

ASSERTIVENESS

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Griet
**SKILL
SERIES**

ASSERTIVENESS



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"Assertiveness is the quality of being self-assured and confident without being aggressive. In the field of psychology and psychotherapy, it is a learnable skill and mode of communication."

Assertiveness is the ability to clearly communicate how we feel and what we need in a calm open style. It is needed in all areas of life from work situations, relationships with friends and family, to buying something in the supermarket. Assertiveness is the middle ground of communication between a passive style of relating and an aggressive style of relating.

If we struggle to assert ourselves we can easily be taken advantage of, and end up having too much responsibility for work tasks or family commitments as people become more likely to pile things on us.

If we pay attention to the way we feel when relating to others and make a commitment to try and change the way we approach situations, in time we can learn to be more assertive.



What Assertiveness Is

- ⊙ Respect for yourself and others.
- ⊙ Honestly expressing your thoughts, feelings and beliefs.
- ⊙ Effectively influencing, listening, and negotiating with others.

What Assertiveness Is Not

- ⊙ It is important to remember that assertiveness is not aggressiveness or selfishness.
- ⊙ Being assertive does not involve humiliating or abusing other people and their rights.
- ⊙ Being assertive does not mean violating the rights of others or gaining at the expense of someone else's loss.

Assertiveness

- ⊙ Is not the same as aggressive behavior?
- ⊙ Aggressive behavior enhances self at the expense of others.
- ⊙ Assertiveness produces positive outcomes for all; aggressive acts result in negative outcomes.
- ⊙ Attitude backed up by effective communication skills
- ⊙ Direct, frank statement of one's own goals/feelings
- ⊙ Willingness to address the interests of others
- ⊙ Spirit of mutual problem-solving
- ⊙ Preference for openness

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate your needs, feelings, opinions, and beliefs in an open and honest manner without violating the rights of others.

Elements of Assertive Behavior

- ⊙ **Knowledge:** When to act assertively
 - ⊙ Understanding the situation
- ⊙ **Behavioral:** Asserting in a constructive, not-hostile way
 - ⊙ Control emotions, watch for emotional signs
 - ⊙ Delivery can carry the day (or lose it)
- ⊙ **Evaluate:**
 - ⊙ Successful/unsuccessful
 - ⊙ Impact on relationships
 - ⊙ Need for diplomacy
 - ⊙ Respect for chain of command
 - ⊙ PICK YOUR BATTLES!!!!

Why is Assertiveness Important?

If you don't know how to be assertive you might experience:

- ⊙ Depression. From anger turned inward, a sense of being helpless, hopeless, with no control over your life.
- ⊙ Resentment. Anger at others for manipulating or taking advantage of you.
- ⊙ Frustration. How could be such a wimp? Why did I let someone victimize me?
- ⊙ Temper/Violence. If you can't express anger appropriately, it builds up until it blows.
- ⊙ Anxiety, which leads to avoidance.

- ⊙ Poor relationships of all kinds. Non assertive people are often unable to express emotions of any kind, negative or positive.
- ⊙ Physical complaints. Headaches, ulcers, etc.,
- ⊙ Parenting Problems. Kids are born knowing to test their limits.
- ⊙ Effective communication brings about the achievement of individual and/or shared goals.
- ⊙ Assertiveness increases your ability to reach these goals while maintaining your rights and dignity.

What will it do

- ⊙ Helps you become self-confident
- ⊙ Increases self-esteem
- ⊙ Gain respect of others
- ⊙ Improve communication skills
- ⊙ Improve decision-making ability

Why Must You be Assertive

- ⊙ Advocate for your people
- ⊙ Ensure you and your people's safety
- ⊙ Ensure mission accomplishment
- ⊙ Stand up for your personal beliefs
- ⊙ Do the "right thing" (ethical behavior)

