

Assertive Communication: 10 Tips for Expressing Yourself Assertively

1. Think before you speak. The first step is to be clear within yourself as to what you want to say.
2. Communicate your needs without excuses or disclaimers at the beginning, such as “well, this may not really be important” or “I may be making a big deal out of nothing”.
3. Speak clearly and concisely. Remember “less is more”. When we keep on talking we often start to make excuses, contradict ourselves and give others lots of ammunition for arguing us out of our opinion if they want.
4. Say what you mean. Avoid hinting and “beating around the bush”. Others cannot read your mind. You need to ask for what you want. If you have a sore back and want a back rub, ask for it. Simply complaining about having a sore back may not achieve your goal of getting a back rub.
5. Speak in a firm and calm voice.
6. Describe how you see the current situation and how you would like it to be different.
7. Express your feelings without judgment or justification. Your feelings are always valid whether others agree with them or not. They simply need to be expressed in an appropriate and respectful manner.
8. Own your opinion, feelings and wants by using “I” statements. Avoid using “you” and “we”. Other may feel like you are talking for them or accusing them, such as “You made me angry”.
9. Maintain direct eye contact. This does not mean staring. It is okay to glance away. When you look at people as you are talking with them, they know you are confident about what you are saying and that it is important.

10. When you are first assertive it can be challenging to come up with how to say something assertively. The wording is unfamiliar. Below are some statements that you might use. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but simply some options to help start you off.

- I feel uncomfortable about...
- I don't appreciate that.
- I have a problem with that.
- That's not acceptable.
- I'm not interested.
- I'd like to make a suggestion.
- No, thank you.
- I don't like that...
- Not right now, thank you.
- I think we should discuss this.
- I don't have time.
- No.
- When are you available to talk about this?
- I would like to...
- I would rather talk about this later.
- I'd like to think about it.
- I see it differently.
- I need help with....
- It is important to me.
- In my opinion...
- Perhaps...
- Yes, I do mind.
- This is what I need.
- I'd rather not.
- This is difficult for me to say.
- I don't know.
- I misunderstood you.
- I understand your point of view and...
- I disagree.
- I don't want to...