

So are you aggressive?

The line between aggressive and assertive communication is usually a fine one; however, there are some main behaviours that characterise aggressiveness, like:

- Physical violence
- Verbal abuse
- Put-downs
- Intimidating body language
- Not listening to differing points of view

Being aggressive is a way of forcing people to do what you want them to do without consideration for their thoughts and feelings. Sales people can often be pushy and aggressive, forcing you to buy their products. Intentionally standing over someone when talking to them is aggressive because the person is being intimidated.

So are you passive-aggressive?

There are also people who are passive-aggressive who are not honest with themselves or others and they tend to:

- Act false by being "nice" on the outside but really they are angry
- Bottle up anger and plan revenge or to get even when things don't go their way
- Try to sabotage something to get what they want

So now you know about passive and aggressive behaviour it will help you understand how to be assertive. When being assertive you will hopefully end up with a result that you want and that the other person is happy with as well. This means that when it comes to assertiveness a big role is played by communication.

How can I communicate better?

Communication involves the verbal messages including what we say and how we say it and the body language that we use, such as crossing our arms and using hand gestures as we speak. It is important to match up our body language with our verbal messages for good communication. How we speak and use our body language determines whether we are communicating assertively, passively or aggressively.

Tact and timing

Tact is an important part of assertiveness. Using different tones and styles with different people is a big part of being assertive. In one case, you may be kind and caring but still say what is on your mind. In another case you may have very little to say but the words you use still get your opinion across.

Timing is just as important as tact. For example, if someone had borrowed something from you and you wanted it back, ringing him or her up at midnight would not be the right time and you would more than likely get a bad response.

Say what you mean

Too many people don't say what they want to say or when they do they don't tell someone straight; they drop hints and talk in round about ways. It's okay to tell people exactly what you think, feel and want, although they may not agree with you. So be clear about what you want to say whether it is negative or positive. This will help stop confusion and misunderstandings about what you are talking about.

Mean what you say

Meaning what you say is another thing that is extremely important in assertiveness. For example, if someone asks you if you mind doing some work for them, you may say " No, I don't mind" but you are really thinking "what would I want to do that for?" Being honest with yourself and others is plays a big part in assertiveness.

Listening

There is more to assertiveness than getting your way all the time and telling other people 'this is how it's going to be.' You need to listen to others as well because they may have something important to add to the conversation. Assertive communication is like having a debate; both sides need to be listened to and respected.

Try being assertive

Next time you have a argument, conversation or discussion try communicating assertively. Being assertive takes practice so here a few things to keep in mind:

- Be clear and think about what you want to say about a situation or issue before saying it
- It's okay to say how situations or issues affect you – basically how they make you feel
- Be clear about what you need changed or how you want things to be

- Listen and consider other people's points of view
- Say 'yes' or 'no' when you mean it
- Learn what to do and what not to do from watching other people
- Remember you can't please everybody but you can communicate what you think, feel and need in a honest and assertive way
- You may not always get what you want but at least people will know you have a different point of view and you'll feel better that at least you tried

This information was found at Headroom - <http://www.headroom.net.au/lounge>
© 2006 Children, Youth and Women's Health Service



WWW.HEADROOM.NET.AU