



# Communication and Assertiveness

Office of Health Education and Promotion  
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# Communication 101

Becoming a clear communicator means effectively conveying your thoughts, ideas, needs and wants.

Communicating clearly helps you manage your time and your life to feel good about yourself, and to build trusting relationships with others.

# Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a powerful skill that will help you to communicating clearly.

## What is assertiveness?

- Assertiveness is behaviors and words that express a person's feelings, beliefs and opinions.
- It should be done directly, firmly, and honestly.
- Assertiveness involves respecting the other person's rights.
- This is a SKILL that can be learned and practiced in an ongoing way.

# The ultimate goal of assertiveness is respect!



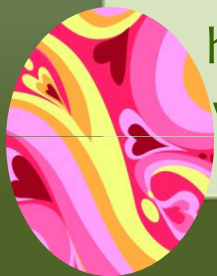
## Self-respect:

It allows you to feel self-confident and more in control of your life.

## Respect from others:

People can sense it when you respect yourself, so they'll treat you with respect in return.

It is also a respectful way of treating others. You are able to honestly express your own thoughts, needs, feelings and beliefs while respecting another person's needs, thoughts feelings and beliefs.



# Why aren't people assertive?

Many of us have a fear of displeasing others, since then we won't be liked. But even though you can avoid immediate unpleasantness, you may ruin a relationship in the long run since you'll feel taken advantage of.

It's "not nice" to put your own needs above those of others.

We shouldn't "make waves" if someone says/does something we don't like.

# Non-assertive communication styles

## Aggressive

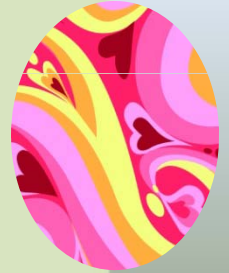
A person stands up for his/her own rights, but in a way that violates the rights of others. This commonly results in put-downs of the other person, and it can cause people to lose respect for the speaker.

## Passive-Aggressive

A person avoids direct confrontation (passive) but attempts to “get even” through manipulation or sneaky behavior (aggressive).

## Passive

The speaker’s rights will probably be violated. The style reflects the underlying belief that one’s feelings, ideas, needs or beliefs aren’t important, or that one is too weak to act on those feelings.



# The implications of being non-assertive

**Depression-** This is the end result of anger turned inward; it gives the person a sense of being helpless and hopeless, with no control over his/her life.

**Anxiety-** This leads to avoidance. If you begin to avoid uncomfortable situations/people, you may miss out on fun activities, job opportunities, etc.

**Poor Relationships-** If you are unable to express both negative and positive emotions, others can't tell what you want and need.

**Physical Complaints-** Such as headaches, ulcers, and high blood pressure. These are related to stress, and assertiveness is a great stress reliever.

## Forming assertive statements

Be direct; express your request in just a few easy-to-understand sentences.

Think about yourself positively, and don't add qualifying statement (i.e. "You'll probably think I'm crazy, but...").



*Forming assertive statements continued...*



Use the “I” formula:

1. I feel----state your feeling
2. When ----describe behavior
3. Because----concrete  
effect/consequence on your situation
4. I'd prefer----offer a compromise
5. Feedback----”Am I being clear? How do  
you see this situation?”

# Tips to help you become a clear communicator

## 1. Know what you want to say

- **Ask yourself what it is you want:** Gaining a full understanding of what you want to say will help you deliver your message.
- **Practice what you are going to say in advance:** Say it out loud to yourself or someone else. Don't be afraid to change your message in the process.
- **Stay focused:** Don't bring up things that happened in the past.

## 2. Listening is crucial



- **Show that you are listening:** Make eye contact; don't be afraid to ask questions or ask the other person to repeat what he or she has said.
- **Be polite:** Don't interrupt; take turns talking.
- **Be respectful:** Respect what the other person is feeling and/or thinking.
- **Keep an open mind:** Don't be afraid to change your mind about what you first thought when you started the conversation.

### 3. Say what you mean

- **Be direct and give examples:** Help the person understand what you're trying to say.
- **Be honest:** Show how you really feel.
- **Use "I" statements:** Talking in "I" statements helps you clearly explain what you need and how you feel, without placing blame on the other person. Example: "I feel frustrated when you're late. I want you to be on time."
- **Pay attention to your body language:** The way you move your body and hands speak just as much as what you say.
- **Don't be afraid to say that you are sorry** if you say something that is hurtful or wrong.

## 4. Make sure you understand

- **What do you both want:** Ask the other person what he or she needs, and be clear about your needs.
- **If you don't understand, ask:** Don't be afraid to ask the other person how he or she is thinking and feeling. Don't try to guess on your own.
- **Repeat what the other person says:** A great way to make sure that you understand someone is to repeat what the person has just said, in your own words, e.g., "What I hear you saying is..."

## 5. Action and closure

- **Before the conversation ends**, make sure you both understand what the other has said.
- **Summarize:** Restate what each of you has said, to make sure that there are no misunderstandings.
- **What will happen next:** Make an agreement about what will happen next as a result of your conversation.
- **Closure:** You may not both agree with one another, but make sure you are both satisfied with the conversation. Don't be afraid to start the conversation again, at a later time, if necessary.



# How you say things matters!

## Gestures

Relaxed use of these shows openness, self-confidence and spontaneity.

## Voice tone, inflection and volume

Tone: level, well-modulated, conversational tone.

Inflection: make sure your words sound like a statement, not a question.

Volume: try not to speak too softly or loudly (stay calm)

## Fluency

Maintain a smooth flow of speech, with clear and slow statements.

## **Body posture**

Maintain an active and erect posture.



## **Facial expression**

Your words should express the same message as your face.

## **Eye contact**

Look directly at the person, but don't stare too intently (look away occasionally)

If you feel you are struggling with a situation  
and need further assistance on  
communicating clearly, you may contact the:

Office of Health Education and Promotion, Health Services  
(603) 862-3823  
for an appointment with a wellness educator/counselor

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