

Become More Assertive: 13 Stepping Stones Along Your Path to Assertiveness

1. **Begin being assertive in low risk situations first.** For some people it is easier to try being assertive with a family member. For others it is easier with the clerk at the grocery store.
2. **Practice makes perfect.** Don't expect immediate success in expressing yourself assertively. Like any other new skill it takes time to master it.
3. **Acknowledge your successes.** Remember the times when you were assertive and it worked well. These will help to encourage you to try again next time.
4. **Don't expect to always get what you want every time you are assertive.** You have the right to ask for what you want and others also have the right to say no. Validation comes from having enough self-respect to express yourself, rather than ignoring your needs and keeping silent.
5. **Others will not always like your assertive behaviour.** It doesn't mean that you do not have the right to be assertive. Sometimes your assertiveness means that someone else does not get his or her way.
6. **Learn from your mistakes.** What worked? What didn't work? What can you do differently next time?
7. **You don't have to be an expert to offer an opinion.** We all have the right to an opinion and others do not have to agree with us. We will all have opinions based on our unique perceptions and experiences.
8. **Don't expect to be guilt-free every time you are assertive.** If you are used to being passive, likely you will feel guilty when you begin to speak up for yourself and ask for what you want. You can feel guilty and be assertive at the same time.

9. **Every situation is unique.** Assess each situation and respond appropriately. You do not have to be assertive all the time. Sometimes the circumstances might warrant that you step back this time.

10. **If someone interrupts you when you are speaking,** ask that person to wait until you have finished your statement. For example, “please wait a minute and let me finish speaking.”

11. **Ensure your body language is also assertive.** Assertive body language includes maintaining direct eye contact, speaking clearly, using appropriate voice tone and respecting personal space.

12. **Thinking positively about being assertive makes it easier to actually be assertive.** If you believe you have the right to be assertive, you are more likely to do so.

13. **Make sure your responses are clear and concise.** Avoid making excuses or justifying your choices. Short and direct responses work best.