

What does "assertiveness" mean?

In this lesson you will learn:

- The meaning of “being assertive”
- The difference between being assertive and being aggressive
- To practise assertiveness skills

Why does it matter?

An assertive communication style can help us do the things we want to do. But it goes further than that: being assertive shows we respect ourselves and other people.

People who speak assertively send the message that they believe in themselves. They're not too timid and they're not too pushy. They know that their feelings and ideas matter. They're confident.

People who are assertive tend to make friends more easily. They communicate in a way that respects other people's needs as well as their own. They tend to be better at working out conflicts and disagreements. People who give respect get respect in return.

Starter

Think of as many different ways as you can to say the word "yes" so that each time it has a different meaning. Try saying it to yourself in your head:

- As if you really, really mean it.
- As if you're not sure you mean it.
- As if you don't mean it at all.

Try out the different ways of saying "yes" with a partner, but don't reveal which is which.

Could they guess the different feelings or thoughts you were having as you said each one?

How could they tell?

Are there any other ways of saying "yes" which may have other thoughts or feelings behind them?

For example, saying "yes" when your friend asks you for a favour, but saying it with such a big sigh that your friend knows you think it's a real hassle and don't really want to do it.

Task 1

Our tone of voice, the expressions we use, the speed at which we speak - all of these affect how our words are heard. Sometimes we say words that mean one thing, but the way we say them might reveal different feelings or thoughts.

In the same way as "yes", the way we say "no" to something can reveal our true feelings. Here are some words that describe different ways of saying "no":

timidly ferociously calmly gently
aggressively assertively sweetly

Lets' take two of these words that people sometimes mistake for each other: "aggressively" and "assertively". Here are some definitions that could be used to explain the difference:

Speaking aggressively - attacking/being hostile/being offensive

Speaking assertively - declaring/being confident/being sure

Working together in small groups, make notes to answer and report back on these questions:

- Are there other definitions you could use to explain the difference between these two ways of speaking?
- What could be the result of an individual/group/nation speaking to another individual/group/nation aggressively?
- Why could being assertive be a better way of dealing with a problem than being aggressive?

Task 2

Speaking assertively isn't always easy - especially when people put pressure on us to agree with them when we might have a different point of view, or when we want to say "no".

Look at the list of tips for being assertive and speaking assertively on the next slide.

What do you think of them?

Would they help you to be assertive without becoming aggressive?

Why/how?

How to be assertive - some tips

- Be sure you know what you want.
- Sit or stand up straight - your body language should be relaxed, but not casual.
- Match your expression to the words you use - look like you mean it!
- Look directly at the person you are talking to.
- Use a clear, firm voice.
- Say what you want or need.
- Listen to the other person.
- Repeat your message as often as you need to.
- Suggest alternatives that are acceptable to you - this could show that you still want to be friendly with the other person, even if you can't agree at first.

And finally

In pairs, think about times when someone might need to be assertive. Think about the sentences and phrases you could use in these situations (the tips on the previous slide might help).

Is anyone willing to share their ideas with the rest of the class?