

9. ASSERTIVENESS...

As a person becomes more confident and self-assured, they are able to be more assertive.

Assertiveness is the ability to express oneself in a way that is honest, direct and appropriate while respecting the point of view and feelings of others. Assertive people stand up for their rights while respecting the rights of others.

If you're to be happy and successful at work, assertiveness is a key skill to master. There's a useful questionnaire [here](#), which tests how assertive you're likely to be and can then be used as a framework to developing the personal qualities that will contribute to your confidence, emotional intelligence and assertiveness of approach.

It's likely that you will be, or have already been, on the receiving end of passive, aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviour from a parent, teacher, work-colleague, manager. The important thing to remember is that people have rights and you will always achieve a better result by being assertive and encouraging those around you to be aware of their behaviour and become assertive too.

Assertiveness is all about rights.

You have the right to:

- Ask for what you want (realising that the other person has the right to say 'no').
- Express your feelings, opinions and beliefs
- Make your own decisions and cope with the consequences
- Say 'yes' and 'no' for yourself
- Change your mind
- Say "I don't understand"
- Choose whether or not to get involved in the issues of someone else
- Make mistakes
- Be alone and to be independent
- Privacy and your own space
- Be successful and acknowledge it
- Change yourself and become assertive

Ten top tips for becoming more assertive:

1. Meet the person at their level
2. Speak at a similar volume to the other person and keep calm (or adjourn)
3. Use I... / I feel...
4. Be prepared to discuss and compromise - "You want X, I want Y, so..."
5. Remember you have rights / equality
6. Think about what both want to achieve
7. Be aware of feelings / relax
8. Pre-emptive / explanatory statements - "You may not like what I'm about to say..."
9. Role model - "what would he / she do?" / channel your inner cheerleader
10. Start small and gain experience



Bonus tip: Celebrate how far you have come

Be careful to deal with facts – never make assumptions. All sorts of dramas befall people because of something they think they know rather than what they actually do know. This is particularly true of people who like to give and receive a lot of feedback – they can tend to extend that they know in their heads until they believe it to be fact.

Magnificent man-up mantras and cheesy though convenient clichés:

- How is this helping? This is a good one if you feel overly emotional, are worrying about something you can't do anything about or are feeling stressed.
- What's the worst thing that can happen? Assertive people know what they stand for, have a sense of what's right and make decisions. Writing down pros and cons is a great place to start and if you're still feeling a little uncomfortable ask yourself this important question.
- Speak to the one person: If there's an issue to be dealt with, be sure to go to the person who can resolve it. Expending energy talking to others and gathering endless opinions is counterproductive, can be seen as gossiping and, having gained six people's differing points of view, you'll be no closer to a resolution. Go to the source; deal with it.
- Life is not a rehearsal: make everything you do count, spending hours or even years procrastinating, letting things irritate you and feeling unfulfilled is a waste of your precious time on this earth so make some choices so you can make the most of it.
- You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs: it's OK to make mistakes; that's how people learn and progress is made. Instead of beating yourself up, ask yourself what you've learned and how you can do it better next time and then move on. Wasting time worrying is not healthy or smart. Most errors seem far worse to you than to everyone else so learn to celebrate your mistakes instead of letting them bring you down.
- Feedback is the breakfast of champions: this is cheesy though valid here, so listen up 'feedback is not personal'. The vast majority of the time it is provided to enable you to grow and improve, so please learn to welcome it as such. If people take time to give it, be gracious about receiving it. This can be particularly pertinent for Generations Y and Z who have often been told how fantastic they are throughout their upbringing and education; so if you're one of them please take note and learn to take it on the chin.

If you only do three things:

1. Resolve to become assertive and do what it takes to get there
2. Take feedback positively, never personally, and learn as you go
3. Be brave and venture out of your comfort zone

Adapted from '[It's Never OK to Kiss the Interviewer](#)'