

ASSERTIVENESS

WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU HAVE?

DO YOU FIND...

- ⚡ You lose your temper and justifying your lack of self control by blaming it on others?
- ⚡ You avoid discussions for fear of confrontation?
- ⚡ You hold back what you wanted say because of fear of letting them have it with both barrels?
- ⚡ You regret saying your piece?
- ⚡ You feel that others cause you a great deal of stress and dent your self confidence?
- ⚡ That you feel guilty or uncomfortable asking for things like extensions of deadlines

WOULD YOU RATHER...

- ★ Handle confrontation more easily and satisfactorily?
- ★ Feel less stressed?
- ★ Have greater confidence?
- ★ Be more tactful?
- ★ Improve your image and credibility?
- ★ Be able to disagree with people resolutely while retaining positive relationships with them?
- ★ Resist other people's attempts to manipulate you through bullying, emotional blackmail, flattery etc?

WHAT IS ASSERTTIVENESS?

- The ability to express our ideas and feelings, both positive and negative, in an open, direct and honest manner
- The ability to stand up for our rights while respecting the rights of others
- The ability to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions without judging or blaming other people
- The ability to find a compromise where conflict exists

The Rights Charter



I have the right to be treated with respect as an equal human being



I have the right to acknowledge my needs as being equal to those of others.



I have the right to express my opinions, thoughts and feelings.



I have the right to make mistakes.



I have the right to choose not to take responsibility for other people.


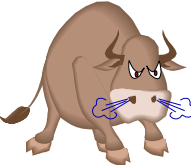




I have the right to be me without being dependent on the approval of others.



4 BASIC TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR

PASSIVITY	DIRECT AGGRESSION	INDIRECT AGGRESSION	ASSERTION
<p>☾ ‘Doormat’ syndrome – characterized by a feeling of powerlessness and an inability to take control of our lives</p> <p>☾ Low self-esteem but we bolster this by acts of self-sacrifice, giving others what they want.</p> <p>☾ We often have a tendency to avoid taking any responsibility for our own feelings or actions. We often give in or run away.</p>	<p>➡ Often confused with assertion because it involves standing up for our rights – but we do this without any thought or consideration for others’ feelings –</p> <p>➡ Compromise is impossible because it means ‘losing’.</p> <p>➡ Often based on low self-esteem – aggressive people build self-esteem by putting others down, but sometimes mistaken as an example of extreme confidence.</p>	<p>🌀 This is harder to identify because it is often subtle. When it is challenged it is denied.</p> <p>🌀 People who show this maybe daren’t risk an open account of their thoughts and feelings.</p> <p>Often based on low self-esteem because they know how manipulative they are and that they are avoiding any direct expression of their feelings.</p>	<p>★ Assertion means feeling equal to others, whoever they may be, and being honest about our feelings, expressing them openly and clearly.</p> <p>★ Assertive behaviour involves taking the initiative, rather than waiting for something to happen. This results in a feeling of inner strength and enables us to take control of our lives.</p> <p>★ It means taking responsibility for our thoughts, feelings and actions, instead of blaming or judging others.</p> <p>★ It means standing up for our rights and expressing our needs with consideration for the other person’s rights and needs.</p> <p>★ It means shunning the idea of winning and losing in favour of a situation of mutual compromise where both parties feel acknowledged.</p> <p>★ This leads to higher self-esteem - we are more able to admit our faults and mistakes without feeling totally devastated. Confrontation and criticism can be handled honestly without resorting to defensiveness.</p>

Behaviour Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	When Appropriate	When inappropriate
Passive 	You avoid conflict	You're not taken seriously / respected. Your viewpoint is ignored. You achieve less than your potential. You suffer self-generated stress. Your self-esteem suffers.	When the cost of confrontation far outweighs the benefits of the possible outcome. When physical violence is threatened.	When the outcome matters.
Aggressive 	You achieve a narrow victory	You tend to lose in the long term. It irritates people. You alienate people. People will under-perform for you because they will not show initiative	In a crisis when you need people to act without hesitation.	Virtually every other occasion
Passive Aggressive 	You feel as if you've achieved something, but...	... you haven't. Your attempts to manipulate people have alienated them, and built up resentments. Consequently, you lose people's respect and trust.	Never	Always
Assertive 	You can achieve results. People like and respect you. You do not need to worry if you've behaved fairly or appropriately. Your confidence and self-esteem are robust.	None	Always, except...	... when the timing is wrong or when the outcome is not worth the effort

