

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

Assertive behavior means directly expressing your thoughts, feelings and needs to other people with respect and without violating their rights.

Examples of assertive behavior

1. Saying “No” to a pushy salesperson.
2. Telling someone they are important to you.
3. Ending a visit with an alcoholic parent when he or she starts to drink by saying, “You are not drinking so I am leaving. “I’ll call you later in the week”

Some people have trouble being assertive in all situations, some just with certain situations, or with certain people. There are three general types of communication people use in different situations:

1. **Passive:** When a person is not expressing their true thoughts and feelings, they are being indirect and passive. Usually the concern is, if they spoke up, they would hurt or anger someone else and be “attacked,” or not liked. They often feel others needs come first. It is not unusual for a passive person to have low self-esteem and feel constantly stressed and used.

Example:

2. **Aggressive:** When a person tries to get what they want to express their feelings by threatening, or “walking all over” people, they are being aggressive. They violate the rights of others through intimidation, control and put-downs and usually find others are defensive, angry and keep their distance. They often feel their wants and needs always come first and sometimes their behavior is dangerous or gets them into trouble (e.g., fights or work warnings).

Example:

3. **Assertive:** When a person is direct, as defined above, they are assertive. They do not put others down and they try to make themselves understood, while trying to understand others. They usually feel better about themselves and less stressed than those using the above styles and often they have more satisfying relationships.

Example: