

Assertiveness Skills for Women

Assertiveness Skills for Women Are you comfortable stating your opinion, even if the rest of your work team disagrees? When you leave the team meeting, do you regret that you did not share more of your ideas? Asserting yourself is not easy. One reason is that some people see assertiveness as a negative behavior. Perhaps they confuse assertiveness with aggressiveness. Assertiveness is especially difficult for women. Many of us are taught to be agreeable, be polite, and make those around us at ease. Putting those thoughts together you can see why assertive behavior is difficult for many women. Let's take a closer look, and I'll show you how to be assertive and be comfortable with yourself.

By Definition Even though people interchange the terms assertiveness and aggressiveness, there is a difference. Here are the definitions from Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary. assertive \As*sert"ive\, a. Positive; affirming confidently; affirmative; peremptory. In a confident and assertive form. --Glanvill. As*sert"ive*ly, adv. -- As*sert"ive*ness, n. Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, (c) 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc. aggressive \Ag*gres"sive\, a. [Cf. F. agressif.] Tending or disposed to aggress; characterized by aggression; making assaults; unjustly attacking; as, an aggressive policy, war, person, nation. -- Ag*gres"sive*ly, adv. -- Ag*gres"sive*ness, n. Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, (c) 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc.

Passiveness: We don't feel that we have the right to be heard. We are uncomfortable expressing ourselves. We may not like the response we will get. We willing back down easily to avoid conflict.

Assertiveness: We are comfortable to express what we think, feel and want. We can express our view and needs without stepping on others, and without anger or attack. We aim for a solution that is a win for all.

Aggressiveness: We stand up for ourselves, even at the expense of others. We use tactics such as loud talking, sarcasm, desk pounding and forcefulness to get our way.

Real Life Step back, and think of where you fall on the continuum in most situations. Are you the timid child (passive), rational adult (assertive), or the aggressor (aggressive)? If you want to feel good about yourself, gain respect or others, and achieve high productivity in your life, aim to be in the middle of the continuum. Assertive individuals try to understand others, and acknowledge the value others bring. In a conflict, assertive people actively listen, explain themselves clearly, and invite the others to work together toward a solution. Assertive people realize they want to have a long-term relationship with people. In order to do so, they do not create barriers with anger or humiliation. Instead they use constructive feedback. Here is an example of constructive feedback. Mike, when you say that my idea is ludicrous, I feel frustrated because I do not think you have fully reviewed my team's proposal. Pause, wait for feedback. I would like the opportunity for my team to present it to you, so you can express your objections and we can address your concerns, because we think the plan benefits both our teams by reducing paperwork, and staffing expenses. What do you think?

Analysis By responding to Mike in an assertive way, there is a good chance he will mirror your behavior. You were able to get your points across without anger or humiliation. You stayed focused on the team benefits. Had you used passive behavior, Mike would have shot your proposal down, without a comment from you. If you matched his aggressive behavior and name calling, you may still be arguing now.

Using Assertiveness for Success The Result True, sometimes women find it more difficult to be assertive. Don't allow this to be an issue for you. Practice positive self-talk, and assertive behavior; leave those old habits behind. Ask a trusted associate to role-play with you, if that helps. At first, it may be tough, but you can do it. Remember, you'll feel better about yourself and those around you when you practice assertive behavior. Think Win-Win. What is best for you and the team? When speaking, include statements that illustrate the benefits to the team. Respect your team members. Share your knowledge and ideas with the team. Point out potential problems in a constructive way. Enable processes that move the team toward its goals.

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