

Assertive communication

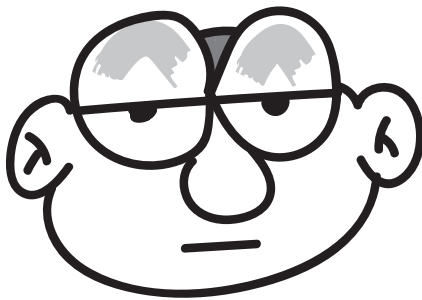
3 communication styles

There are three styles of communication usually identified in assertiveness training.

These are set out below with examples to help you recognise them in your own or other peoples' communication.

Aggressive

- Shouting or talking forcefully
- Not listening to what others are saying
- Interrupting people
- Snapping at people
- Being unwilling to compromise
- Getting what you want (no matter what)



Passive

- Talking quietly or timidly
- Apologising all the time
- Not saying how you feel
- Not asking for what you need
- Doing what other people want all the time
- Hiding how you feel

Assertive

- Stating things in a calm clear way
- Saying how you feel about things
- Listening to others
- Being prepared to compromise
- Meeting your own needs
- Taking others into account



What are the advantages of practising assertive communication?

1. People understand you or your situation and how you feel about it, and you understand them and theirs.
2. Your needs and wishes are more likely to be met, or your feelings acknowledged and understood.
3. A good compromise or a 'win-win' situation is more likely to be worked out between you and others.

What difference can that make?

- You boost your self-esteem
- You improve your relationships
- You feel more confident and relaxed
- You know that you did your best
- You have had respect for the rights of others
- You did not abuse the rights of others

Being assertive comes naturally to some people, while others need to prepare and practise for important conversations and develop their skills over time.

Eventually, it will become more natural to you. It will be your first response every time.

What stops us being assertive, and what makes us either passive or aggressive?

Here are some examples :

Passive	Agressive
Embarrassed to say how I really feel	Feel really angry with someone and want to shout at them
Worried that I will upset people if I say no	Enjoy being in charge and telling others what to do
Too shy or low in self-esteem to ask for help	Think that people don't listen unless I shout
Think others should know what I want without me having to ask	Just feel frustrated and take it out on others
Think others don't want to hear about me and my situation	Think my needs are more important than other people's
Think other people's needs are more important than my own	Think that everyone wants to hear about me and my situation

How to communicate assertively when asking for help or understanding.

1. Speak directly to the right person rather than to a third party.
2. Now might not be the right time if you are feeling angry or upset. Why not allow some time for emotions to settle down and arrange to meet at a time and place convenient to both of you?
3. Remain calm and keep it friendly. A good way to do this is to acknowledge how the other person is feeling. There are always two sides to a story.
4. Stick to the facts and avoid accusations. Remember, black and white rarely exists!
Saying, "When you do I feel"
sounds less accusing than, "You make me feel---"
5. Be clear.
 - State what exactly this person does or says which causes you concern or difficulty.
 - State exactly what you feel at these times.
 - State what you need instead.

Here is an example of what an assertive conversation might look like:

"Jane, there are a few things about this condition that I would like you to know and I think it would be helpful for us to talk. Perhaps we could meet up for a coffee tomorrow?"

During coffee the next day

"I know you are getting frustrated because I'm not going out very much just now, and that must be hard for you."

"When this condition gets on top of me, it can be really hard for me to feel able to talk to anyone. I've been feeling really down recently and have been finding it hard to be in a group of people."

"When you get impatient with me I feel even more useless than I have been feeling already, and I find it harder to pick myself up."

"What I need is for you to be patient with me and give me a bit of support."

"Perhaps we could plan to do something tomorrow – just the two of us?"