How to be Assertive

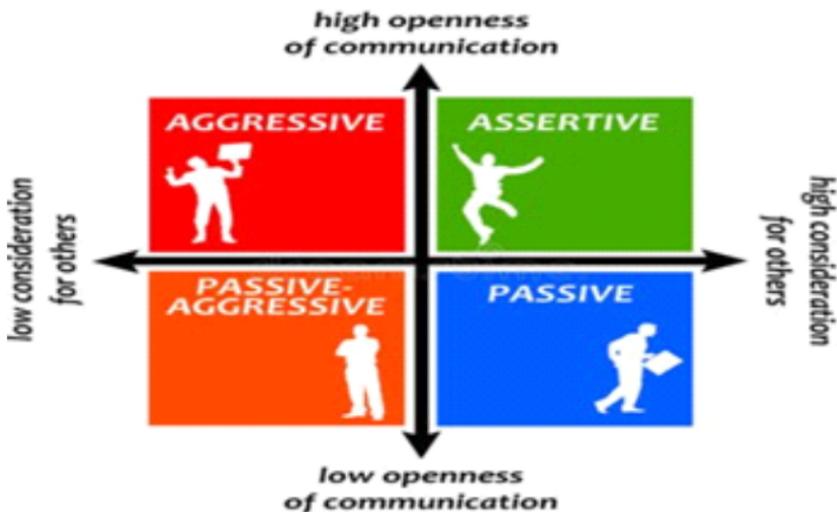
1. Be honest and direct about your feelings, needs and beliefs.
2. Express yourself firmly and directly to specific individuals.
3. Be reasonable in your requests
4. State your viewpoint without being hesitant or apologetic.
5. Be honest when giving or receiving feedback.
6. Learn to say "no" to unreasonable expectations.
7. Paraphrase what others have stated to you.
8. Recognize and respect the rights of those around you.
9. Use appropriate tone of voice.
10. Be aware of body posture/language
11. Maintain eye contact.
12. Use "I" statement to express self.
13. Don't let others impose their values/ideas on you
14. Encourage others to be clear and direct
15. Take ownership

Five steps to assertive behavior:

- ⊙ Listen
- ⊙ Show you understand
- ⊙ Say what you think and feel
- ⊙ Say exactly what you want to happen
- ⊙ Work out a joint solution

Some communication skills that will help you convey an assertive attitude.

- ⦿ Be aware of your facial expression.
- ⦿ Always make eye contact.
- ⦿ Pay attention to what others are saying and let them know that you are listening.
- ⦿ Use a pleasant but firm voice when communicating.
- ⦿ Be aware of your gestures and how you hold and present yourself.
- ⦿ Always ask questions when clarification is needed to avoid misunderstanding.
- ⦿ Look for always to solve the problem so all parties are satisfied.



Tips for being Assertive

- ⊙ State your reasons
- ⊙ Be direct
- ⊙ Do not over rely upon friendship
- ⊙ Do not take refusal personally
- ⊙ Be firm, but polite
- ⊙ Be honest about limitations

How to be effectively assertive:

- ⊙ Make clear direct requests. Don't invite the person to say no.
- ⊙ Example: "Will you please..." instead of "Why don't you..."
- ⊙ Use facts, not judgments.
- ⊙ Example: "Did you know that shirt has some sports?" instead of "You're not going out like that, are you?"
- ⊙ Express ownership of your thoughts.
- ⊙ Example: "I get angry when you break your promises." Instead of "you make me angry!"
- ⊙ Use assertive body language. Face the other person, be sure you have a pleasant but serious facial expression, keep your voice calm and soft.
- ⊙ Use "I" statements keep the focus on the problem you are having, not on accusing or blaming the other person.

Assertiveness Skills

➤ **Initiating Conversations**

- ⊙ **Be a Starter, seek opportunities to engage others**
- ⊙ Avoid being abrupt or pushy
- ⊙ Hello, I'm the pharmacist, Mary and I noticed you looking at the cough medications, can I help you select one?

➤ **Expressing your Opinion**

- ⊙ Being expressive lets people know where you stand.
- ⊙ It can demonstrate credibility-making you more persuasive.
- ⊙ Doctor, I believe a short acting benzodiazepine would be more appropriate in this patient due to their age.

➤ Making requests

⊙ **Key Point:**

- ⊙ Do not be afraid to ask for what you want.
- ⊙ I want you to make an appointment to see your doctor about your knee pain. The symptoms you have described are serious enough that they need to be assessed before we try to treat this with over the counter medications...
- ⊙ If you can speak to me with out being disrespectful we can continue this conversation.

