than perfect.

Dealing publicly with their academic imperfections in class can be a real problem for your children. I know that as a youngster I went through eleven years of formal schooling before I asked any of my teachers a question with any intelligence behind it. During that time I don't remember any of my peers behaving any differently. Perhaps that's one of the reasons we were called the silent generation. When I finally got fed up with being given things to memorize, and began asking why these things were important, the whole class groaned, giving me clear feedback about my stupidity and lack of sensitivity to what they perceived our teacher really wanted: quiet acceptance of dogma without ever questioning it. I endured my classmates' disdain and kept asking questions during

that semester because I was tired of listening passively and not learning much more from lectures than I could from reading a book. During the next semester I quit high school and got a job because I needed the money. Later, that teacher said that she missed me and my questions, because I had sparked up the class for her. Her reaction was one of the reasons I went back to school after a year and a half to finish up and then go on to college.

The purpose behind this kind of manipulation is to make you feel ignorant for not being able to read minds. No long dialogue is needed as an example - the following mini-dialogue says it all. During a lecture to my clinical colleagues and their graduate students at Long Beach State College a few years ago, one of the graduate students asked me a question:

Grad Student: Dr. Smith, what exactly do you mean by the "feeling of ignorance" that is induced by manipulation?

Me: (Being manipulative and pompous) Do you mean to tell me that with all your clinical graduate training and after an hour of my describing manipulation, you don't know what a feeling of ignorance is?

Grad Student: I do now.

Both you and your employees can learn to say comfortably, I don't understand," and, in conjunction with the assertive verbal skills covered in later chapters, to cope with manipulation as well as with your irrational feelings of ignorance when confronted with something new.

Assertive Right X

**You and your subordinates have the right —
To say "I don't care"**

From childhood, most of us have been taught that we should try to improve ourselves whenever we can. This is a noble motive and it's easy to understand why we were taught this. Unfortunately, however, there is no platinum bar with deep marks on it in the National Bureau of Standards that tells us what is improvement and what is not. Neither are there absolutes on which to base judgments of what is good (and will therefore

make us better) and what is bad (and will therefore hinder us). Each of us is as convinced that we really know what is good and bad as we are that we should improve ourselves. But we need only look at the radical changes that have occurred over the last thirty years to realize the extent to which society's ideas of good and bad have altered. People who talked about sex in public then were socially ostracized or even jailed. Nowadays we talk about sex at cocktail parties and watch TV programs about how to have good sex. What was scandalous behavior then is widely accepted now. Values that were thought to have been fixed in stone have given way to values that completely reverse what we believed back then. Throughout history, in fact, as our society, circumstances, and environment changed, our labels of "good" and "bad" have changed with them.

Given that our notions of good and bad are arbitrary and changeable, though at any one time we may see them as infallible and permanent, we are very susceptible to manipulation based on our respect for self-improvement. All manipulators need do is point out that we should care more - ostensibly about ourselves, but really about them - and in so doing improve ourselves by doing things their way. As irrational as this guilt induction is, we feel guilty as hell if we don't care and try to improve. We feel this way because we irrationally believe that we have to be perfect, and since we know we aren't, we strive to at least appear so.

This belief that we should always try to be better and to do better makes us vulnerable to emotional manipulation. Other people point out that we could be better workers, parents, dentists, house painters, CIA agents, lovers, nurses, tennis players, etc., if we would strive to meet their standards. Their standards of improvement, however, are often impossibly high and arbitrarily set, based on their personal wants. For example, a co-worker might try to get you to do part of his or her work by saying, "A really good secretary [or file clerk, salesperson, manager, CIA agent, etc.] would want to grow and improve by helping out with the typing [or Xeroxing, sales meeting, United Way campaign, political cover-up, etc.]."

You can often see this manipulation in action when what you are doing is more desirable than what someone else is doing - for instance, during the preparations for the annual office party. As you enjoy yourself decorating the office, invariably someone will come up and point out that you could improve the festive effect by doing it differently. When this happens you usually end up as an assistant, cutting, stapling, and gluing, while that person takes over the creative and fun part of the job.

People are always ready to show us how to improve something that is fun to do, but I have yet to have anyone come up to me and say, "Hey, hold on there! You can improve the way you clean up that toilet. Watch me and I'll show you how to do it better."

This kind of manipulation can be, and is, applied to anything you do, and even how you feel - especially how you "should" feel about important things and about those around you. Other people will commonly point out that not only should you want to improve yourself, but if you really were a good person, you would care more about them - about their feelings, comfort, and convenience. At home, for example, it's very likely that family members have manipulated you into doing something with the words "If you really cared about me, you would..." The implication, of course, is that what you are doing now is not what a really good spouse, mother, or father would do, and that you can improve the way you care about that person and his or her specific wants.

