



CHRISTMAS



Lesson 1 of 3



What is assertiveness and how does it benefit you?

Assertiveness is an attitude, a mindset in which you stand up for your rights and interests without attacking those of others. Although it doesn't guarantee anything, it greatly increases the chances of opening a productive dialogue and avoiding conflict.

Increasing your assertiveness will help your self-confidence, your self-esteem, and your relationships with other people. In your day to day, **conflicts can arise with other people** at any time. You're faced with three options: to confront them passively, aggressively, or assertively.

Below, we'll look at three ways to face the same situation: a coworker has spoken to you in a rude and disrespectful way.

- A. **Passive.** You don't say anything. You'll lose respect, your confidence will be shot, and you'll continue to get the same treatment. The situation is likely to blow up in the future when it could have been nipped in the bud. Of all the ways to deal with conflict, always avoid this one
- B. **Aggressive.** You confront your coworker by saying calmly and politely that he is a rude and disrespectful person. We seemingly haven't done anything wrong, but the truth is we insulted him. The other person will get defensive, denying it and insulting you back. This isn't the best way to open a productive dialogue either.
- C. **Assertive.** You tell your coworker, "It really bothers me that you speak to me like that." You're protecting your rights and interests without attacking him. You do so by talking about your emotions and feelings --things that aren't up for debate. Also, the other person will think "why does that bother you?" or "how am I speaking to you?" You're opening a dialogue and giving yourself the opportunity to explain your thinking.

Assertiveness is somewhere in the middle between passivity and aggressiveness. It doesn't work miracles; if you confront someone with no intention of changing, it might be an exercise in futility. But, undoubtedly, if there's any chance the other person will change, assertiveness will help you take advantage of the situation.

Lesson 2 of 3



How to be assertive

When someone isn't respecting your rights and interests, you should be able to tell them as much in a way that doesn't insult or attack them.

It's not comfortable; it's an effort and it's often easier to not say anything at all, but it's the only way to make sure you and your wishes are respected. It's a perpetual and sometimes exhausting fight. And it doesn't always work. But, every time you defend yourself assertively, you get a self-confidence boost and usually a little more than you originally wanted from the other person.

Three steps to building an assertive message

1. **Describe objective statements.** For the first step, focus on describing the facts, the behavior, the situation, etc. Describe them as objectively as you can so none of what you say can be argued. Describe things that are objective, evident, undeniable, and visible to everyone. State the facts without making value judgments or blanket statements.
2. **Verbalize the consequences of their behavior.** Let the other person see how their behavior affects you, your interests, and your feelings. Talk about yourself: what matters to you, what hurts you, what you feel, etc. (none of these things can be argued).
3. **Say what you want. Explain in detail what you want them to do.** What do you want the other person to do or not do? What do you want them to change? What do you want to happen?

Tips for being assertive:

- Direct what you say to generate dialogue; say things that make the other person want to ask and understand your perspective (wishes, feelings, needs, interests). Don't say anything that will cause friction, start an argument, or fuel conflict (value judgments, blanket statements, attacks, threats).
- Be objective. Always talk about things that are non-debatable.

- Stay calm. Stay collected. Never raise your voice or get upset. If you lose your cool, you won't be in the right anymore.
- Don't beat around the bush or sidestep the issue. Be direct. Get to the point. The more concise you are, the better.
- Remember, your problem isn't with the person, but with how they're acting.
- Never resort to personal attacks.
- Never threaten.
- Show self-confidence by looking them in the eyes, keeping your composure, and speaking deliberately.

Examples

- Not assertive (debatable): "This report is terrible." "This report is unprofessional."
- Assertive (non-debatable): "This report is missing the sales data from last month."
- Not assertive (debatable): "This design is ugly."
- Assertive (non-debatable): "I don't like this design."
- Not assertive (debatable): "You're always yelling." "You're rude."
- Assertive (non-debatable): "I am uncomfortable with you yelling at your coworkers in the office."
- Not assertive (debatable): "Your behavior is very unprofessional." "You're not engaged."
- Assertive (non-debatable): "I don't like that you were late for work today." "You've been late three times this week."
- Not assertive (debatable): "You have bad behavior." "You're a mess."
- Assertive (non-debatable): "I don't like that you let your room get so messy." "It bothers me that you didn't make your bed."

Lesson 3 of 3



Saying “NO” assertively

Learning to say "no." You should be able to say "no" when someone asks you to do something you don't want to do or that doesn't benefit you. A lot of people have a hard time doing this. Some people can't do it at all.

Three steps to saying “no” assertively

1. **Say the word clearly and forcefully.** Be polite and respectful yet blunt in your "no."
2. **Say why not.** Tell them the reasons why you can't or don't want to do it. But you don't have to justify yourself.
3. **Offer alternatives.** It's much easier for the other to accept your "no" if you suggest other ways for their interests to be met (without sacrificing yours).

An example

Imagine that you're working on something very important and you're pressed for time. Someone stops by your desk to chat for a bit and have a coffee.

You have three options:

1. Be passive: let them interrupt you.

“Well, alright. But let's do it fast, ok?”

2. Be aggressive: tell them to go away.

"I'm busy right now." "I don't have time for a coffee."

3. Be assertive: Say "no" politely yet firmly.

Say "no."

"I can't right now."

Tell them why not.

"I have a ton of things to turn in today, and I don't have a lot of time."

Offer alternatives.

"How about when I finish?" or "do you want to have lunch together instead?"