**BEING ASSERTIVE: REDUCE STRESS, COMMUNICATE BETTER**

Assertiveness can help you control stress and anger and improve coping skills. Recognize and learn assertive behavior and communication.

Being assertive is a core communication skill. Assertiveness can help you express yourself effectively and stand up for your point of view, while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others.

Being assertive can also help boost your self-esteem and earn others' respect. This can help with stress management, especially if you tend to take on too many responsibilities because you have a hard time saying no.Some people seem to be naturally assertive. But if you're not one of them, you can learn to be more assertive.

**Why assertive communication makes sense**

Because assertiveness is based on mutual respect, it's an effective and diplomatic communication style. Being assertive shows that you respect yourself because you're willing to stand up for your interests and express your thoughts and feelings. It also demonstrates that you're aware of others' rights and willing to work on resolving conflicts.

**Assertive vs. passive behavior**

If your style is passive, you may seem to be shy or overly easygoing. You may routinely say things such as "I'll just go with whatever the group decides." You tend to avoid conflict. Why is that a problem? Because the message you're sending is that your thoughts and feelings aren't as important as those of other people. In essence, when you're too passive, you give others the license to disregard your wants and needs.

The internal conflict that can be created by passive behavior can lead to:

Stress, Resentment, Seething anger, Feelings of victimization, Desire to exact revenge

**Assertive vs. aggressive behavior**

Now consider the flip side. If your style is aggressive, you may come across as a bully who disregards the needs, feelings and opinions of others. You may appear self-righteous or superior. Very aggressive people humiliate and intimidate others and may even be physically threatening.

You may think that being aggressive gets you what you want. However, it comes at a cost. Aggression undercuts trust and mutual respect. Others may come to resent you, leading them to avoid or oppose you.

**Assertive vs. passive-aggressive behavior**

Now consider passive-aggressive behavior. If you communicate in a passive-aggressive manner, you may say yes when you want to say no. You may be sarcastic or complain about others behind their backs. Rather than confront an issue directly, you may show your anger and feelings through your actions or negative attitude. You may have developed a passive-aggressive style because you're uncomfortable being direct about your needs and feelings.

The benefits of being assertive

Being assertive is usually viewed as a healthier communication style. Assertiveness offers many benefits. It helps you keep people from taking advantage of you. It can also help you from acting like a bully to others.

Behaving assertively can help you:

1. Gain self-confidence and self-esteem
2. Understand and recognize your feelings
3. Earn respect from others
4. Improve communication
5. Create win-win situations
6. Improve your decision-making skills
7. Create honest relationships
8. Gain more job satisfaction

Learning to be more assertive can also help you effectively express your feelings when communicating with others about issues.

Here are some tips to help you become more assertive:

Assess your style. Do you voice your opinions or remain silent? Do you say yes to additional work even when your plate is full? Are you quick to judge or blame? Do people seem to dread or fear talking to you? Understand your style before you begin making changes.

Use 'I' statements. Using "I" statements lets others know what you're thinking or feeling without sounding accusatory. For instance, say, "I disagree," rather than, "You're wrong." If you have a request, say, "I would like you to help with this" rather than, "You need to do this." Keep your requests simple and specific.

Practice saying no. If you have a hard time turning down requests, try saying, "No, I can't do that now." Don't hesitate — be direct. If an explanation is appropriate, keep it brief.

Rehearse what you want to say. If it's challenging to say what you want or think, practice general scenarios you encounter. Say what you want to say out loud. It may help to write it out first, too, so you can practice from a script. Consider role-playing with a friend or colleague and ask for clear feedback.

Use body language. Communication isn't just verbal. Act confident even if you aren't feeling it. Keep an upright posture, but lean forward a bit. Make regular eye contact. Maintain a neutral or positive facial expression. Don't cross your arms or legs. Practice assertive body language in front of a mirror or with a friend or colleague.

Keep emotions in check. Conflict is hard for most people. Maybe you get angry or frustrated, or maybe you feel like crying. Although these feelings are normal, they can get in the way of resolving conflict. If you feel too emotional going into a situation, wait a bit if possible. Then work on remaining calm. Breathe slowly. Keep your voice even and firm.

Start small. At first, practice your new skills in situations that are low risk. For instance, try out your assertiveness on a partner or friend before tackling a difficult situation at work. Evaluate yourself afterward and tweak your approach as necessary.