

Assertiveness Skills

[About Assertiveness](#) ?He who trims himself to suit everyone will soon whittle himself away.?

?Raymond Hull? Those who have been conditioned to please may envy those who can effortlessly ask for what they want and need. Those who have no problem asking for what they want do not usually know that there are others around them bending over backwards to please them. If you are one of those people who worry about pleasing or offending others to the detriment of your own needs it may be time to think of ways to readdress your fears, build up your confidence and learn to say what you want. It's no good feeling resentful when others take advantage of you if you are allowing them to. They may not even be aware of your feelings if you do not express them. What is assertiveness? Being assertive is the art of getting understood by others by being neither aggressive nor passive, but by stating your needs clearly and effectively. Assertiveness is: Being able to stand up for yourself Making sure your opinions and feelings are considered Not letting other people always get their way A way of communicating and behaving with others that helps people to become more confident and aware of themselves A skill that can be learnt Assertiveness is not: Aggressiveness, you can be assertive without being forceful or rude Almost everyone, at some time will find themselves in situations where they find it difficult to express themselves clearly. Examples might be: Dealing with angry people Communicating our true feelings to friends and family Dealing with unhelpful shop assistants, call centres etc. Often situations such as these may be dealt with by holding in feelings and not expressing them, or getting angry or simply giving in whilst still holding resentment. This usually leaves a person unhappy, with a feeling of not being in control and the problem remains unresolved. When these responses to difficult situations become a habit it can lead to a loss of confidence which compounds the problem. [Why be Assertive?](#) ?Assertiveness is not what you do, it's who you are!?

?Shakti Gawain? Not knowing how to be assertive can cause you to feel: Depressed as a result of unexpressed anger Angry at others for manipulating or taking advantage you Helpless Hopeless That you have no control over your life Resentful Frustrated Lonely You may start to feel despondent and angry with yourself for being weak. You may ask yourself why did I let someone victimise me? You may find your self at time blowing up with rage, repressed feelings can build up inside us. Anxiety about situations can lead to avoidance. It is worth learning to feel confident about being assertive in order to move forward and enjoy more that life has to offer. Being non-assertive can lead to poor relationships at home and a work. Non-assertive people can find it difficult to express emotions of any kind, negative OR positive. Relationships that work usually consist of two people that can tell each other what they want and need and how the other person affects them. Other people cannot read your mind. Learning to be assertive can lead to more fulfilling relationships at home and at work. Not being able to express your feelings can lead to physical complaints like headaches, ulcers, and high blood pressure. Stress causes all kinds of complaints, and learning to be assertive can relieve stress and anxiety. ; [How to be Assertive?](#) Learn to Be Assertive In a Positive Way You could break this down into four stages 1. Change the way you react to situations: You need to change the way in which you see assertive behaviour. Work on developing a belief system which allows you to assert yourself. This may take some work. It means: Giving yourself permission to be angry Learning to say ?No? Feeling it is OK to ask for help Not beating yourself up when you make mistakes Basically it is all bout building self confidence and self esteem. Learning to be assertive means working in these areas too. There are [training courses like this one in Brighton](#) in the UK ;that will cover both assertiveness and self confidence. 2. Learn some Assertiveness Skills. You could attend a course like [this training course](#) run by silicon beach training. Or you could study the ;[assertiveness techniques](#) listed on this site. 3. ; Use good communication skills Learn to use your body language and control your feelings and reactions. Maintain direct eye contact Keep your posture open and relaxed Be sure your facial expression agrees with the message Keep a level, well-modulated tone of voice Select an appropriate time to be assertive 4. Practice You won?t learn how to become a more assertive person just by reading, you will need to practice. You can practice on your friends and family, choose someone understanding and it is best to tell them what you are doing first! Ask for feedback on how you?re doing. In the long run, communicating honestly can help your relationships. [When to be Assertive?](#)

It is easier to be assertive in some situations than in others. With your partner or you boss you may find it difficult to ask for something for fear of making them angry or upset. It is much easier to risk upsetting a stranger, a shop assistant or call service operator. However the more important the relationship is to you, the more important it is to be assertive. Assertiveness leads to increased respect from others; they will begin to see you as a person who respects him/herself, a worthwhile person. Ultimately this makes you easier to live with! In any situation, however it is important to consider weather you can live with the consequences of your assertive actions. There are people who will almost always react negatively to assertive people. A dictatorial and aggressive boss may be known for being aggressive towards any request that is not immediately to his/her benefit. You could risk loosing your job if you choose an assertive stance. You could decide to leave your job, but if this is not an option you will need to learn alternative stress management techniques. If you have been non-assertive for a very long time, those around you are going to be in for a bit of a shock when you change your behaviour. They may be confused or angry. It may be better to discuss what you are trying to do and why you are trying to do it before practising being assertive with them. It is important to remain compassionate; remember being assertive is not about always getting your own way.

Choose your moment carefully and don?t be accusatory, focus on the ways a situation makes you feel and express this rather than blaming the other person for the need to change your behaviour. Then tell them how you mean to deal with those feelings, for example: ?When we do this or that, I feel frustrated or overwhelmed; I don?t feel I have the space to express my point of view. I am afraid to upset you and then I resent the fact that my feelings have been overlooked even though I know I haven?t expressed them. So what I need to do in future is ask you to stop and let me express

myself, or to give me time to think before giving you an honest response.?

