

# Developing Your Assertiveness

Some people are naturally more assertive than others. If your disposition tends more towards being either passive or aggressive, you need to work on the following skills to develop your assertiveness.

## Value yourself and your rights

- Understand that your rights, thoughts, feelings, needs and desires are just as important as everyone else's.
- But remember they are not more important than anyone else's, either.
- Recognize your rights and protect them.
- Believe you deserve to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- Stop apologizing for everything.

## Identify your needs and wants, and ask for them to be satisfied

- Don't wait for someone to recognize what you need (you might wait forever!)
- Understand that to perform to your full potential, your needs must be met.
- Find ways to get your needs met without sacrificing others' needs in the process.

## Acknowledge that people are responsible for their own behavior

- Don't make the mistake of accepting responsibility for the how people react to your assertive statements (e.g. anger, resentment). You can only control yourself.
- As long as you are not violating someone else's needs, then you have the right to say or do what you want.

## Express negative thoughts and feelings in a healthy and positive manner

- Allow yourself to be angry, but always be respectful.
- Do say what's on your mind, but do it in a way that protects the other person's feelings.
- Control your emotions.
- Stand up for yourself and confront people who challenge you and/or your rights.

## Receive criticism and compliments positively

- Accept compliments graciously.
- Allow yourself to make mistakes and ask for help.
- Accept feedback positively – be prepared to say you don't agree but do not get defensive or angry.

## Learn to say "No" when you need to. This is the granddaddy of assertiveness!

- Know your limits and what will cause you to feel taken advantage of.
- Know that you can't do everything or please everyone and learn to be OK with that.
- Go with what is right for you.
- Suggest an alternative for a win-win solution.

# Assertive Communication Techniques

There are a variety of ways to communicate assertively. By understanding how to be assertive, you can quickly adapt these techniques to any situation you are facing.

## I statements

- ✓ Use "I want.", "I need." or "I feel." to convey basic assertions.
- ✓ I feel strongly that we need to bring in a third party to mediate this disagreement.

## Empathic Assertion

- ✓ First, recognize how the other person views the situation:
  - I understand you are having trouble working with Arlene.
- ✓ Then, express what you need:
  - ...however, this project needs to be completed by Friday. Let's all sit down and come up with a plan to get it done.

## Escalating Assertion

- ✓ This type of assertiveness is necessary when your first attempts are not successful in getting your needs met.
- ✓ The technique involves getting more and more firm as time goes on. It may end in you telling the person what you will do next if you do not receive satisfaction. Remember though, regardless of the consequences you give, you may not get what you want in the end.
  - John, this is the third time this week I've had to speak to you about arriving late. If you are late one more time this month, I will activate the disciplinary process.

## Ask for More Time

- ✓ Sometimes, you just need to put off saying anything. You might be too emotional or you might really not know what you want. Be honest and tell the person you need a few minutes to compose your thoughts.
  - Dave, your request has caught me off guard. I'll get back to you within the half hour.

## Change Your Verbs

- ✓ Use 'won't' instead of 'can't'
- ✓ Use 'want' instead of 'need'
- ✓ Use 'choose to' instead of 'have to'
- ✓ Use 'could' instead of 'should'.

## Broken Record

- ✓ Prepare ahead of time the message you want to convey:
  - I cannot take on any more projects right now.
- ✓ During the conversation, keep restating your message using the same language over and over again. Don't relent. Eventually the person is likely to realize that you really mean what you are saying.