



ISLINGTON

# Assertiveness

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# Learning outcomes

*By the end of the course, delegates will:*

- Understand what is considered to be assertive communication and behaviour;
- Have learned a number of tools and methods to support assertiveness;
- Have reflected on their own level of assertiveness and considered ways in which they can improve their skills in this area



# Assertive communication and behaviours



# Assertive communication

- Communicating and acting assertively is an **interpersonal skill** that helps people to maintain healthy relationships, resolve interpersonal conflict, and prevent one's needs from being stifled or repressed.
- Assertiveness can be understood as a **relational style** that treads a middle path between being passive and being aggressive.



## 4 Benefits of Being Assertive

- Better communication
- Less stress
- More trust
- More confidence





## **Passive**

*Emotionally dishonest, indirect, inhibited, self-denying, blaming, apologetic.*

*“Others’ rights and needs take precedence over mine”*

## **Passive Aggressive**

*Emotionally dishonest, indirect. Self-denying at first. Self-enhancing at expense of others later.*

*“I subtly make clear that my rights and needs prevail”*

## **Aggressive**

*Inappropriately honest, direct, expressive, attacking, blaming, controlling, self-enhancing at expense of others.*

*“I boldly insist that my rights and needs prevail”*

## **Assertive**

*Appropriately honest, direct, self-enhancing, expressive, self-confident, empathic to emotions of all involved.*

*I clearly express that we both have rights and needs”*

# Definition of passive communication

## PASSIVE COMMUNICATOR

Fails to express his or her feelings or needs.

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION is a **style in which individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings**, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs. As a result, passive individuals do not respond overtly to hurtful or anger-inducing situations.

- . Lacks eye contact
- . Poor body posture
- . Inability to say “no”
- . Easy to get along



I don't know.

Whatever you think. You decide.

It doesn't matter to me.



# Definition of Passive Aggressive communication

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

### PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATOR

Aware of his/her needs but often struggles to voice them.

- . Mutters to himself rather than confront
- . Communicate with body language
- . Uses sarcasm
- . Avoids conversation

You did a great job.  
No one will probably notice that mistake.

That's fine with me,  
but don't be surprised if someone else gets mad.

Passive-aggressive behavior is a **pattern of indirectly expressing negative feelings instead of openly addressing them**. ... For example, someone who engages in passive-aggressive behavior might appear to agree — perhaps even enthusiastically — with another person's request.

# Definition of Aggressive communication

## AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATOR

Expressive but ignores others' feelings.

Aggressive communication is described as **expressing your feelings and opinions strongly and as they occur**. Verbal characteristics of aggressive communication (eg, shouting, yelling, demanding, commanding, blaming, being critical, or being verbally abusive).

- Issues commands
- Fails to listen
- Can lead and command respect to those close to him/her



It's all your fault!

We do it my way.

What you feel doesn't matter.

# Definition of Assertive communication

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

### ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATOR

Expresses his/her own needs, desires, ideas and feelings, while also considering the needs of others.

- . Owns actions without blaming
- . Honest
- . Does not fear nor avoid conflict
- . Level-headed



I hear what you're saying.

We are equally entitled to express ourselves respectfully to one another.

I realize I have choices in my life, and I consider my options.

[jeanillec.blogspot.com](http://jeanillec.blogspot.com)

Assertive communication means **being okay with saying exactly what you want**, but doing it in such a way that it doesn't hurt the other person's feelings. This might mean rejecting things you decide are not a good fit for you, but then explaining exactly why you rejected them.

# What's your predominant communication style?

	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Assertive</b>	<b>Aggressive</b>
Behaviour	Compliant, submissive, puts self down and praises others, non-committal.	Form but polite, respectful of both yours and their feelings.	Sarcastic, harsh, always right, superior, know it all, interrupts, critical.
Inner self talk	"You're right, I'm wrong"	"We both matter. We can work this out together"	"I'm right, you are wrong"
Internal belief	My opinion is never as important as someone else's.	People working together can achieve great things if they treat each other with respect.	My opinion and needs are more important than anyone else's.

# Know why you don't communicate

- We think we already had the conversation
- Don't have time to prepare
- Not sure how to approach
- Too focused on 'winning' the conversation
- No point – nothing will change
- Its not my problem
- It might ruin the relationship (further)
- Its too confrontational.
- Its against our natural response.