- **Saying “no”**
- ⊙ **When people make requests that are not reasonable, just say no.**
- ⊙ **Set your personal limits**
 - ⊙ Personally and professionally
 - ⊙ Moral, ethical, preferences, legal, etc.
 - ⊙ Because your doctor is not available right now, I cannot refill your prescription. I must speak with her first. I can give you two tables until.....
- **Confrontation**
 - ⊙ Let the person know they are being aggressive and you do not like it.
 - ⊙ State how you feel about the behavior and what the results of the behavior will be.
 - ⊙ When you arrive late for your shift, I feel angry because it makes me late to pick my daughter up from the sitter.
 - ⊙ I would appreciate it if you would call when you are running late, so that I can try to make other arrangements for my daughter.



Tools for improving Assertativeness

Body Language: Pay attention to your body language. Making your body look small, slouching, hunching, not looking someone in the eye indicates that you may be passive. Making yourself look bigger, putting hands on hips or having a wide stance and narrowing eyes indicates that you or someone else is aggressive.

Tone of Voice: A lot of what we say is not what we say but how we say it. When trying to assert yourself speak slowly and clearly allowing yourself pauses and time to take a breath. Try to vary the pitch of your voice to maintain interest.

Allow Time: When we are caught off guard it is easy to respond in the way we usually would by saying 'yes' or 'ok your right' instantly. If someone asks you to do something or for an opinion and you are not prepared, you are entitled to ask for some time to think.

Value yourself: Quite often if we find it hard to assert ourselves it stems in an underlying belief that other people's needs, wants, opinions, deadlines are more important than your own. Challenge this assumption when you notice it. Recognize what your needs and values are – if you don't know them, no one else will be able to know them either.

Understand responsibility: You are only responsible for the way that you think, feel and behave. You are not responsible for someone else thoughts or feelings. So long as you are expressing yourself without being aggressive or exploiting another person you are not responsible for the way they respond to your assertiveness.

Language tools:

- ⊙ Use I need / think / feel / want, to convey messages.
- ⊙ Try to replace 'I must' and 'I should' with 'I could' or 'I might'.
- ⊙ Start by showing empathy with the other persons view point but then go back to what you need and why you need it.
- ⊙ Escalate you requirements – if your initial attempts at assertiveness do not work, repeat yourself until you become a broken record, if this does not work escalate by telling the person what you will do if they do not provide a satisfactory resolution.
- ⊙ Do not start a sentence with I'm sorry but, or do you mind if.
- ⊙ When preparing responses think of the event, your feelings, what you need to happen and the consequences.



Passive



Assertive



Aggressive

Being Interrupted: If you find that you are frequently interrupted, or there is one particular person who always does this to you. The next time this happens wait for the person to finish what they are saying when they interrupted you. Calmly and politely say something like "Just a minute please, I hadn't finished what I was saying" or "thank you for that I understand, but to go back to what I was saying as I hadn't finished" This is truly assertive as you are acknowledging the other persons point, but not allowing your own to be dismissed.

Where to get help

If you are still struggling with your assertiveness after trying some of the things above, or being assertive brings up painful experiences from your past, it may be helpful to talk things through with a qualified counsellor.

Test Your Assertiveness

- ⊙ Can you express negative feelings about other people and their behaviors without using abusive language?
- ⊙ Are you able to exercise and express your strengths?
- ⊙ Can you easily recognize and compliment other people's achievements?
- ⊙ Do you have the confidence to ask for what is rightfully yours?

- ⊙ Can you accept criticism without being defensive?
- ⊙ Do you feel comfortable accepting compliments?
- ⊙ Are you able to stand up for your rights?
- ⊙ Are you able to refuse unreasonable request from friends, family, or co-workers?
- ⊙ Can you comfortably start and carry on a conversation with others?
- ⊙ Do you ask for assistance when you need it?
- ⊙ A "yes" response to the questions indicates an assertive approach.

Are You Unassertive?

- ⊙ Do you feel guilty standing up for your fights or expressing your feelings?
- ⊙ Are you unable to recognize and acknowledge your strengths?
- ⊙ Are you uncomfortable with starting or carrying on a conversation?
- ⊙ Do you rarely stand up for yourself?
- ⊙ Do you have trouble saying "no" to people?
- ⊙ Are you unable to ask other people to perform reasonable requests for you?
- ⊙ Do you feel that you let other people take advantage of you?

A "yes" answer to any of the questions may indicate unassertive behavior.

Aggressiveness Is

- ⦿ Inappropriately expressing your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a way that violates other people's rights.
- ⦿ Achieving your goal by not allowing others the freedom to choose.
- ⦿ Completely disrespecting others whether it be in an active or passive method.





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