

Assertiveness 101



Assertiveness is ...

- * a core communication skill that anyone can learn
- * a flexible spectrum of behaviour vs. something fixed that you either do / don't do (all-or-nothing)
- * the sweet spot between being too aggressive & too passive
- * expressing yourself effectively & standing up for your own rights / point of view, while also respecting others' rights / points of view



Degrees of Assertiveness

Some people are naturally more assertive. But if you tend to be reserved, you can learn to speak up. Or if you have aggressive tendencies, you can learn to tone them down. Being assertive is not about following a rigid set of rules. Assertiveness can be adapted to suit your personality and your comfort level in any particular situation.

Imagine a scale from 1-10, with assertiveness sitting across levels 4-7 in a flexible middle ground. If you tend to be passive, assertiveness is just as accessible to you by aiming for level 4 or 5 as it is for those who may naturally be more direct and thus aim for level 7.



Benefits of Assertiveness

Assertive communicators are more likely to:

- * have healthy levels of confidence & self esteem
- * respect themselves & earn the respect of others
- * honour their own wants / needs / thoughts / feelings
- * be satisfied with the decisions they make
- * feel comfortable interacting with others, whether one-on-one or in groups
- * stand up for themselves when they encounter disrespectful behaviour / bad service / defective goods
- * better manage conflict



Can you think of other benefits?

OPENLY AGGRESSIVE

4 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION STYLES



PASSIVE

ASSERTIVE

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE

1. The openly aggressive communicator...

- * appears capable, strong & confident but is sensitive to criticism
- * feels superior & doesn't see any need to change (everyone else / the world in general is the problem, not them)
- * likely to express themselves in a way that violates the rights of others
- * deals with anxiety by striking at others
- * uses anger as a threat to keep others "in their place"
- * tends to use "you" statements, labels, accusations & words of extremes (Examples: "You lazy bum!" / "It's your fault." / "You're *always* late." / "You *never* do what you're told.")
- * may say "yes" when they mean "no" & then complain about how others have inconvenienced them
- * may feel guilty after an aggressive outburst



2. The passive-aggressive communicator...

- * feels powerless, fearful & victimized
- * out to get revenge but doesn't feel capable of doing it openly
- * punishes others / teaches them lessons without saying a word, preferring to work behind the scenes
- * uses tactics like “the silent treatment” & pouting to get their own way without confrontation
- * tends to make others feel insecure & guilty (without them knowing exactly what about or why)
- * says “yes” when they mean “no” & then gives excuses for why they're not able to follow through
- * won't say “no” outright but tries to get even for being asked to do something they didn't want to do in the first place



3. The passive communicator...



- * appears shy, timid, quiet & reserved
- * lacks confidence & self-esteem, worries about what others think & tries at all costs not to offend people or hurt their feelings
- * doesn't speak up for themselves or say "no", always does what others want at the expense of their own needs
- * can feel victimized but does nothing about it
- * may think things like: "No one cares about me." / "I'm always ignored." / "Why can't I think for myself?" / "I don't know what I think, feel or want."
- * may experience the following feelings: out of control, anxious, confused, unsure, stuck, hopeless, depressed, afraid, misunderstood

Note: There is a huge difference between being nice or polite and being passive. When you behave passively, you think about what you should have said or done over and over. You may also vent to others. When you are being nice or polite, you have no second thoughts or resentments about the person or the situation.



4. The assertive communicator...



- * acts on their rights while respecting others' rights, sends the message that they value themselves & everyone else
- * able to identify their wants / needs & takes responsibility for fulfilling them, expresses themselves & accepts accountability for how they think / feel / behave
- * deals in the present & with one situation at a time
- * feels in control / peaceful / empowered, has the courage to risk ridicule & rejection (as well as acceptance)
- * experiences little guilt / anger / resentment
- * uses "I" statements
- * makes requests openly / honestly / directly / respectfully
- * doesn't say "yes" when they mean "no" OR at least owns up to it if they do (instead of blaming or accusing someone else) & fulfills the request as soon / as best they can



Principles Underlying Assertiveness

- * All human beings have equal worth.
- * The most fulfilling relationships are characterized by the free and mutually respectful expression of wants, needs, thoughts and feelings.
- * We respect ourselves when we risk expressing who we are and we respect others when we accept them for who they are.
- * We have the power to make choices about our thoughts, feelings, actions, etc. With that power, comes the responsibility to be accountable for ourselves and the choices we make.
- * We can choose to exercise the **power within** as opposed to **taking power** from others (aggressive) or **giving up our own power** (passive).

Whose Rights Count?

Assertive

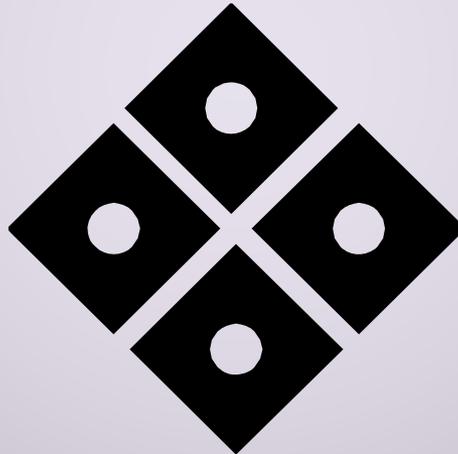
Message: My rights count, so do yours.

Outcome: I win, you win.

Aggressive

Message: My rights count, yours don't.

Outcome: I win, you lose.



Passive

Message: Your rights count, mine don't.

Outcome: I lose, you win.

Passive-Aggressive

Message: My rights don't count, neither do yours.

Outcome: I lose, you lose.

What Kind of Communicator Do You Want to Be?

Many of our thoughts, feelings and responses are automatic, but we can work on changing them. We don't have control over everything in our lives. However, we often have more control than we realize.



So begin to consider your options and get your brain used to the concept of consciously choosing how you want to communicate!

Note: It's best to limit our assertiveness to things that concern us directly. We don't need to tell everyone what we think about them and how they handle their lives.