

FOUR PART ASSERTIVE MESSAGE

People often try to be assertive and soon find themselves back into an old pattern of behavior. Sometimes they are choosing the wrong time and place and the other person “can’t” hear the message. Other times they are not clear enough about the problem, or present too many problems. Sometimes people attempt to be assertive with the wrong person, such as someone who is abusive or dangerous.

Once you have choose the right time and place to maximize listening, and are clear about what you want, the following guidelines for developing a four part assertive message should be useful:

1. **Describe the Behavior:** Briefly describe a specific, observable behavior without judgments, sarcasm, exaggerations, profanity, or reference to motives. “When you yell at me in public....,” is better than, “:When you act outrageously, trying ot make me angry and get me to give in....”.
2. **Describe your feelings:** Briefly describe how you feel in response to the behavior, using accurate (e.g., don’t say concerned when you feel hurt) and nonjudgmental words (e.g., say angry rather than abused). Also, use “I” statements, such as “I feel angry” rather than “You make me angry.”
3. **Describe the Tangible Effect:** Briefly describe how the behavior and feelings affect your thinking and behavior. This can give the other person a reason to change. Examples are “... and I get confused and withdraw” or “...and I get tension headaches and often drink.”
4. **Describe your Request:** Briefly and specifically describe what you want done differently. Rather than say “I would like you to be more considerate,” say “I would like you to return my calls within 24 hours.”

Examples:

1. “When you yell at me in front of other people, I feel angry and embarrassed and want to hide and not be around you. I want you to tell me what bothers you in private and not criticize or yell at me in public.”
2. _____

3. _____

***Remember: BEING ASSERTIVE DOES NOT ALWAYS GET YOU WHAT YOU WANT, BUT YOU WILL GET MORE AND FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF.**