# Assertive behaviours

- The assertive communicator **shares and owns their ideas** but balances a **respect** for themselves and for others as well.
- There is an **open communication** when speaking to an assertive communicator. Other than using a **calm, clear tone of voice** they do not interrupt others but they can avoid being manipulated.
- They always stay **in control** of themselves; as a result they tend to earn respect from those around them. This circumstance allows growth as everyone is involved and open to different opinions and ideas.
- The good thing about the assertive communicator is that because they **own** their opinions and actions, they never resort to blaming.
- The assertive communication style maybe the most efficient style that would lead to **respectful, productive and long-term relationships** but bear in mind that most of us don't use a single communication style. We vary depending on the circumstances laid in front of us. Surviving in daily encounters may be attributed to your knowledge in the different communication styles.



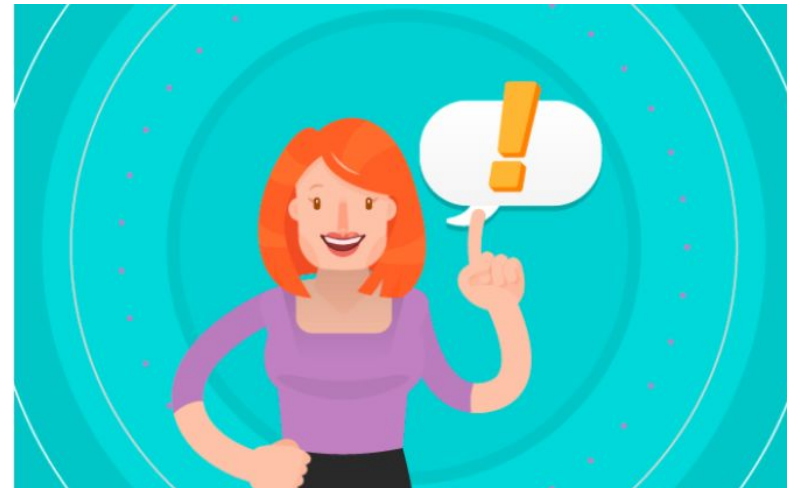
## Assertiveness tips

- Your needs, wants and rights are as important as anyone else's.
- It is fine to express what you want, so long as you show respect towards the rights of others.
- Express your thoughts and feelings calmly.
- Giving the silent treatment, yelling, threatening, and shaming are all great examples of what **not** to do.
- Take responsibility for your emotions and express them in a calm and factual manner.
- Try starting sentences with "I feel...." and plan what you're going to say.
- Know your wants and needs, and how to achieve them.

### Assertiveness Plan

When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_

I need to \_\_\_\_\_ and I want \_\_\_\_\_



# Four behavioural choices

- **Direct Aggression**

Bossy, arrogant, bulldozing, intolerant, opinionated, and overbearing

- **Indirect Aggression**

Sarcastic, deceiving, ambiguous, insinuating, manipulative, and guilt-inducing

- **Submissive**

Wailing, moaning, helpless, passive, indecisive, and apologetic

- **Assertive**

Direct, honest, accepting, responsible, and spontaneous





# Tools and resources



# Videos

- [Being Assertive video](#) (3.48)
- [Mindtools Assertiveness Video](#) (2.35)



# The 3 C's of assertive communication

- **Confident** – you believe in your ability to handle a situation
- **Clear** – the message you have is clear and easy to understand
- **Controlled** – you deliver the message in calm and controlled manner



# Assertive Communication Techniques (1)

## **"I" Statements**

Use "I want", "I need" or "I feel" to convey basic assertions and get your point across firmly. For example, "I feel strongly that we need to bring in a third party to mediate this disagreement."

## **Empathy**

Always try to recognize and understand how the other person views the situation. Then, after taking their point of view into consideration, express what you need from them.

## **Escalation**

If your first attempts at asserting yourself have been unsuccessful, then you may need to escalate the matter further. This means becoming firmer (though still polite and respectful) with the person who you are requesting help from, and may end in you telling them what you will do next if you still aren't satisfied, such as starting the disciplinary process.

## **Ask for More Time**

Sometimes, it's best not to say anything straight away. You might be too emotional or you might not know what it is that you want yet. If this is the case, be honest and tell the person that you need a few minutes to compose your thoughts.

# "I" Statements

- Part of being assertive involves the ability to appropriately express your needs and feelings.
- You can accomplish this by using "I" statements
- These indicate ownership, do not attribute blame, focuses on behaviour, identifies the effect of behaviour, is direct and honest, and contributes to the growth of your relationship with each other.

- **Strong "I" Statements Have Three Specific Elements:**

- Behaviour
- Feeling
- Tangible effect (consequence to you)

- **For Example:**

*"I feel frustrated when you are late for meetings. I don't like having to repeat information."*

# Assertive Communication Techniques (2)

## Change Your Verbs

Try using verbs that are more definite and emphatic when you communicate. This will help you to send a clear message and avoid "sugar-coating" your message so much that people are left confused by what it is that you want from them.