A sound reasonable doesn't it?

Assertiveness Techniques

Being assertive and building your self confidence is not really difficult.

Nor does it mean becoming excessively dominant. Becoming assertive means learning to:

Resist the pressure and dominance of

excessively dominant people

Stand up to bullies

Have more control in situations that are important

First let's look at the

character traits of the overly controlling and dominant.

Most people are not naturally assertive. Excessively dominant people are driven by their personality and usually by their insecurities. It is these overbearing and dictatorial personalities that present most problems for those trying to learn to

improve their own reasonable levels of assertiveness. Excessively dominant people are usually bullies, they need to dominate others because they are too insecure to allow others any amount of control even if it would be reasonable to do so. It is usually deeply ingrained in their personalities, caused by events from their past. Their inability to allow others to question them makes it unlikely that they will change. It is not your job to try and change them, what you need to do is learn to change yourself, so that you can retain your self respect and develop ways to have your needs considered.

Non assertive people will usually give in to the excessively dominant, for fear of aggression or disapproval, unfortunately this simple reinforces the behaviour of the bully. He/She is getting what they want - total compliance. They have been practicing this behaviour for a long time, probably since childhood and found that it works for them. They get what they want, they satisfy their ego, and they take total control. They often surround themselves by people who will not question them because they are afraid of judgment, scrutiny, and interference. As these people have learned to behave like this, it is not something that they can easily control. One of the hardest things for the non assertive person to do, but a very important step is to feel sympathy for the bully! Learning to be assertive is not leaning to be a bully; it is learning to resist the pressure and dominance of bullies.

Learning the techniques below is a good start. If you persevere and succeed you will definitely improve your self esteem and feel better about yourself.

You must learn to choose when to be assertive, non-assertiveness is appropriate in many situations. You may need to be assertive to be able to defend yourself, and make choices. It is about taking control of your own life, not controlling others. Techniques and methods for developing

self-confidence and more assertive behaviour

Be prepared

If you about to discuss something that is important to you have as many facts

as you can at hand before you start any discussion. Bullies usually dominate through force and reputation. State the facts clearly and do not deviate.

Dominant people will often try and throw you by bringing irrelevant criticism into a discussion, do not be tempted to defend yourself, just bring the conversation back around, say something like, 'I would like to discuss the point in hand,' and repeat your request or of point of view. If possible prepare your facts, do your research, then you will be able to make a firm case, and be perceived as being someone who is organised and firm.

Anticipate other people's behaviour and prepare your responses

Think about how the discussion might go role-play in your mind how things are

likely to happen. Think about what the other person might say and prepare responses. You will be more confident if you are prepared then being assertive will come more naturally to you. Prepare good open questions. Using good open questions will expose any flaws in other

people's arguments. Asking good questions is the most reliable way of keeping a discussion on track. They can be used to diffuse an aggressor or steer the discussion back to the point in question if the other person digresses into a personal attack. Ask what evidence someone has to back up their viewpoint. Ask if they have consulted anyone else. Ask them if they have any alternatives. If the discussion is personal in nature, you may wish to ask, how do you think that makes me feel? If your questions are ignored, don't be put off, just repeat or rephrase it. Practice new reactions to facing aggressiveness

There are ways in which you can help yourself by relearning ways of reacting to dominant people:

You can learn

new and more effective ways that can give you more time to compose your response; dominant people can fire their opinions at you like rapid machine gun fire, causing you to lose control

You can learn to be firm and repeat your message and not be knocked off course.

An easy

way to start is simply by visualising yourself being firmer, asking clearly for what you want/need, asking clear precise questions, and presenting well-prepared argument supported with facts.

You may need to learn to give yourself time, and ask for it. Don't be bulldozed into giving an

instant response, say:

'I need time to consider what you have said?'

'I'm not sure about that?'

'I need more time to

make a decision?'

'I don't want to be rushed?'

'OK let me think about that and I'll get back to you?'

The fear of being

shouted at can be a real discouragement to standing up for yourself. Just think, what is the worst that can happen if someone shouts? Now think, what's the worst that can happen if I allow people to walk all over me? It could be that as a child you learned to avoid confrontation and arguments.

You may associate shouting with bad memories or feelings. The truth is when someone shouts at you are not physically hurt, it is your own reaction to the shouting that causes you discomfort and anxiety. You can control your own feelings and reactions with practice. Breathe deeply, relax and watch the other person lose their temper, and then respond calmly. Their temper is their problem you don't need to make it yours. Practice new

reactions in yourself to resist, rather than cave in, for fear that someone might shout at you or have a tantrum. If you have a good friend who won't mind, you could ask them to shout at you and you can practice staying calm, don't let the volume of someone's voice frighten you, say to yourself

(not aloud) 'you do not frighten me?' and 'poor you, look how your emotions control you?'

Feel sorry for bullies

Don't forget being

non-assertive is ok. There is a time and a place for assertiveness. Those who are overly assertive have the real problems. Feeling sorry for someone who is threatening you can give you the edge. Stop you from being afraid and help to respond calmly and with thought.

About the Author

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