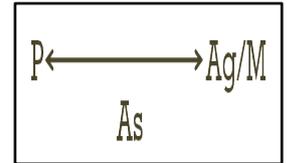




## Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a way of respectfully expressing own needs, feelings, thoughts, and rights to others: it gives power and self-assurance and helps to say own point firmly, fairly and with empathy; it shows mutual respect and is balanced somewhere on the continuum between Passivity and Aggression and/or Manipulation. Assertiveness ought not be confused with behaviours that can be maladaptive to relationships (e.g., nagging, discounting, excluding, belittling, acquiescence, criticising, blaming, tuning out) which can seep out when we deny our right to assert.



For various reasons, we can struggle to assert ourselves: don't know the rules of acceptable behaviour; don't know/ value own needs or feelings (low self-worth, "burdening" others); might be judged or punished or have love or acceptance withheld—indeed, asserting oneself might be inappropriate for the culture, home, role, or workplace.

<i>You get what you want</i>	Concede	Negotiate
<i>You don't get what you want</i>	Withdraw	Demand
<b>SITUATIONAL TACTICS</b>	<i>I don't get what I want</i>	<i>I get what I want</i>

Theories suggest that there are four main ways of being that are contingent upon the situation, culture, etc.:

1. **Passive:** avoid conflict, refuse decision making, aim to please. Can result in feeling frustrated as needs are unmet; becoming resentful, devalued, and lowered self-worth.
2. **Aggressive:** forceful, bullying, ignoring others needs/rights, must "win". Can result in feeling low self-worth and poor relationships.
3. **Manipulative:** concealed attacks, emotional blackmail, charm, to undermine or trick other. Can imply a poor sense of self worth?
4. **Assertive:** open, broad view, considers own and others needs and rights, fair, respectful. This results in less anxiety and worry, misunderstanding, frustration, disrespect, and more self-worth, respect, autonomy, empowerment, control, leadership skills, depth in relationships.

Consider the following if you wish to change to assertiveness:

<b>Attitudes, Beliefs, &amp; Values</b>	<b>Our inner thoughts can affect our being assertive. In what way might this affect you? Examples: "I do not have a right to ask", "If I ask they'll think I am rude", "He won't want to, so I won't ask", "My needs are more important than other people's", "How dare they say no to me", "It's fair that expectation that if I listen to her, she ought to listen to me", "Being direct is rude".</b>
<b>Be Direct</b>	<b>Being direct is simple, straight forward, and clear. It helps to save time, to negotiate to get to a win-win scenario, and to build trust and honesty. It also helps to minimise resentment, confusion, and ambiguity, game playing or "mind reading", and being continually infringed upon. Being indirect can frustrate other people as they try to figure you out, denied chances to relate, connect, help you.</b>
<b>Disagree Constructively</b>	<b>Be direct and clear to avoid misunderstanding; people often infer silence to be agreement. State disagreement followed by alternatives/questions. Try not to focus on the disagreement as can bog down the discussion. Examples: "No, I can't drive you to work. Can you get a taxi?", "No, I can't drive you to work. Is there another way you can get there?", "No, I don't think that'll work, but we definitely need to do something about it."</b>
<b>Body Language &amp; Tone of Voice</b>	<b>Maintain eye contact: whilst it can imply confidence and respect, too much can imply aggression and too little, disrespect. Stand upright: slouching can imply poor confidence, shyness, laziness. Sit up: whilst sitting open and upright can imply alertness and interest, crossing arms/legs can imply nervousness or closed off-ness. Tone of voice: nervousness can make us speak higher or faster; activate calming affect by counting to 2 before speaking, imagining a deep tone coming from chest.</b>
<b>Time &amp; Space</b>	<b>Good time management: Consistent lateness can imply low self-worth or passive-aggression. Giving too much time, not sticking to time boundaries, can imply less value to oneself. Distance and personal space: Personal space invasion is uncomfortable; it can be a form of manipulation from the other or lack of awareness. It's important to set boundaries, e.g., step back, "back-off" hand gesture, tell them, humour "my space/your space".</b>



### **Other Points to consider:**

Accept that you can't control others.  
 Actively listen, empathise. Be patient and compassionate with self and other.  
 Aim for open and honest whilst respecting others when sharing.  
 Be open to (assess) criticism and compliments.  
 Believe your worth!  
 Change your verbs "Will you" instead of "Could you", "Choose to" instead of "Have to".  
 Decide to positively assert and start practicing today.

Resolve the past, and/or Accept it.  
 Self-confidence is not self-importance. Whilst you are not less important than others, you are not more important.  
 Stick to "I" statements.  
 "No" is a great word, but not the only word!  
 Saying "no" to others can be saying "yes" to self; and others have a right to say "no" to you.  
 Prepare for refusal or compromise...as well as manipulation.

### **Slip Ups: You will make mistakes as you learn to enhance your skill of asserting:**

Watch out for blaming, criticising, or not being firm  
 Making unrealistic threats or "consequences"  
 No, inconsistent, or weak consequences for violations  
 Backing down when maladaptive behaviour occurs (e.g., accusations, threats, silence)

Feeling sorry for the other person instead of self  
 Undervaluing own worth, needs, respect  
 Expecting the other to do all the changing  
 No plan B or support system for new behaviour  
 Contradictory words and actions

### **Examples**

"Thanks, but..." statements:

- "Thanks, but I'm not interested."
- "Thanks, but I can't make that a priority now."
- "Thanks, but I need some time to myself now."
- "Thanks, but no thanks."
- "No thanks." Must you give a reason?

• "This is so important, and I can't give it the time it deserves right now. Can we meet later to talk?"

Brief "I" statements—a sharing of your thoughts, feelings, wants, or opinions:

- "I didn't appreciate \_\_\_ (what you did, your tone of voice)."
- "I appreciated \_\_\_."
- "I disagree with you. I see the situation this way."
- "I would like you to respect my point of view."
- "I feel offended by your remark."

"Thanks, but..." statements and empathy:

- "Thanks for thinking of me, but I think I'll pass."
- "Thanks for the update, but I can't make it."
- "I get that you enjoy X, but it's not my scene."

Express core beliefs "My Policy is \_\_\_\_\_"

Time buying statements:

- "I'll think about it and get back to you."
- "I just don't know. Mind if I think about it?"

### **Assertiveness:**

involves defending own rights whilst respecting others' rights and performing own responsibilities whilst insisting others perform their responsibilities.

Do I/Other Person have the Right to...?	Me	Other
be consulted when decisions might have a personal impact		
be given respect		
change own mind		
do the job in own way once objectives are agreed		
expect certain standards from the other person		
express own opinions		
give feedback (good and bad)		
make a mistake?		
not be talked about behind one's back		
not give any reasons or excuses for own behaviour?		
say "I don't know"		
say "I don't care"		
say "no"?		