

Assertive communication

Assertiveness may be defined as behaviour that helps us to communicate clearly and confidently our **NEEDS, WANTS AND FEELINGS** while respecting the rights of others.

It is an alternative to passive, aggressive and manipulative behaviour.

Three ways people relate to each other

Passive (Felling as if you aren't important enough to be heard, people usually take advantage of you and that your feelings don't matter)

Assertive (Expressing what you think, feel, how you see the situation and what you would like to see happen)

Aggressive (You may feel like your feelings and views don't count, This is what you believe and it is stupid to believe any different and this is what I feel and any other feelings don't matter)

Take note

Everyone is different, therefore we perceive, think and behave differently.

Benefits of being assertive

- Control over oneself
- Greater self-confidence, less insecurity/vulnerability
- Better interpersonal relationships
- Helps interacting parties reach their goals and satisfy their needs
- Increased competence/effectiveness when interacting with others

Change the World

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Assertiveness

How to be more assertive

To communicate thoughts, feelings, needs and opinions assertively, you need to choose words that are direct, honest, appropriate and respectful.

- Identify your personal **rights, wants and needs**.
- **Identify how you feel** about a particular situation ("I feel angry", "I feel embarrassed". "I feel like feel...")
- Express your thoughts, feelings and opinions using '**I-statements**' rather than 'you statements'. In this way we own our own feelings and opinions rather than blaming/evaluating others ("I feel hurt" rather than "You hurt me" or "You are inconsiderate.")
- Use **factual descriptions** instead of judgements or exaggerations.
- Connect your feeling statement with some **specific behaviour** in the other person ("I felt hurt when you left without saying goodbye," rather than "I felt hurt because you were so inconsiderate.")

Assertiveness recipe

1. Identify the behaviour
2. Identify how you feel about it and why
3. Identify your needs, wants and preferences

★ For example:

"When you (persons specific behaviour)...I feel (add in your feelings like angry, sad, hurt)...because (give your reason)...and I would rather (state your needs, wants/ preferences)".

Assertiveness tips

- **Be direct** – deliver your message to the person for whom it was intended.. Express your request directly in one or two easy to understand questions.
- **Try not to make assumptions** about what the other person is thinking or feeling, about what their motives are, or about their reaction.. Check things out with them first.
- **Avoid sarcasm, character assassination or absolutes** (avoid using words like "You never...", "you always...", "you constantly...", etc.) and avoid labelling the person (e.g. "You are a lazy, useless person").
- **Avoid statements beginning with "Why...", or "You..."** This may put the other person on the defensive.
- **Ask for feedback:** "Am I being clear?" or "How do you see this situation?" This helps correct any misperceptions and helps others realise that you are open to communication and are expressing an opinion or feeling rather than a demand.

Conflict

- Is a natural part/experience of life
- It can provide opportunities to personally grow/learn
- It has the potential to negatively affect an individual;/relationship if one does not knowhow to handle/deal with it effectively
- Everyone experiences/deals with conflict differently
- It is usually viewed as a struggle/ disagreement between two parties with different goal, resources and interferences from additional parties
- Difference in opinion, values and norms
- It can occur between an individuals, two parties, teams/organisations

Positive aspects of conflict

1. People are given the chance to express their concerns, opinions and feelings
2. It can bring about positive change that may be needed
3. It is seen as a survival strategy
4. It can make relationships stronger
5. It can bring about a sense of achievement/team work once resolved

Negative aspects of conflict

1. It can include personal attacks, blaming and judging
2. It has the ability to leave mental, physical, and emotional scars
3. It can become the only perceived way to communicate ones needs/for one to feel as if they are heard

How to deal with constructive criticism

- Avoid responding with hostility or defensiveness.
- Listen without interruption and ensure that you fully understand the criticism.
- Restate the criticism objectively.
- Probe for more understanding.
- State your own opinions, saying where you agree and/or disagree with the other person. Use self-disclosure
- Make suggestions as to how the problems can be resolved and discuss these. .

Available Resources (Nelson Mandela University)

South Campus: **041 504 2511**
North Campus: **041 504 3222**
Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1106**
Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3854**
George Campus: **044 801 5047**

In case of an emergency, please use the following numbers for assistance:

Protection Services: **041 504 2009 or 041 504 3483**
Suicide Emergency Line: **0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 for a call back**
Life Line: **0861 322 322** (Counselling available 24/7)
SA Anxiety Group 24-hour helpline: **0800 12 13 14**

Note: Student Counselling services are confidential, free of charge to registered Mandela students and offered by qualified counsellors and psychologists.