



## Assertiveness

**Assertiveness is an attitude and a way of acting in any situation where you need to:**

- Express your feelings
- Ask for what you want, or
- Say no to something you don't want



### Are you assertive?

- Do you find it difficult to say 'No'?
- Can you ask for what you want?
- Do you often feel you're being treated like a doormat?
- Do people sometimes say they find your reactions aggressive?
- Do you feel guilty if you think you haven't been nice enough?

Circle the number below to show where would you place your assertive skills today



### BEHAVIOUR STYLES

#### Passive

Here you are giving in to someone else's preferences while discounting your own rights and needs. If no one knows what you want, then you are unlikely to be get it. This passive behaviour also includes feeling guilty, and gives the message that you are not sure. Often seen in those of you who are anxiety prone, needing to be seen as 'nice' or 'pleasing' to everyone

#### Assertive

This in contrast to the above, involves asking for what you want (or saying no – nicely) in a simple, direct way that does not negate, attack or manipulate anyone else  
You communicate your feelings honestly while maintaining respect and consideration for others

#### Aggressive

Here you are communicating in a demanding, abrasive, or even hostile way with others. Aggressive people typically are insensitive to other people's rights and feelings, attempting to get what they want through coercion or intimidation. Succeeding in this way creates enemies and conflict and puts others on the defensive, leading them to withdraw or fight back rather than cooperate. You may get what you want – but it comes at a cost to others!

Learning to be assertive does not guarantee you will get what you ask for, but it will give you the best chance of a positive outcome

## 3 Steps to an assertive behaviour



### STEP 1

#### Empathise

Active listening & demonstrate you are able to see the situation from the other person's perspective

### STEP 2

#### Say what you think or feel

Use 'I' statements rather than 'you' statements

### STEP 3

#### Propose a win : win solution

Bear in mind this may require flexibility from both/all sides. Ask them for ideas too!

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### When are you not assertive and who with?

- If you are prone to worry & anxiety, you may act assertively in some situations but have difficulty in making requests or saying no to e.g. family members or close friends. You may have grown up in a family where you felt the need to be perfect and please your parents & you've remained a 'people pleaser' as an adult. You may find that now you often end up doing many things that you don't really want to do which creates resentment, which in turn produces tension, and sometimes open conflict in your relationships.
  - By learning to be assertive, you can begin to express your true feelings and needs more easily. You may get more of what you want because of your assertiveness and also it's good to know that assertive behaviour brings you increased respect from others.
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### Learning how to say no!



- The secrets of successfully saying no are to:
    - ✓ Not use the word 'no' or 'I can't' at all. Instead say, 'I am unable to...' or 'I am unwilling to...'
  - Remember that by declining you are rejecting the request, not the person
  - Accept that sometimes you may have to upset someone if you cannot comply with his or her request – their upset is their problem, however, don't make it yours by giving in and saying yes when you really are unable to do something
  - Pause before answering a request if you are not sure about it – it is ok to say, 'Can I get back to you on this?' or 'Can I let you know later?'
  - Acknowledge his or her need without giving in: 'I understand that you need someone to help, but I am unable to do that right now.'
  - Be brief. Don't give a long speech about why you have to say no. A non-committal phrase such as 'other priorities I have to attend to' is more than enough explanation.
  - Be calm and pleasant. Don't snap. If necessary, thank the person for asking you but still say no. 'I'm afraid I can't make that, but thank you for asking me'. 'I understand the importance of this assignment, but without extra resources, I cannot take it on'.
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## Top Tips to Help Boost Your Assertiveness



- Keep your request simple. One or two easy to understand sentences will be fine
- Avoid asking for more than one thing at a time
- Always try to understand what the other person has said, even if you don't agree with it
- Most people will have their own problems so will have little or no idea about what you want or need unless you are clear in your request
- Find a mutually convenient time to discuss the problem, unless you need to be spontaneously assertive on the spot
- Be clear, direct and specific in what you say, outlining your point of view even if it seems obvious to you, remember that other people are not mind readers
- Challenge in a non-aggressive manner by asking for clarification and listen in order to understand; make requests, not demands
- Describe the problem objectively, without using language that blames or judges by talking about your concerns and reasons rather than by accusing others of error or "putting them down" by name calling and other means
- Acknowledge your true feelings to yourself whilst respecting the rights of the other person
- By telling people how you feel, you let them know how their behaviour affects you and your reactions. Even if they disagree, he or she can at least appreciate your strong feelings on an issue
- Keep calm and stick to the point and if necessary, keep repeating your message
- Don't apologise for making your request and when you need to decline a request, do so directly but politely. Don't make excuses. Simply say "No thank you" or "Thank you but I'm not interested" or "I'm not able to do that". If the other person resorts to persuasion, just repeat your statement firmly until you have made your point
- With close friends and partners, stating positive consequences of their compliance with your request can be an honest offer of give and take rather than manipulation  
e.g. "If you take the rubbish out, I'll put the kettle on"



"Too many of us fail to fulfil our needs because we say no rather than yes,  
and yes when we should say no."

William Glasser