



Standing Up For Yourself – Being Assertive

Assertiveness simply means expressing your thoughts, feelings and opinions in a manner that is direct but respectful of the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others. Think of assertiveness as being on a continuum with passivity on the one extreme and aggressiveness on the other extreme. In your interactions with others, you could be passive (i.e., suppressing your own needs or thoughts without saying something) or aggressive (i.e., forcing your point of view with disregard for their feelings or point of view) or clearly standing up for your rights and needs without being hurtful. That's being assertive.

If you are assertive you will create an atmosphere of trust and goodwill around you and you will gain the respect and genuine affection of others. This means dealing with problems openly, giving and receiving constructive feedback, and dealing with conflict directly and non-defensively. Being assertive feels good and is more likely to lead to more effective and productive interactions at home and work. When you are assertive you treat others fairly, are positive in your approach, and stand up for yourself. Here are a few key points to assist being assertive.

1. Recognize yourself as an equal with others. You deserve the same respect as everyone.
2. Recognize that protecting your rights is your responsibility. You need to stand up for yourself.
3. Always acknowledge and respect the rights and needs of others. Show that you care by listening to them and using empathy to let others know you've heard them and understand their position.
4. You are only responsible for your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and you are not responsible for other's feelings. This does not give you the right to hurt others. If you act with good intent, act fairly, and act responsibly then the other person's reaction is their responsibility.
5. Looking after yourself does not mean you are selfish. Looking after your needs is a key factor in your health and personal resilience.
6. Be comfortable saying "No". It is most often our own worries that stop us from saying no in situations where we need to stand up for ourselves. If you are not sure how to handle a situation, try to buy some time by asking if you can think about it and make a decision at a later point in time. Saying "No" does not mean that you are rejecting a person but only refusing a request to do something.
7. The following represent assertive interactions:
 - a. Listen intently to the person's request,
 - b. Tell them what you understand them to be asking of you,
 - c. Thank them for thinking of you as someone who could do the task,
 - d. Tell them whether or not you can do the request and your timeline for getting it done if you can actually do it.
 - e. Pat yourself on the back when you have honestly told another person how you feel and did it in a respectful, caring manner.