



Don't Say Yes When You Mean No!

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How To Be Assertive

Developing your assertiveness skills is one of the most important activities you can ever undertake.

You need to be assertive in today's highly pressurised environment where there are more demands placed on you mentally, physically and with your time.

You need to be able to stick up for yourself!

Indeed, being assertive means being able to stand up for what you want.

The benefits of being assertive are far more reaching than just getting what you want.

You will feel more confident and assured, you will feel good about yourself, you are able to get win win situations rather than giving in all of the time and you can also manage your time more effectively especially if you feel uncomfortable saying no to your boss when he hands you more work to do!

You are also able to delegate work better and ask other people to help you.

What will it take to be assertive?

We have discussed the benefits of being assertive, but what will it actually take to be assertive?

Well, if being assertive does not come natural to you, you will feel uncomfortable at first but being assertive is like anything else in life, you get better at it the more times you do it!

If you have an out-going personality you will probably find that being assertive comes easier to you. If you are more reserved, you might have to work at it a little harder in the initial stages.

Being assertive will mean that you will have to stand up in the face of opposition at times, it may also mean being confrontational and expressing your opinion when all others agree with a certain course of action.

It is human nature to avoid confrontation but many people usually react to it in one of two ways.

The first approach is to fight fire with fire and become aggressive to deal with the situation, the second approach is to cave in and give in to the demands of the other party.

The right way to deal with the situation is to be assertive of course!

Just how assertive are you?

Before we look into techniques and strategies to become more assertive let's first see how your current levels of assertiveness fair by answering the following questions.

- 1. You are eating out with a friend and you order a steak very well done. When it is served, you cut into it and find that it is medium.**

Would you:

- a. Say nothing and eat it commenting that it isn't that under cooked for your liking.
- b. Make a real fuss over the sub-standard service and say something like "There is no way I am eating that – it is still alive on my plate!".
- c. Call the waiter over and explain that you ordered your steak very well-done and that this one is medium "Could you please exchange this steak for one that is very well done please? Thank you"

- 2. You are in the middle of watching your favourite television program when a friend calls you on the telephone to talk which could mean missing the rest of the program – you actually answer the phone!**

Would you:

- a. Have a quick chat and get off the phone as quickly as you could, then return to the program to finish watching what is left of it.
- b. Say that you have got friends around and need to be with them or make up an excuse.
- c. Say to your friend that "Jenny, Eastenders has just started – my favourite program, would you mind if I call you back in 30 minutes?"

- 3. You are waiting in a queue at the bank to pay some cheques in during your lunch break when all of a sudden someone rushes in ahead of you in the queue. The person states that they are in a hurry and will be late for work - you have to be back at work in 5 minutes time yourself!**

Would you:

- a. Let the person stay in the queue ahead of you and say nothing.
- b. Shout abuse at the person and say something like "Oy, get back to the end of the queue and wait like the rest of us mate"
- c. Go up to the person and in a controlled manner say "Excuse me there are a lot of us who are also on our lunch break and who do not have a lot of time – the queue begins back there behind that gentleman with the hat on"

- 4. After walking out of a shop where you purchased some CD's you notice that some of the cases have some cracks in them.**

Would you:

- a. Don't say anything admitting "It's only a little scratch – it does not harm the sound quality of the CD's"
- b. Go back to the shop, rant and rave and demand that they replace the CD's.
- c. Return to the shop and inform that shop assistant that "I noticed that the covers of the CD's I just bought from you have cracks and blemishes on them – could you please exchange them for better ones – thank you".

5. You are at work and it's ten minutes before you leave for the day where you are going out for dinner with your spouse. Your boss comes up to you and asks you to complete a piece of work that needs doing asap – it will take about 30 minutes that will make you late.

Would you:

- a. Complete the work for your boss and call your spouse up and say that you will be late.
- b. Say to your boss "Oh come off it, why give me work with only 10 minutes to go of the day – find someone else to do it"
- c. Explain to your boss that you are going out for dinner with your spouse and discuss some possible solutions.

6. You are out with some friends, it's the end of the night and you have had a good time and you want to go home. Your friends however want to go onto a nightclub or to have a late night meal in a curry house and are putting pressure on you to join them.

Would you:

- a. Give into the peer pressure as you want to be "one of the gang" even though this is the last thing you want to do.
- b. Tell your friends to stop putting pressure on you, stop bothering you and to let you go home in peace
- c. Explain to your friends that you have had a great night and are very tired and that you need to call it a night and go to bed.

What were your scores?

Jot down the choices that you made for each question and then see what letter a, b or c you had the most of.

If you selected mostly choice "a" that means that you prefer the PASSIVE STYLE of interpersonal behaviour.

You would prefer to give in rather than to rock the boat or be seen to be standing out. You have a need to be liked and to fit in.

You do not like to offend others and have trouble standing up for your rights. When faced with confrontation you feel very uncomfortable and overall you tend to bottle up your feelings which causes you to worry and stress out.

Passive people communicate indirectly and do not say what they want; they expect others to figure out what they need and for their needs to be met. When they don't get what they want, they tend to "pout".

Passive behaviour is rather like a game. Passive people are very concerned about how others see them. It is very important to them that they be liked by everyone.

This causes them to behave in self-sacrificing ways, but later they resent the person they made the sacrifice for and this behaviour perpetuates a negative cycle. Passive people need to be liked.

