

An Instant Guide to Assertiveness

1. Assertiveness is difficult because it goes against our natural instincts for fight or flight. We have to learn to make a conscious effort to overcome the adrenaline in our bodies and remain calm.
2. Assertiveness requires a starting belief that you are OK—which you are! Your self-worth should come from you, not from what other people think. Think to yourself, “No one else can push me into the not-OK box.”
3. Assertiveness means standing up for your rights, but also respecting the rights of others.
4. Persist if necessary. You have the right to be heard. You’re not being rude; they are.
5. You have a right to say how you feel. And you don’t have to justify how you feel.
6. Take responsibility for how you feel, what you do, and what happens to you. “We teach others how to treat us.” Lack of taking responsibility is at the root of all negative emotions.
7. Take responsibility for mistakes. It’s OK to make them (the only way to never make a mistake is to never do anything, and making a mistake doesn’t make you a bad person), but you must learn from them. Then let them go—they are in the past.
8. Your behaviour is controlled by your subconscious beliefs, or “scripts.” You can change your scripts by what you say to yourself—keep it positive.
9. You can change your behaviour, but only if you are aware of it. Practise detachment - observe yourself in situations: How did you do?
10. The other side of detachment is that other people are responsible for their own actions. Don’t blame yourself for the actions that others have chosen to take.
11. Remain calm in situations where the other person is being aggressive. It’s their problem, not yours, so remember your rights, and take time to plan. Don’t get aggressive back!

12. Aggression can be behaviour other than physically attacking someone: it can be verbal intimidation, interrupting, invading someone's space, patronising, etc. If someone is using emotive words to attack you, pick them up on the words: "I agree that it was a mistake, but I wouldn't say it was 'stupid.'"
13. Pick them up on aggressive body language using the format "I notice that you are doing xx, and I interpret this to mean xxx. Am I right?" This will force them to put up or shut up.
14. When you're being criticised, consider whether they may be right. If they are: learn from it and thank them. If they are not, you can choose between letting it go or challenging them—both are OK. If you are unsure about what they are unhappy with, or if you are unsure whether they are right about it, ask them for more information.
15. Giving criticism is not usually effective because asking someone to change their personality is not feasible, and it's even worse if you don't say what you want instead. However, asking someone to change their behaviour CAN be effective.
16. Use the 4-step process to make your point: I understand, I feel, I want, is that OK?
17. Wish you'd said something at the time? Don't worry—it's never too late to go back and be assertive. Plan it and then do it.

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