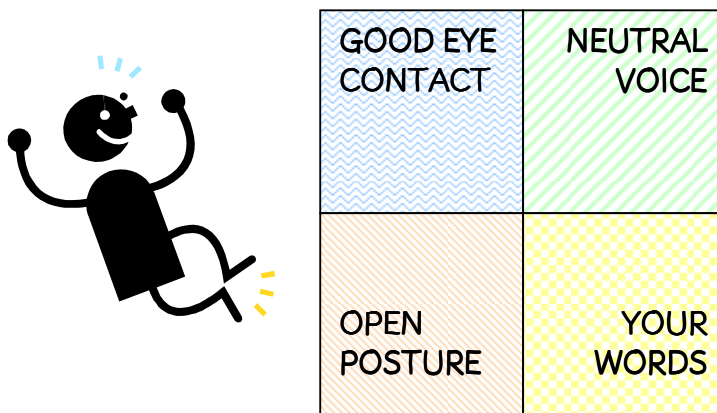
Identifying different behaviours

	Situation	Response	Behaviour
1	A neighbour calls at your house to ask you to help with the school fair	'I'd like to help you with the fair, but I'm not sure if I'm free then. I'll get back to you tomorrow.'	
2	You arrange to meet a friend for a meal. He is half an hour late, but full of apologies.	'Oh good, you're here at last. I'm absolutely starving; I didn't get time for lunch today, but it doesn't matter.'	
3	The TV repairer promises to return the following day with your TV. When he doesn't you ring the shop to complain.	'I'm fed up with your awful service – I won't buy anything from you ever again.'	
4	Your friend telephones you and chats for a long time. You would like to finish the conversation.	'I'm ever so sorry, but I'm going to have to go: the cat's just been sick and the children are shouting for their tea. I'm really sorry, I hope you don't mind.'	
5	A meeting is being planned to arrange a Christmas party. The time suggested is not convenient for you.	'I'd like to come to the meeting, but unfortunately I won't be able to. Please would you give my apologies and ensure that I'm sent the minutes?'	
6	You live in a shared house. Someone plays loud music well into the night.	You bang on the wall, shouting: 'Will you stop that dreadful row, I'm sick to death of it.'	
7	Your partner/friend has left the bathroom in a disgusting mess	'I feel angry when you leave your clothes all over the floor, I'd like you to clear it up before the weekend'.	
8	You ask your friend to look after your dog for the weekend	You say: 'I know I can rely on you to look after Rover for me. I couldn't possibly not visit my Gran and there's no one else I could ask.'	
9	A friend has borrowed money from you several times and not repaid it. S/he asks again.	'Er, um, well actually . . . that's okay, I think. Um, how much would you like?'	
10	Your partner is obviously upset about something, but won't say what.	'What the hell's wrong with you, sitting there sulking all night?'	

HOW TO BEHAVE ASSERTIVELY

We have **needs**; we have **rights**; we have **desires**; and we have **expectations**. While these are not all the same things, assertive behaviour enables us to express them in an open and positive manner. Furthermore, by not suppressing them we are better able to distinguish between them and recognise and respect them in others. This makes dialogue and *appropriate* compromise possible.

The 4 cornerstones of assertiveness:



Other important aspects of assertiveness include:



- ★ Disclosing your feelings
- ★ Being clear
- ★ Being persistent
- ★ Empathising
- ★ Working towards a compromise

You may also find it helpful to “**set the scene**” so that you can be emotionally and mentally prepared.

OPEN POSTURE & GOOD EYE CONTACT Body Language

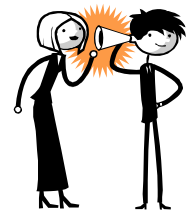
Perhaps 75 % of communication occurs at this level – try to make it match up to your verbal communication.

- Use direct and comfortable eye contact – this is open and honest
- Use confident gestures, not unnecessary ones that can distract or reveal anxiety
- Respect each other's body space
- Be careful how you use your voice
- Palm up gestures are more inviting and less aggressive than palm down and pointing gestures
- Holding your hands behind your back (the *at ease* army stance) can act to reassure you and suggests that you are without fear. (However, be aware that clasping your wrist or arm behind your back is a sign you are suppressing aggression).

DISCLOSING FEELINGS

Use 'I' statements – take responsibility for the feelings you are expressing, either positive or negative – express them honestly, without blaming other people for them. Use the 'I feel' format:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|
| ☆ | WHEN | Objectively describe the other person's behaviour |
| ☆ | THEN | Describe the effect of the behaviour on you |
| ☆ | I FEEL | Name an emotion. Do not accuse or blame. |
| ☆ | I PREFER | Describe the behaviour you want/prefer |



It may also be useful to state what will be the consequences of inaction but without resorting to threats or emotional blackmail.

Examples:

“You're so inconsiderate!” can be rephrased as

“WHEN you do not phone me when you say you will, (THEN) I imagine that something bad has happened to prevent you from calling. I FEEL scared and anxious. I WANT/I WOULD PREFER that you call when you say you will.