Passive people violate their own rights they do not stand up for what they want or ask for what they deserve. Passive people are apologetic, accepting, quite often feel dejected and are in some cases "ready to be yelled at".

Passive people are fearful of confrontation, they sometimes stammer when in a difficult situation, they have "small voices" and given the choice don't want to act on anything. Passive people avoid responsibility and are therefore seldom found to be accountable for results.

If you selected mostly choice "b" that means that you prefer the AGGRESSIVE STYLE of interpersonal behaviour.

Aggressive people do not care about the needs of others or about how they are perceived.

They certainly don't care about other people's feelings. Aggressive behaviour is perpetuated because, for the most part, it works (at least in the short term). Other people are hesitant to take on the aggressive person because it is so unpleasant.

Aggressive people violate other people's rights and they require their needs to be met at any expense.

When dealing with issues the aggressive person does not stay focussed on the issues and expect the fear that they instill in people to be the basis for not being questioned.



Aggressive people usually:

- use a loud, blustering voice in addition to swearing/using abusive language
- violate other people's space
- pound on desks; stare
- demand what they need from others
- are concerned only with their own feelings
- like to be feared

With the aggressive style you tend to be single minded and do not have a concern for the impact that you have upon other people with your behaviour and actions.

This can alienate you at times and it is difficult for you to build up relationships as you like to dominate situations to get your own way.

If you selected mostly choice "c" that means that you prefer the ASSERTIVE STYLE of interpersonal behaviour.

Being assertive is all about being firm but fair. If you have got something on your mind you will say it but you will say it in a way so that you do not upset the other person – it is all about appreciating the rights of others and putting yourself in their shoes.

You will stand up for what you believe in and what you believe is right – the difference between getting your opinion accepted is down to the way that you communicate this and your requirements.

Assertive people value everyone's needs. They state what they want, but do it in a way that takes into account what others need.

Assertive people hold themselves and others accountable, especially to speak up and believe that they and others have the responsibility to ask for what they need.

When assertive people deal with passive people they may become annoyed that the other person does not say what he/she wants rather than bringing it up later when nothing can be done about it.

Physical clues to assertiveness in people are that they:

- Ø Have direct eye contact
- Ø Have a confident stance
- Ø Ask others for what they need
- Ø Are concerned about everyone's feelings (including their own)
- Ø Expect everyone to be self-accountable
- Ø Respect personal space
- Ø Maintain an even, direct, firm delivery
- Ø Show no indication of anger

Becoming More Assertive

Let's look at some techniques that will enable you to become more assertive.

The most popular assertiveness model is the **3 STEP TECHNIQUE**

STATE THE FACTS

STATE YOUR FEELINGS

STATE YOUR REQUIREMENTS

With this technique you are first understanding and acknowledging the situation, you might say for example:

"When you spoke to me in the way that you did in that meeting....."

Then, you need to indicate how you felt

"I felt really uncomfortable and embarrassed in front of all of those people"

Lastly, you need to state your requirements and also include some benefits to the other party as well

"Next time **I would like you** to talk to me one on one outside of the meeting and not in front of anyone else, in this way we will not disrupt the meeting and make others duck for cover!"



With this 3 STEP MODEL you can ask for what you want in a non-aggressive manner and without getting personal at all.

It allows you to stick to the facts and be as objective as you can be with the situation that has not met your requirements.

The whole purpose of this technique is to engage a conversation about the situation rather than an argument.

There are no put-downs or nasty subjective comments – instead everything is factually based and structured in such a way so that the person on the receiving end of the feedback can reply in a non-aggressive manner.



Exercise

Plan out your response by writing down what you would say to the following situations below:

1. Your manager asks you to stay late this evening to help him complete a proposal which must be on the client's desk tomorrow. You are meeting a friend straight after work, and don't want to change your arrangement.
2. You are going on holiday, travelling this coming Monday and returning on the Sunday 14 days later. Your first day back in the office will be the following Tuesday, as you have allowed yourself a day for unpacking and getting organised. Your manager now asks if you will come back in a day early as he wants you to brief a meeting that Monday on a team project you've been leading.
3. A colleague asks you for help with an IT process she cannot seem to grasp. You have already shown her three times and feel she is beginning to waste your time.
4. A colleague – someone you like a lot, as well as respect – asks you to join a charity fund raising committee at work for Red Nose Day. He/she reminds you how they helped you out with organising the Families Open Day last summer. However, you have a lot on and don't want to say "yes".
5. Your manager wants you to stand in for her at a project meeting tomorrow. Last time you did this, you felt a bit of a spare part, as you could not follow all the details of the discussions and were unable to contribute anything.

About Management Training & Development Ltd

MTD, the management training specialists, has been working with a wide variety of clients (both large and small) in the UK and internationally for several years.

We specialise in providing:

- In-house, tailor made management training courses (1-5 days duration)
- Open courses (Delivered throughout the UK at various locations)
- Management & leadership development programmes (From 5 days to 2 years)
- Corporate and executive coaching (With senior or middle managers)

We provide a wide range of management training courses and programmes that will enable your managers to maximise their potential by gaining or refining their management skills.

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At Management Training & Development Ltd we will design and deliver a solution that suits your specific needs addressing the issues and requirements from your training brief that best fits your culture, learning style and ways of working. Our programmes are delivered when and where you need them!

We believe that training should be fun, highly interactive and provide “real world” practical techniques and methods that you can use back in the office – and that’s exactly what we provide.

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