The key to dealing with this manipulation is to recognize it as manipulative guilt induction, and then remind yourself that you cannot be everything to everybody. You will never be perfect, and why should you even want to be? You have to accept who you are, and you have to set your own priorities. Your kids may push you to take them to Disney World this Saturday by complaining that you don't care enough about them. But it may also be that you have to finish an important work job this weekend, and you can't do both. The only practical way you can deal with these two pressures is to realize that while you do care about your kids' enjoyment, right now you care more about getting that job done. You don't have to automatically feel guilty because they imply that you are not as good a parent as you could be. You will never be as good a parent as they want you to be, because their notion of a good parent is that the sky is the limit for their demands upon you. In short, this weekend the kids are right - you are not perfect and you don't care as much about them as you could, so everybody stays home until you finish that work. Next weekend is a different story, since your priorities about what you care about most can change.

If you can be manipulated because you believe that you should always care, your subordinates can be manipulated in the same way, or they can manipulate you, as the following dialogue points out.

Demonstration Dialogue #11

How your subordinate is conned by a customer into giving a free repair visit because he/she was taught to always care.

Setting: The employee is talking to a customer on the phone.

Customer: You've got to help me out.

Employee: How?

Customer: That damned reproduction scaling machine you sold me is on the blink again.

Employee: Sorry to hear that. I'll be happy to give repair a call and have them send someone out.

Customer: This is the third time this month.

Employee: Ouch! That hurts.

Customer: You're damned right. It has us in a quandary here. We can't get anything done.

Employee: As I said I'll get repair on it right away.

Customer: That's not good enough! Your people "repaired" it three times this month already. I either want it fixed for free, or a new machine.

Employee: I can't do that.

Customer: Why not?

Employee: Our repair people say it's simply a case of bad maintenance.

Customer: So now you're saying we don't know how to take care of your precious scaling machine?

Employee: I didn't say that!

Customer: It sure as hell sounded like that!

Employee: I offered to send your people to the maintenance course.

Customer: At a huge cost to us. That was just an attempt to get more money out of us when we refused to pay list.

Employee: I'm sorry you feel that way. I don't know how to help you.

Customer: I do. If you cared about your customers, you would throw in a free repair now and then.

Employee: I do care about my customers!

Customer: Not much, it seems.

Employee: I do!

Customer: Then prove it with a free repair and a free maintenance course for one of our people.

Employee: I'm not supposed to do something like that.

Customer: I guess that Cutthroat Scalers would care more for their customers welfare than you guys do. Maybe I should give them a call and see what they would give me for a trade-in on your machine.

Employee: They will tell you the same thing I'm saying.

Customer: Maybe I'd better give them a call to make sure of that.

Employee: Ohhh ... okay. But I'm not supposed to do this. I'll tell the repair section that this is a freebee.

The Bill of Assertive Rights calls your attention to the most common types of manipulation, but you and your subordinates can be emotionally manipulated in many other ways. The bill of rights illustrates the ten most common ways other people will try to manipulate you. To cope with manipulation, each of us have to first recognize that they are

being manipulated. That's what the practice dialogues in the rest of this book teach as well as what you can do about it.

You and your subordinates' personal interests and goals

Nowhere in this book will you find a statement on what you or your employees should always do. The Bill of Assertive Rights is not a fancy new scientific set of shoulds that replaces an old-fashioned set you were taught in childhood. It does not tell you what your goals or your employee's should be. It has no dogmatic statements, such as telling you, for example, that everyone should do his own thing. Sometimes you may want to do someone else's thing, and assertiveness helps you do that, too. It does not tell you how to behave and why - e.g., "Sex is good for you, will improve your mental health, and restraint will lead to neurosis." You have to decide yourself when sex is appropriate and when it is not, according to your own value system; assertiveness only helps you to back up that decision in the face of opposition from others, and feel comfortable in doing so.

Nor does the Bill of Assertive Rights present you with a belief system, such as claiming that faith in science is better than faith in religion and making the assumption that religion is only for the troubled or personally insecure who need a strong external structure to tell them what to do. While religion can be used in that way, so can science. Having known as many personally insecure scientific zealots as I have religious ones, I can't see any difference. If you are religious - or an atheist - and you want to be able to cope with social pressure to follow beliefs that are more popular than those that you value, assertiveness can back up your beliefs. What is more fitting to back up your faith in your beliefs than faith in yourself? Assertiveness does not make a saint out of a sinner or vice versa. It only makes one a much more efficient and capable saint or a much more efficient and capable sinner. The material in this book is a guideline for becoming very effective in achieving your goals. It makes no presumption as to what those goals should be. This book doesn't even tell you that you or your employee should be assertive. It only points out how to be assertive and what the typical results of learning to be assertive are. You and your employees still have to decide whether, when, and where to be assertive in order to achieve a goal.

In summary, before going on, make sure you can recognize the most common forms of emotional manipulation that interfere with your

own personal and professional goals, as well as with your personal judgments of what is right and what is wrong. In the next chapter, we begin to look at the verbal assertive skills that you and your employees can use to actively cope with manipulation, and to increase self-respect, confidence, and maturity.