“You’re such a slob!” can be rephrased as “WHEN you don’t put things away after using them, (THEN) I end up doing it and I FEEL really resentful. WOULD YOU BE WILLING to help in keeping things in their proper storage places?”

You can practise the I FEEL format by rephrasing the following statements:

“I can never count on you to do what you tell me you will do.”

“You never listen to me when I’m talking to you.”

“Stop interrupting me.”

You can use ‘I’ statements in order to avoid using the aggressive ‘you’ form:

‘You’ statements (indirect and ineffective)	‘I’ statements
You make me so mad	I feel angry when you . . .
You don’t give a damn about me	I feel neglected when you avoid me
You don’t know what you are talking about	I feel convinced it is this way
You shut up	I feel annoyed when you call me names and make fun of me

If you are not comfortable with the ‘I feel’ statement you may find it preferable to use ‘I think...’, ‘I believe...’ or ‘I find...’, e.g. ‘I find it unacceptable when you pick your nose and flick it at me.’

BEING CLEAR

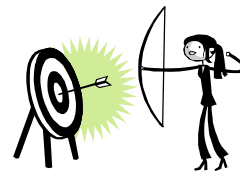
Be concise, be specific: you wish for something to happen or change – the person you are addressing needs to know *what it is* and *what steps* they need to take in order *to resolve* the discussion *before* they can honestly commit to a yes or a no answer.

SETTING THE SCENE

- Be prepared – clarify what you want to say and how you will say it – try to choose the place and time to meet and have a clear idea of what you want
- Challenge any negative thoughts you might have – instead of thinking ‘I’ll never be able to do it’, try ‘I’ll have a go at this and see how I get on’.
- Learn to think assertively – avoid words like *should*, *ought*, *must*. Replace these with *could*, *want to*, *can*.

STAYING WITH IT

Persist with your request or statement and resist being side-tracked as a result of feeling vulnerable or pressurized.



EMPATHISING

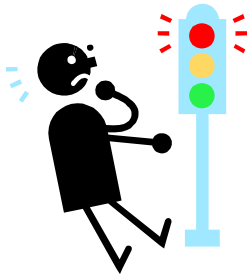
Verbally acknowledging the other person’s position or feelings, and demonstrating a genuine respect and understanding of their rights and point of view, will endear you to them and make it easier for them to empathise with you.

EXAMPLE: ‘I realise that you are trying to help me. I just don’t want to take the tablets any more. I’d really like to try without them.’

WORKING FOR A COMPROMISE

Avoid looking for victory – strive for compromise – both parties are then left feeling satisfied – in this way you can avoid stalemate.

Learning to say 'No!'



Some typical beliefs:

'Saying no means they'll think I'm selfish'

'I can't say no because I must always help other people'

'I couldn't possibly say 'no' – it would hurt their feelings'

CHALLENGING THE BELIEF

- This is the first step in saying no.
- Instead of 'Saying no means they'll think I'm selfish', try 'By looking after myself I'm more able to look after others'.
- Instead of saying 'I can't say no because I must always help other people', try 'I can choose to help others if I wish'.
- Instead of saying 'I couldn't possibly say no – it would hurt their feelings', try 'I'm not responsible for other people's feelings'.

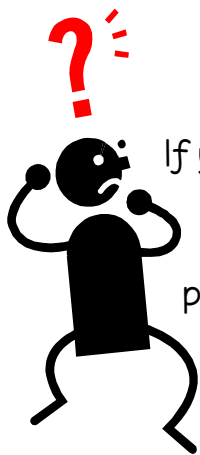
It is an unhealthy relationship which depends on one party constantly discounting their own desires to please the other. Remember – **'When we say no, we are refusing the request, not rejecting the person'**.

SETTING LIMITS

We need to establish our own boundaries – acknowledge and set your own. Decide your limits.

WAYS OF SAYING 'NO'

- If you make a refusal then use the word 'No' in your response
- Match up your body language to what you say.
- Be clear and definitive, express your feelings honestly and, if necessary, add a simple explanation . . . 'I feel guilty saying 'no'; however I've decided to spend the weekend with my partner.' Avoid a complex set of excuses, lies and justifications
- If necessary ask for further information – when do you want the printing to be ready?
- Maybe ask for time to consider a request and use the time to reflect, gather more information or ask for advice.
- Learning to say 'No' brings immense benefits, though you might feel guilty for a while – it does diminish in time, though.



If you still feel guilty about being assertive, list the good qualities exhibited by some of your favourite people, e.g. your favourite teacher at school, best friends, best boss, etc

Did you find things like these on your list: open, honest, relaxed, friendly and fair, but standing firm on important matters? These are all characteristics of assertive people. Adopting an assertive manner could help to put you on someone else's list of best ever friends, bosses, colleagues, teachers etc.

