

## Keep From Melting Under Stress!

A scenario for exploring communication

Sam's teacher helped him obtain a job at the local Ben and Jerry's, and Sam was excited. The store manager had already complimented him on how hard he was working. His parents were impressed with his independence and were beginning to treat him more like an adult. Best of all, he had money in his pocket to spend on whatever he liked. The only problem was Rosie, his shift leader. She wasn't the hardest worker in the world and so Sam often had to do more than his share of the work to pick up the slack. He didn't really mind, though, because he figured it would just make him look better to the manager.

One day Rosie told Sam that it was time to defrost the ice cream freezers, and then left on an errand, saying she would be right back. Sam looked in the notebook where store procedures were outlined, but couldn't find defrosting instructions. He thought of calling the manager, but knew that Rosie would get in trouble for leaving and would be angry with him.

Finally, he decided he should just turn off the freezers and wait until Rosie got back to find out what to do next. Rosie, as it turned out, was gone for several hours. By the time she returned, all the ice cream had melted and had to be thrown out. When the manager arrived, Rosie told him that Sam had not followed her instructions and had ruined all the ice cream. Sam did not know what to do. He felt terrible about the ice cream, but he felt even worse that he had lost the confidence of his manager.

Source:

Coppola, J. (2014, July 1). Self-Advocacy Modules Developed for the Mystic Grant. A Self Advocacy Module Developed for the Mystic Grant. Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Regional Research Institute, School of Social Work, Portland State University. [https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/HTItoolkit/files/03-Workforce/3-Training/A.Self-Advocacy\\_Modules\\_Developed\\_for\\_the\\_Mystic\\_Grant.pdf](https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/HTItoolkit/files/03-Workforce/3-Training/A.Self-Advocacy_Modules_Developed_for_the_Mystic_Grant.pdf).

Activity:

1. Identify the elements (both self-imposed and external) which inhibit Sam from advocating adequately for himself.
2. At which point(s) could Sam have taken steps to change the trajectory of this outcome? What could he have done?
3. How would you handle this situation if you were Sam? How could you advocate to the manager your perspective on the outcome?

## Exploration of Personal History and Experience

Example:

Phase of life	Experience with Personal Advocacy
<b>Home and early childhood</b>	Voicing of opinion was not encouraged. The philosophy of the authority figures in my life was “children should be seen and not heard”
<b>School</b>	I don’t have any recollection of teachers encouraging assertiveness or self-advocacy. The emphasis was always placed on being able to follow directions and rules, get along with others, and be respectful of others. Other than “telling the teacher” in circumstances of perceived unfairness, there was little to no instruction on how to problem-solve or negotiate a more favourable solution to perceived injustices.
<b>University or technical/professional training (if relevant)</b>	My Japanese language professors were very supportive of questioning of norms and pushed me to do more of it more frequently. I was encouraged to be vocal about my opinions and to learn how to voice opinions in a non-threatening way.
<b>First professional role</b>	My first job was in Japan, so there was no escaping questioning and voicing of needs/wants. Everything around me was new and different and it was my job to get acclimated and learn how to “fend for myself” in an unfamiliar environment. Eventually, I became comfortable enough to assist others in becoming acclimated to the environment and culture. The importance of voicing opinions and concerns in a “face-saving” way became clearer to me and I learned to become more adept at practicing this communication style.
<b>First managerial role (if relevant)</b>	This was also in Japan. It was my job to oversee the work of foreign teachers and in that role, I frequently served as advocate for the teaching staff as well as enforcer of policy on behalf of the company. This role taught me the importance of and impact of cultural norms and how to be respectful of these norms in a negotiation/advocacy situation.
<b>Current role</b>	In my current role, I find I am in a more comfortable position to advocate for myself and others. That said, there is still a need to be conscious of the concept of “saving face” and to approach advocacy from the perspective of questioning rather than stating.

Please complete the following based on your own experiences in each stage.

<b>Phase of life</b>	<b>Experience with Personal Advocacy</b>
<b>Home and early childhood</b>	
<b>School</b>	
<b>University or technical/professional training (if relevant)</b>	
<b>First professional role</b>	
<b>First managerial role (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Current role</b>	

Linguistic conventions for preserving face

### Euphemism

For example, let us consider the difference between these pairs of statements:

- Kathy is loud and pushy. / Kathy's voice carries and she is skilled at getting her way.
- The décor is drab. / The décor can accommodate (is a lovely backdrop for) a splash of personal flair.
- The teddy bear is tattered and worn. / The teddy bear has been well-loved.

There are also instances in which the message is conveyed through a positive turn of phrase, such as

- These pieces are all that remain of the extremely fragile artifact (read: most of it broke when we tried to excavate the site)
- Mathematics is not my strong suit (please don't make me do any sort of calculations!)
- We took the scenic route (read: we got lost)

### Use of modal verbs

Modal verbs are verbs such as can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will and would. These words have the effect of softening suggestions and requests made to others. For example:

- It may be advantageous to...
  - You might think about...
  - Would it be possible to...
- We tend to use these modal verb phrases when we speak to superiors, in particular.

### Passive Expressions

Through use of passive expressions, one is able to **distance** oneself and/or one's speaking partner from the situation described. For example:

- It would appear that...
- It is my understanding that...
- I was under the impression/I was told that...
- Perhaps the explanation was unclear the first time...

**Giving your conversation partner an "out;"** a means to reject your linguistic offering without risking face (appearing arrogant or mean) and without injuring your self-respect and face.

Examples include:

- Let me think about it (This phrase is so frequently used in Japanese that some Japanese-English phrase books now translate it as "no" in English!)
- I'll have to check my schedule (read: I don't want to outright reject your offer right now in front of you)
- If you have time, could you...

Psychological Safety Questionnaire

		Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree
<b>Part 1: Individual safety</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1</b>	In this environment, it is easy to discuss difficult issues and problems.					
<b>2</b>	I won't receive retaliation or criticism if I admit to an error or mistake.					
<b>3</b>	It is easy to ask another person for help.					
<b>4</b>	I feel safe offering new ideas, even if they aren't fully-formed plans.					
<b>Part 2: Respect</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	In this environment, people are accepted for being different.					
<b>6</b>	My ideas are welcomed and afforded time and attention.					
<b>7</b>	People in this environment are able to articulate/describe the value of others' contributions.					
<b>8</b>	Do you and the people in the environment share a desire to reach a mutually agreeable solution/plan?					
<b>Part 3: Learning</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>9</b>	In this environment, people talk about mistakes and ways to improve and learn from them.					
<b>10</b>	In this environment, people take time to be innovative.					
<b>11</b>	In this environment, people feel uninhibited when it comes to raising concerns.					
<b>12</b>	In this environment, people time to explore underlying assumptions and seek counterarguments about issues under discussion.					