

tips  
for **being ASSERTIVE!**



**Assertiveness** is the direct and honest communication of your opinions, feelings, needs, and rights in a way that does not violate the personal rights of others. It involves standing up for your own rights, while acknowledging the rights of others, and working towards a win-win solution. Assertiveness is different from non-assertiveness and aggressiveness.

**Non-assertiveness** is when you allow others to violate your rights by regarding their needs, opinions and rights as more important than your own. **Aggressiveness** is the opposite of non-assertiveness. It involves expressing and pursuing your rights at the expense of others.

Assertiveness can help you improve your communication skills, self-esteem, and decision-making ability. It can help you overcome shyness and anger. Below are some tips for being more assertive:

- Deliver your message directly to the intended person.
- Use statements that make what you want, think, and feel as clear as possible. For example, “I want to...” or “I feel...”
- Own” your message. Rather than saying, “You should...” try saying, “I’d really like it if you...”
- Be specific and objective when describing the behaviour or situation.
- Don’t use generalisations such as, “you always...” or “you never”. Focus on the most recent case, saying, “I noticed today you....when you do that I feel...” Using behavioural descriptions allows you to avoid using labels that hinder the other person’s acceptance of your message.
- Avoid “why” questions to further reduce the likelihood of the other person becoming defensive.
- Avoid becoming emotional when describing how it makes you feel. It may also be appropriate to give some explanation as to why the situation or other person’s behaviour makes you feel that way. Focusing on your feelings has two important effects: It invites the other person to see things from your point of view and, unlike statements of the facts as you see them, your own feeling can not be disputed. This is especially true when you say, “I feel...” rather than “you make me feel”, to which they may reply, “Well I don’t mean to”.

- Be specific about the action required from the other person, taking into account the rights, needs and feelings of the other person. If necessary and appropriate, clearly describe the consequences of the other person's behaviour not changing.
- Do not be apologetic about your feelings or opinions. Say "no" to unreasonable requests, also without being apologetic.
- Only address one issue at a time, rather than listing everything you believe the other person has done wrong.
- Be sure to acknowledge both the feelings shown by the other person, and any issues he/she brings up, then immediately return to your point.
- Maintain eye contact and use tone of voice and body language to reinforce your message.

Practicing these few habits can assist you with communicating in a more effective manner.

**for assistance with communication skills contact:**

**The 4Life Psychology centre**

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**[www.4-life.com.au](http://www.4-life.com.au)**