

## Assertive Communication

Understanding assertiveness and learning how to interact effectively within personal and business relationships is a skill that creates positive results for everyone. Assertive communication is the ability to speak and interact in a manner that considers and respects the rights and opinions of others while also standing up for your own rights, needs and personal boundaries.

Understanding assertiveness and learning how to effectively communicate in both personal and business relationships is a skill that creates positive impact on others as well as yourself. Assertive communication creates opportunities for open discussion with a variety of opinions, needs and choices to be respectfully heard and considered in order to achieve a win-win solution to problems rather than selfishly (aggressively) demanding to “get my own way”.

### 8 Benefits of Using Assertive Speech and Behaviors:

1. Reduces anxiety and stress often caused by misunderstandings and conflicts.
2. Allows you to express your thoughts and feelings clearly and effectively.
3. Self-esteem and self-confidence is enhanced and you have better control over your own life.
4. Others have more respect for your ideas and opinions by knowing where you stand.
5. Relationships with others are greatly improved by disagreeing without being hostile.
6. Having the ability to say “no” when you mean “no” without feeling self-conscious.
7. Motivates others to clearly state their own opinions and ideas.
8. Allows you to ask for help when needed without fear and stress.

### How to Communicate Effectively and Build Self-Confidence:

Change your mindset. Remember that you have a right to be heard and your opinions and needs be considered when decisions are being made. If you are often fearful of speaking up, ask yourself “What is the worst thing that can possibly happen if I voice my feelings in a respectful manner?” More often than not you will discover your fears were not reality based and you will quickly calm down and feel more comfortable being assertive.

Use “I” phrases. Be willing to own your opinions and feelings by saying something like “I need the report completed and on my desk by 5 p.m. today” or, “I need more time to consider these proposals, so may we meet again tomorrow at 8 a.m. to review?” In personal relationships there may be times when you want or need to say “no” to requests from family or friends. Simply say something along the lines of, “I would like to help you, but I already have a prior commitment on Saturday” or, “I appreciate the invitation, but I can’t make it this time”.

Be specific and direct. Look the person directly in the eye and deliver your message in short, easy-to-understand sentences, respectfully offering or asking for clarification when needed. Keep in mind that men and women communicate differently, especially with those of the opposite sex, so make it a priority to learn the difference between men and women and their communication styles while striving to be assertive.

Respect yourself and others. Realize that you are worthy of being heard and that you have something valuable to say, just as others do. You have important ideas and suggestions that everyone will be benefited by after respectfully considering what you have to say, just as they do. Recognize the things you do well and feel good about yourself and your achievements, and take gradual steps to improve in the areas you have difficulty with.

Prepare and practice. If you find there is a need to confront someone, take some time to prepare what message you wish to get across and practice your tone of voice and body language, in order to achieve assertive while also keeping the lines of communication, compromise and negotiation open.