To do this, use verbs like "will" instead of "could" or "should," "want" instead of "need," or "choose to" instead of "have to."

For example:

- "I will be going on annual leave next week, so I will need someone to cover my workload."
- "I want to go on this training course because I believe that it will help me to progress in my role and my career."
- "I choose this option because I think it will prove to be more successful than the other options on the table."

## Be a Broken Record

Prepare the message that you want to convey ahead of time.

If, for instance, you can't take on any more work, be direct and say, "I cannot take on any more projects right now." If people still don't get the message, then keep restating your message using the same language, and don't relent. Eventually they will realize that you really mean what you're saying.

# Scripting technique

It can often be hard to know how to put your feelings across clearly and confidently to someone when you need to assert yourself. The **scripting technique** can help here. It allows you to prepare what you want to say in advance, using a four-pronged approach that describes:

**The event.** Tell the other person exactly how you see the situation or problem.

- *"Jack, you have not sent me the information I needed despite me telling you that I needed this by Friday". This means I am unable to complete the report for my manager on time"*
- **Your feelings.** Describe how you feel about the situation and express your emotions clearly.
- *"This frustrates me and makes me feel like you don't understand or appreciate how important it is to meet deadlines and to provide this key information"*

**Your needs.** Tell the other person exactly what you need from them so that they don't have to guess.

- *"I need you to prioritise obtaining this information and ensure that you meet deadlines in future"*

**The consequences.** Describe the positive impact that your request will have for the other person or the company if your needs are met successfully.

- *"If you do this, then senior management will see that we are able to manage their requests and will think highly of us as a team"*

# ALIGN

**A - Assess** the problem using ABC (Activating Event, Belief, Consequence)

**L - List** the problem objectively (who, what, when, where)

**I - I** have these concerns and feel.... (I statements)

**G – Get** their perspective

**N – Note** positive outcomes

The word "align" is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter 'i' has a small blue dot above it.

## Example

### Assess....

At a daily briefing with the team your manager (Louise) comes up with an idea, which you yourself had mentioned to her only 3 days ago. The problem was that she indicated that it was her idea. You are annoyed about this and want to tackle her after the briefing.

Apply the **L, I, G, N**

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the slide consisting of several overlapping, wavy bands of green in various shades, from light to dark.



## **Visualise:**

- Visualise a successful and assertive conversation where everything goes well.
- The more real you can make it – sights, sounds, smells – the greater the positive impact will be.

## **Develop assertive body language:**

- Strong eye contact
- An honest, genuine smile
- Shoulders back but relaxed
- When sitting, be straight and tall
- Gesture with your hands comfortably but not frequently (relax them at your sides when they are not needed)

While being assertive does not ensure you always get what you ask for, it does increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.

- **Be assertive but not aggressive** - You will not gain respect if you behave aggressively at work, which will hinder your ability to communicate effectively.
- **Prepare** - Visualize, note down, or discuss with someone you trust how you are going to manage a problematic conversation assertively.
- **Know your rights** - Take time to learn about what you are entitled to and what is acceptable.
- **Know your boundaries** - What are your limits when it comes to how many hours you work? While you may accept some late work, at what point does this become unacceptable?
- **Recognize how valuable you are** - Value yourself as a person and an employee. Consider your strengths at work and what you bring to the organization.

## Summary of Top Tips

- **Assess your style.** Do you voice your opinions or remain silent?...
- Practice saying **no**...
- **Rehearse** what you want to say. ...
- Keep **emotions** in check. ...
- Start **small**...
- Use **'I' statements** – a clear, clean statement of your experience of the situation or issue...
- Remain conscious of **body language**...
- Use direct **eye contact**..
- Speak in a **confident, positive and expectant** tone of voice...
- **Avoid arguing** in a conflict.



- [Positive Psychology - 10 Best Assertive Communication Worksheets and Techniques](#)
- [Psychology Tools – Assertiveness](#)
- Developing Assertiveness Skills for Health and Social Care Professionals – Annie Phillips, 2013
- Practical Assertiveness for Professionals in Health Care: Skills Key to Personal Effectiveness with Patients, Families, and Coworkers – Wendy Leebov, 2012
- [Community Care Article - How to Be Assertive](#)
- [Mindtools - Assertiveness](#)

## Going forwards...making changes.....

### **Some things for you to think about.....**

- What type of communication style do you think you currently adopt?
- What struck a chord with you today?
- What is a key point you are going to takeaway?
- Make a note of one thing that you are going to do differently or try as a result of the workshop today





Thank You!



GOODBYE