

Assertiveness Skills

Definitions of Assertiveness

- Stating your views clearly and articulately
- The ability to express your own feelings in a way that is respectful and honest
- Standing up for your own needs without violating the needs of others

Benefits of Assertiveness

- Express your own needs and get them met
- Respect and communicate with others effectively
- Influence others in order to gain acceptance, agreement or behavior change

The Assertiveness Continuum

- **Passive:** Uncomfortable expressing needs and wants, quickly backs down to avoid conflict, concerned with the judgments and perceptions of others
- **Passive-Aggressive:** Avoids making a direct response, demonstrates feelings of aggression in passive ways, such as procrastination, intentional inefficiency, sullenness, lots of sarcasm and indirect criticism
- **Assertive:** Comfortable expressing needs and wants, can communicate feelings without attacking or disrespecting others, aims to consider win-win solutions
- **Aggressive:** Gets needs met at the expense of others, uses attacking tactics such as yelling, door slamming, desk pounding, concerned solely with own feelings

Assertive Language

- **Use "I" Statements:** "I would like to complete my explanation without interruption."
- **Use Factual Statements:** "I noticed that you arrived late three times this week."
- **Make Clear, Direct Requests or Directives:** "Please review and practice your presentation before the meeting this afternoon."
- **Express Feelings Honestly:** "I feel that we strayed too far from the agenda and digressed on issues we can't control."

Assertive Behaviors

Body Language

- Direct eye contact
- Genuine smile, if appropriate
- Confident stance
- Strong handshake

Vocal Behaviors

- Even tone
- Volume neither too soft nor too loud
- No "ums," "uhs," "you knows," etc.
- Avoid nervous laughter
- Avoid voice rising at the end of a sentence

Saying No

Be Polite, But Firm

- Don't say "maybe" when you mean "no".
- Eliminate hinting—be direct.
- You don't have to give a reason, except when saying no to your boss.
- Stay "on message".
- Pay attention to body language and voice.
- Support the person if not the specific request.
- Set strict boundaries and get complete info before committing if you have (or want) to say yes.

Handling Conflict Assertively

- Be clear on the issue and your intention.
- Make specific requests.
- Be open to a variety of solutions.
- Find agreement wherever possible.
- Take a break if the conversation gets heated.
- If no resolution occurs, take a step back.

Handling Criticism Assertively

Key: Don't Get Defensive

- Acknowledge
- Deflect
- Assess the validity of the criticism
- Figure out how to handle this situation in the future