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Scripts, Lines and Phrases

Most of us weren't taught how to be assertive, or how to state our needs. Very little was modeled to us in terms of harmonious assertiveness. So finding the 'right words' can be difficult. Here are a few to get you start:

When you disagree with someone

- I disagree with that approach/assessment.
- I speak as I find.
- I appreciate hearing your opinion, but I'm not prepared change my mind on this.
- Can you please explain your reasoning on this?
- That has not been my experience.
- I'm intrigued by what you're saying, though I'm not sure how it would work.
- I would like it if we could just agree to disagree at this point.
- I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about [our deadlines/our workload/our parenting styles]. I want to hear your thoughts and share mine as well.
- I agree that there are things I've contributed to this. I'd also like to step back to look at the bigger picture together, because I think there are a number of other areas that are important for us to understand if we're going to change things.

Saying no to a project/request for help

- I am long on tasks and short on time. I need to revisit this project in a few weeks.
- I know I said yes, but I had not considered the other things I have going on. I can't add anything else to my task list.
- I need to free up some of my time. I can ask someone else on the team to help you.
- I want to do my best work, and I won't be able to do that right now.
- I'm over-extended. I won't be able to work on this project anymore.
- Thanks for thinking of me on this one. I'm always up for a challenge, but this falls too far outside my skill set.
- I would be happy to help, but I need a day or two to prepare.
- I understand the urgency, but this is not something I can take on right now.

If you're put on the spot

- This is not my area of expertise, but I can find out for you.
- I don't remember off the top of my head. I'm going to check my notes get back to you
- I want to be sure and give you correct information. Let me call you back.
- That's a good question. I'll see what I can find out for you.
- I've been wondering that, too. Let me ask.
- Amy might be able to answer your question, given that she wrote the report.
- I don't think I'm the best person to answer that, but I'll find out who is.
- Based on the information I have, this is what I think.
- Perhaps we should just Google it.

When someone is trying to wear you down

- I'd like to take a break and come back to this in a couple of hours after we've both had time to think.
- I'm feeling overwhelmed right now, so it's hard for me to focus on your feedback. I would like to take a break and discuss this later.
- I'm surprised by all this, and it's a lot to take in. I want to take some time to think about it and digest what you've said. Let's come back to it tomorrow.
- OK, we're deadlocked. We both need to agree on this, and we don't. Your solution is that I should give in. That doesn't feel fair to me. On the other hand, I don't know how to break this deadlock, so we've got to figure it out. What's a fair and efficient way to decide when we don't agree?
- I'm not prepared to discuss this any longer. Let's take a break so I can collect my thoughts.
- Interesting advice, but that doesn't align with my beliefs.

When someone knows how to push your buttons

- I'm putting my needs first and you won't make me feel guilty.
- I don't feel like I have a chance to voice my opinion.
- I feel shut out when you take over the conversation.
- I understand how you feel. But now it's time to talk about how I feel.
- I feel undermined when you bring this up in front of everyone. Next time, please just talk to me about it in private.
- I would appreciate it if you didn't talk to [my mom/your mom /your co-workers] about my private life.
- I'm an adult and capable of making my own decisions
- My reasons are personal, and I don't have to explain them to you.
- I have my reasons.
- I'm not obligated to explain myself to you.
- I prefer not to say.
- I'm confident in my decisions.
- I won't allow you to use guilt to control me.
- My feelings are as equally important as yours.
- As an adult, I'm no longer scared of you.
- If you choose to ignore me, that's your problem, not mine.
- I can see that you're worried about me, but I'm an adult and can make my own decisions.

When someone gives you unsolicited advice

- We're on a tight deadline. Let's focus on the task at hand, and then look at your suggestions.
- I like the idea. Can you put your ideas in an email and send it to me?
- I'm so grateful for your advice, but I'm going to try something else.
- You've given me a lot to think about. Thanks.
- That may have been the case in your situation. But in this situation, I'm dealing with a client who [doesn't have a social media budget/is going through a re-brand/etc.]
- I've never thought about that. Let me talk to my [colleagues/client/boss/child's pediatrician] and see what [he/she] thinks.
- I understand why you think that might work. But here's why it won't.
- I appreciate that you have more overall experience in [parenting/marketing/cooking]—but I have more experience with this situation.
- I want to understand what you're trying to accomplish with this feedback. Can you explain the reasoning behind it?
- Thanks for offering to help, but [my boss/the account rep/customer service] prefers that I handle all requests from this client.
- I'm confused about why that would be a better solution.
- I appreciate your concern and input, but I've made my decision.
- Your views are great, but I would rather make this decision alone.