



How to Be Assertive

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Assertiveness is the ability to express yourself openly and honestly while also reflecting a genuine concern for others. It is about having the confidence to be yourself, to be true to your values and beliefs, and to be courageous enough to speak up when needed. By developing an ability to express yourself, you may be able to reduce your stress, increase your feelings of self-worth, improve your decision-making abilities, and feel more self-confident in relationships.

COMPONENTS OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR

There are several important aspects that contribute to assertiveness – it involves not only what you say but also how you say it.

What To Say

There are ways to express the content of your message such that the other individual will be more likely to hear you. Express yourself and your feelings, and take responsibility for them rather than labelling or blaming the other person. You do not need to put someone else down to express yourself. Remember that assertiveness includes the expression of affection as well as feelings of anger or frustration. Specifically:

1. Be as specific and clear as possible about what you want, think, and feel. Vague or tentative statements will likely lead to misinterpretation.
2. "Own" your message. Acknowledge that your message comes from your frame of reference and your perceptions. You can acknowledge ownership with personalized ("I") statements such as "I don't agree with you" (as compared to "You're wrong"). Blaming statements such as this, rather than a statement of ownership, will likely foster resentment and resistance rather than understanding and cooperation.
3. Ask for feedback and then listen carefully to the other person. "Am I being clear?" Does that make sense? How do you see this situation? What do you want to do?" Asking for feedback can make it clear to the other person that you are expressing an opinion, feeling, or desire rather than a demand. Listening to their feedback and engaging in a discussion can correct any misperceptions either of you have. Encourage others to be clear, direct, and specific in their feedback to you.

How to Say It

1. Eye Contact: Looking directly but comfortably at the person to whom you're speaking helps communicate your sincerity and interest. Looking away or staring too intently can be uncomfortable for the other person.
2. Body Posture: Turning towards an individual feels much more personal than turning away or to the side. A slumped, passive stance makes it difficult to stand up for oneself – both literally and figuratively.
3. Physical Contact and Distance: Closeness is a nonverbal form of communication that varies greatly across cultures. Being too close or too far away may offend someone and have

an impact on his or her ability to listen openly to you.

4. Facial Expression and Gestures: Your expression should match your message. When you are angry, the most effective way is to deliver your message with a straight, non-smiling facial expression, not with a big smile and jovial gestures.
5. Voice: A level, even tone of voice is both clear and convincing without being intimidating or ignorable. Consider your tone, inflection, and volume when speaking.
6. Timing: Generally, the best practice is to respond in the moment. It will allow you to focus on your feelings at the time. However, it is never too late to return to a person at a later time to share your feelings about an interaction.
7. Listening: Actively listening and attending to another person is a reflection of assertive listening. It reflects a commitment to understanding and respect for another individual's needs and wishes. It may mean that you avoid expressing yourself right away so that you can fully listen.

Through assertiveness we develop contact with ourselves and with others. We become real human beings with real ideas, real differences...and real flaws. And we admit all of these things. We don't try to become someone else's mirror. We don't try to suppress someone else's uniqueness. We don't try to pretend that we're perfect. We become ourselves. We allow ourselves to be there.