

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Assertiveness is a manner of communicating and a relational style used by individuals to express their needs confidently, openly, and in a positive manner. Acting assertively is an interpersonal skill that helps people to maintain healthy relationships, resolve interpersonal conflict, and prevent one's needs from being stifled or repressed.

This Assertive Communication information handout is designed to help your client understand what assertiveness and what assertive communication looks like. It describes the qualities of assertive communication and explores its differences from passive and aggressive communication. Some key assertive communication strategies are summarized.



Instructions:

The handout can be used to explore client beliefs about assertiveness. You may find that a client shows an inconsistent understanding of the consequences of assertive behaviour. When applied to their own lives, they might believe that an assertive response will lead to negative consequences such as rejection, disapproval, or confrontation; and trigger negative emotions in themselves such as guilt, shame and self-doubt. However, if asked about unassertive behaviour in other people they can often recognize that it is damaging to the person rather than a means of avoiding negative outcomes.

"We've talked about how you find it difficult to get your needs met and ask for what you want when you are with other people. This sheet summarizes assertive communication, which is a way of being more confident when talking to other people. Let's go through it together..."

"When we talk to other people, we can communicate in different ways. We can be passive, assertive or aggressive. This handout summarizes what those different ways of communicating look like..."

"How do you usually talk to other people? Do you think you are passive, assertive or aggressive?"

It is important to note that individuals may be unassertive in specific situations (e.g. within a specific relationship or in a specific setting) or following specific triggers, rather than it being a universal way of relating to others. This can add a sense of confusion and dissonance, as the individual knows that they are capable of being assertive.

References:

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Assertive Communication

Communicating assertively means clearly and calmly expressing what you want without either being too passive or too aggressive. Learning to communicate assertively doesn't guarantee you will have your needs met but it makes it more likely, and it can improve your relationships with other people.



Thinking your needs don't matter at all	Recognizing that your needs matter as much as anyone else's	Thinking that only your needs matter
Give in	Compromise	Take
Not talking, not being heard	Talking and listening	Talking over people
Trying to keep the peace	Making sure things are fair – for you and others	Looking out for yourself
Allowing yourself to be bullied	Standing up for yourself	Bullying others
Not saying what you think, or not saying anything	Express your point clearly and confidently	Can lead to shouting, aggression or violence
Damages relationships - other people respect you less	Enhances relationships - other people know where they stand	Damages relationships – other people don't like aggression
Damages your self-esteem	Builds your self-esteem	Damages others self-esteem

Tips for communicating assertively

Use "I" statements

- Be clear and direct:
"I would like you to give me a refund"
"I think what you have done is good, but I would like to see more of..."

Describe how another person's behaviour makes you feel

- This makes other people aware of the consequences of their actions:
"When you raise your voice it makes me scared ... I would like you to speak softly"
"When you don't tell me what you are feeling it makes me confused"

Stick to your guns - the broken record technique

- This involves thinking about what you want, preparing what you might say, then repeating it as necessary:
"I would like a refund ... Yes, but I would still like a refund ... I've heard what you have said but I still want a refund"