

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Assertiveness means to communicate your thoughts and feelings honestly and appropriately. Assertive communication can be verbal and nonverbal. To express yourself assertively requires self-awareness and knowing what you want and need. It means showing yourself the same respect that you demonstrate toward others.

If you do not assert yourself, by letting other people know what your thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs are then they are forced to make assumptions about you in those areas. Assumptions have about a 50% chance of being correct. That means that you only have half a chance of people understanding you and responding to you in a way that you desire.

Once you begin to assert yourself you will find that you will feel better about yourself, have more self-confidence, that you get more of what you want out of life, and that others will respect you more.

Be prepared that not everyone will be supportive of your changes in thinking and behavior. Some people that you interact with, such as family members or a significant other, may even demonstrate some negativity toward these changes. This could be because change is difficult for them to accept, they are comfortable with what is familiar to them, they benefited from your passive, people-pleasing behavior, or they fear losing you through change. However, you can't give up who you are to please other people, or to keep certain people in your life. Take one day at a time, focus on the positive, and be the best that you can be.

To clarify the variations of responses and styles of communication/behavior review the following descriptions.

1. *Passive*: Always giving into what others want. Don't want to make waves. Don't express your thoughts or feelings. Afraid to say no. Discounting your own wants and needs.
2. *Aggressive*: Being demanding, hostile, or rude. Insensitive to the rights of others. Intimidates others into doing what they want. Is disrespectful.
3. *Passive-aggressive*: You tell people what they want to hear which avoids conflict. However, you really feel angry inside and you don't follow through on the expectations or requests which results in the other person feeling frustrated, angry, confused, or resentful.
4. *Manipulative*: Attempt to get what you want by making others feel guilty. Tend to play the role of the victim or the martyr in order to get other people to take responsibility for taking care of your needs.
5. *Assertive*: Directly, honestly, and appropriately stating what your thoughts, feelings, needs, or wants are. You take responsibility for yourself and are respectful to others. You are an effective listener and problem solver.