



eBook

How to be Assertive Without Rubbing People the Wrong Way



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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1- What is Assertiveness?	4
Chapter 2- The Difference Between Assertive & Aggressive Behavior.....	6
Chapter 3- How To Be Assertive.....	8
Chapter 4- How Assertive Are You?	9
Conclusion.....	10

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Introduction

Assertiveness is an important skill for effective communication in the modern workplace and at home.

Assertiveness allows you to advocate for yourself and your needs in a healthy way. Some people are concerned that assertiveness may be perceived as hostility or rudeness. Many factors can go into how assertiveness is interpreted or received.

In this eBook, we will discuss what assertiveness is and what it is not, and explore ways to advocate for yourself in an effective manner no matter what phase of life or career you are in. Good to know, these skills are useful in our personal and professional life.



Chapter 1: What Is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is an interpersonal skill. It demonstrates your confidence and allows you to advocate for your needs, desires, and boundaries in a way that is respectful to others and your environment.

Being assertive means that you are honoring yourself and others through honest, thoughtful communication.

Assertiveness is:

- Asking for you want or need tactfully
- Saying no when you want or need to instead of saying yes
- Communicating your available bandwidth and asking for prioritization
- Speaking your mind, sharing your thoughts, ideas, and concerns
- Realizing you are not responsible for the other party's response
- Understanding that you have a right to your feelings as well as a right to communicate them
- Using "I" statements when speaking
- Not apologizing for your feelings or needs

Worth repeating, communicating your wants and needs effectively is a useful tool both personally and professionally.

As we will learn in the next chapter, there is a difference between being assertive and being aggressive. As the saying goes, you catch more flies with honey.



Chapter 2- The Difference Between Assertive & Aggressive Behavior

How you treat other people, aka your attitude, is one of the most important factors when it comes to communicating and being able to lead/influence without formal authority. When striving to build your ability to influence others, especially without formal authority, honesty and communication are vital. A dip in your integrity could be a big blow to your credibility and last a long time. Stay focused, communicate with clarity, and of course, be mindful of your tone. It is beneficial to communicate urgency versus stress.

The tone of your voice and the words you choose can often be your most powerful tools. This is one of the distinctions between being assertive and being aggressive.

Many struggle with exhibiting assertive behavior because they confuse assertiveness with aggressiveness. If you've maintained a passive personality most of your life, you might find asking for what you need or want especially uncomfortable. Now, you fear that you may hurt feelings and make enemies, or drive others away if you practice assertiveness.

If you've had more of an aggressive communication style most of your life, you may find it difficult to contain your harshness when dealing with others. You may feel your way is best and may believe it can't be by being "nicer."

The truth is that there is a line between both passive/assertive and aggressive/assertive behaviors. You also might second-guess yourself about crossing the line – yet, if you know the traits of an assertive communication style versus passive and aggressive, you will want to stand up for yourself without backing down or becoming angry and frustrated.

Here is a quick guide for using assertive rather than passive or aggressive behavior:

- Assertive – Clearly states an opinion, and is respectful of others beliefs.
Aggressive – Becomes angry and attacks the other person's opinions.
(Outwardly or subtly)
Passive – Stays in the corner and doesn't express opinions at all or expresses them with hints or indirectly.
- Assertive – Makes eye contact with others.
Aggressive – Glaring stares at the person.
Passive – Avoids making eye contact.

- Assertive – Body language is relaxed and open.
Aggressive – Body language is rigid and may enter another’s space.
Passive – Body language is withdrawn and slumped.
- Assertive – Considers him or herself as valuable as others.
Aggressive – He or she knows it all.
Passive – No or low self-value or self-esteem.
- Assertive – Sets goals and reaches them.
Aggressive – May reach goals no matter what he/she says or does.
Passive – Doesn’t know how to set goals – or reach them.

As you can see by the above patterns, there’s a huge difference between each of the main communication traits. Assertive traits are admired universally, yet they may not be easily accepted – at least, not at first. As you continue on the road to assertive behavior patterns, you’ll find it easier to transform from passive or aggressive to assertive. TIP: Remember to think before you act.

There are exceptions to every rule. Make it a point to be sensitive to people’s feelings, notice body language, and facial expressions. These observations and presence tips will help you to develop a more assertive communication style and that will benefit you.

Chapter 3- How To Be Assertive

Delivery Matters

How you advocate for your needs (and how it is received by others) can determine whether or not you achieve your desired results. You can be assertive without being rude, aggressive or impolite. Tact, tone, and delivery are important in any type of communication.

Using “I” statements to convey your needs communicates that you are stating your needs/concerns, not placing blame. Stay calm, keep it positive, and constructive, and speak your needs. Here are a few helpful tips on how to be assertive.

Practice Practice Practice

Assertiveness comes easy for some and is an anxiety-inducing challenge for others. Thankfully, the more you practice, the easier it gets. If being assertive does not come naturally for you, start small. Practice stating your opinions in lower fidelity situations first.

Gain Confidence As You Grow

As you practice, you will solidify your boundaries. There is no need to apologize for stating your wants and needs. Practice offering your thoughts, opinions and beliefs on larger and increasingly higher stakes issues. Be ready to peacefully and proactively advocate for your needs and the needs of your team.

Communication No-No's

- Placing blame
- Sharing your wants and needs in a confrontational or aggressive manner
- Yelling or shouting
- Being unwilling to hear the other person out or receive feedback

Do your best to stay calm and be diplomatic. At times, people may perceive assertiveness as rudeness when it is not. This is not your responsibility. You can't force someone to respect or accept your assertive requests and behavior. Stand up for yourself as you know what is best for you. Only you can decide what to do if your requests are not honored. Stay true to your integrity and values. Find freedom in speaking your truth appropriately.

Chapter 4- How Assertive Are You?

An important aspect of personal, professional and life skills is the development of assertiveness. Without it, you could feel disrespected or disregarded in relationships and career paths. Assertiveness is being confident in your ideas, thoughts, and beliefs so that you can ask or communicate what you want or need in a calm and effective manner. Assertiveness is also refusing to accept what you don't want. If you don't speak up, you might become very frustrated.

If you're more of an aggressive communicator, you may react to the same situation by becoming overly-angry and shouting. That type of behavior is unacceptable and can cause serious conflict and inhibit your ability to be heard.

You may have problems being assertive with those in authority – for example, parents, bosses or others who you perceive are “above” you. You may not feel confident about speaking up around these individuals for fear that you'll lose your job or be viewed as confrontational.

Think about people you admire or respect. Chances are they display the honorable quality of being assertive when needed. To gauge how assertive you are, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you speak up when you disagree with someone?
- Do you do what's right even though it goes against what others are doing?
- Would you remind a person about money they borrowed and need to pay back?
- Can you ask for help if needed?
- Can you tell people when you're disappointed in them?
- Do you tell someone if they've hurt your feelings?
- Do you say no when you don't want to say yes?
- If someone is consistently late, do you tell him how it makes you feel?
- Can you refuse if someone asks you to do something wrong?

There's a fine line between aggressiveness and assertiveness, and the consequences may be far-reaching.

Common sense can lead you away from being too aggressive so that feelings are not hurt and relationships are not lost. As you practice assertiveness in your daily life, you'll become more adept at knowing when and where the line is crossed and being able to avoid it.

Conclusion

Again, assertiveness is an important skill for effective communication in the modern workplace and at home.

Learn all you can about assertiveness and apply the lessons where needed in your life. The self-esteem that comes from standing up for yourself and requesting that your rights be respected can transform your life and lead you to a healthier, happier life and stronger, more genuine relationships.

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