



Do you want to be more assertive and to say No with confidence?

Everyone can be assertive, even quiet or shy people. You don't have to be the loudest person in the room. Assertive people have a measured and controlled approach - they chose the right behaviour for the right situation.

Truly assertive people get the simple things right. Here are some practical tips that can really help

Thinking before you speak

We've all had times when we've said something which we've regretted immediately afterwards. If you need to be assertive, the worst thing to do is rush in and say the wrong thing. If you find yourself in a situation where assertiveness is called for, stop and pause for thought – make sure you assess your situation fully before you respond. There's always time to do this if you have the discipline and confidence to create it.

Tone of voice

Your tone of voice will make a big difference to your level of assertiveness. 38% of the way your message is perceived comes from the tone of your voice. Try to sound enthusiastic and positive. People will respond more positively to you if they see you as a positive and interesting person. Don't sound monotone. People will lose interest in you quickly.

Speed of delivery

How fast do you talk? Assertive people avoid any chance of distracting the other person; they talk at a measured pace. One way to control your speed is to take deep breaths. Taking a few long deep breaths if you feel 'wound up' or 'panicky' will help you to feel calmer and to control the pace of your message. Sounding calm when you talk makes you sound more assertive and gives the person a better chance to assimilate your message.

Saying No

Give yourself time; very rarely is it not possible to give yourself time to think. You only need a couple of minutes. Only then should you say Yes or No to the request. Think about the consequences of saying Yes before you give your answer. Which of *your* priorities will suffer as a result? Then, if you decide it's a No, confidently and assertively explain the reasons why you can't do it. Use exactly the same technique if it's your boss asking you to do something. If you're a 'serial' Yes person, you'll become a magnet for people who want things done. People who say No when appropriate are respected more for it.

Being interrupted

Do you find that people don't always listen to your opinions and that some people interrupt you before you've finished speaking? If someone interrupts you while you're speaking, you've got a great opportunity to show your assertiveness. Stop speaking, wait for them to finish interrupting you, pause and then say something along the lines of 'Just a minute please, I haven't finished yet'.

Positive thinking

How you think will make a huge difference to your ability to be assertiveness. If you tell yourself that you're nervous, afraid or angry, your brain will start a chain reaction to set up behaviour that supports your belief. To overcome this and be more assertive, tell yourself that you are strong, safe and capable. Don't use negative or aggressive language when you do this. For example if you say to yourself 'I am not angry' your brain will pick up on the word angry. Instead, try saying something positive to

yourself for example 'I am confident.' Practise regularly and you'll be amazed at how assertive you'll become.

Using 'I' language

Some people find it difficult to be assertive and not to sound aggressive. You can often sound bossy or patronising when using statements that start with 'you'. For example, 'You should do that' or 'You must do this'. Non-assertive people often start their sentences with 'Don't you think ...' Try changing the way you start sentences by using 'I'. For example; 'I appreciate how you feel and this is how I feel'. Using 'I' language is especially useful when expressing negative feelings. It helps you to focus your anger and therefore to act with more assertiveness.

Body Language

Do you cross your arms? Avoid eye contact? Clench your fists? These are some of the actions that could give the wrong message across. Remember, your body communicates 55% of your message. To look and act more assertively, try to limit your hand movements to soft and flowing movements to support your words. Try to retain eye contact. Try to be on the same physical level as the other person. For example if they stand up, don't remain seated. All these things will go a long way to helping you to look and act more assertively.

Preparation

Truly assertive people think carefully about what they are going to say before they say it. They start by working out what they want to achieve from the discussion. If you don't know this, how can you possibly achieve it? Once you know your objective, you can prepare a plan. Using facts to back up your opinion rather conjecture or judgement will send the message that you mean business. People can't argument with fact. Think also about the natural communication and conflict style of the other person and try to adapt your style to match (see our questionnaires page to learn more about this <http://www.think-confidence.com/questionnaires.html>)

Listening

It's all very well speaking up confidently but don't forget that truly assertive people are good listeners too. If the other person doesn't think you're listening to them, you'll really struggle to influence them assertively; they just won't 'buy it' because they'll go away thinking you don't care or just aren't interested. Remain flexible too; once you've heard what the other person has to say, be prepared to change your viewpoint if you think it necessary.

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