

Assertiveness

Do you experience frustration over how other people treat you? Do people take advantage of you? Do you end up paying more than your share of an expense? Do other people use your things without asking, assuming you won't mind? Do you say nothing and internalize your anger?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, perhaps you need to take a look at your *assertiveness*. Why? Unhappiness, frustration, and anger often accompany a lack of assertiveness. Being assertive can serve us well in many situations: at work, at home, as customers, on vacation, any situation at all!

What is Assertiveness?

Acting in an assertive manner is the ability to express yourself and your rights without violating the rights of others. Conversely, acting in an aggressive manner means getting what you want while violating the rights of others.

Being assertive allows you to say what you want to say in a healthy, positive way. If you are assertive, you are more likely to resolve conflicts successfully and enjoy healthy, happy relationships. Assertiveness gives a strong sense of self-confidence. While others might not like seeing you stand up for yourself, especially if they have been able to take advantage of you in the past, you will be happier with your role in your relationships.

What You Can Do

Observe your own behavior and keep track of assertiveness. Are you asserting yourself adequately? Are you satisfied with your role in relationships? Assess how you feel about yourself and your behavior. Make a log or diary for a week. Be honest with yourself!

Imagine yourself handling situations differently. Visualize yourself dealing effectively with a variety of situations. Be assertive, but be as much of your "natural self" as you can. Repeat this often until you

can imagine a comfortable and effective style for yourself.

Observe an effective model. Watch someone who handles situations well. Observe their behaviors and style. If the model is a friend, discuss with them their approach and the consequences.



Give it a try. Find a trusted friend and role play. Get some practice saying "no", "I have an idea," or "that doesn't work for me." The more you practice, the greater your confidence. Have your role play partner play different roles and give you feedback.

Conflict Resolution

The following are different approaches to resolving conflict. While all are appropriate for certain conflicts, the key is using the best strategy for the situation at hand.

- **Avoidance** - This is dodging the situation or person. It works well for a cooling off period, but is not helpful as a standard for how you may solve conflict.
- **Competition** - Seeing who can win. This works well for sports teams, but seeing how many people you can "get on your side" is not helpful in an argument.
- **Compromise** - Both parties get something, but neither party gets all of what they want. This is the most highly used and effective method of resolution. The key for success is knowing when to compromise and when to stand firm.
- **Collaboration** - Both parties agree to work together to "create" a solution that is workable for both. In some cases, the end result is even better than either party's original suggestion.

