

Helpful Hints for Assertive Behavior: Saying NO to Unfair Requests and Demands

1. Be sure where you stand first, i.e., whether you want to say yes or no. If not sure, say you need time to think it over and let the person know when you will have an answer.
2. Ask for clarification if you don't fully understand what is requested of you.
3. Be as brief as possible, i.e., give a legitimate reason for your refusal.
4. Actually use the word "no" when declining. "No" has more power and is less ambiguous.
5. Make sure your nonverbal gestures mirror your verbal messages. Shake your head when saying "no."
6. Use the words "I won't" or "I've decided not to", rather than "I can't" or "I shouldn't". This emphasizes that you have made a choice.
7. You may have to decline several times before the person hears you. It is not necessary to come up with a new explanation each time, just repeat your "no" and your original reason for declining.
8. If the person persists even after you have repeated your NO several times, use silence or change the topic of conversation.
9. You may want to acknowledge any feelings another has about your refusal, "I know this will be a disappointment to you, but I won't be able to..." However, you don't need to say "I'm sorry" in most situations to apologize for your refusal.
10. Avoid feeling guilty -- it is not up to you to solve others' problems or make them happy.
11. If you do not want to agree to the person's original request, but still desire to help her/him out, offer a compromise.

Resources

<http://images.google.com.ph/imgres?imgurl=http://www.crystalinks.com/assertive.jpg&imgrefurl>

Campus & Community Resources for The University of Texas and the Austin Area

UT Counseling & Mental Health Center: 471-3515 for information on assertion groups or individual counseling

Information on the Internet
[State University of New York at Buffalo](http://www.stateuniversityofnewyork.edu)

Additional Reading

Your Perfect Right: Assertiveness and Equality in your Life and Relationships, by Robert E. Alberti & Michael Emmons (San Luis Obispo, Impact Publishers, 2008).

Where to Draw the Line: How to Set up Healthy Boundaries Every Day, by Anne Katherine (9th ed., New York, Fireside, 2000).

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In, by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton (2nd ed., New York, Penguin Books, 1991).

Learning to Be Assertive

What is Assertiveness?



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What is Assertiveness?

- Clearly communicating what you want
- Expressing your feelings, needs, and opinions
- Standing up for your rights when they are threatened or taken advantage of

Why do People Avoid Being Assertive?

Many people avoid being assertive because they confuse being assertive with being aggressive. Aggressiveness violates the rights of others. Assertiveness is a respectful communication of your own rights.

Another reason people avoid asserting themselves is fear of upsetting others or damaging relationships. However, avoiding assertiveness may damage relationships more in the long run, by causing feelings of resentment or mistrust to build.

Being assertive empowers you to express yourself in an honest way with others. It also allows others to know what you want or need from them, making it more likely that they will meet your needs. In other words, assertiveness can be a great tool in helping you build strong, respectful, supportive relationships with loved ones, classmates, and co-workers.

How Assertive Are You?

Ask yourself the following questions to get an idea of how comfortable you are being assertive.

- Do you ask for help when you need it?
- Do you express anger and annoyance appropriately?
- Do you ask questions when you're confused?
- Do you volunteer your opinions when you think or feel differently from others?
- Do you speak up in class fairly frequently?
- Are you able to say "no" when you don't want to do something?
- Do you generally speak in a confident manner?
- Do you look at people when you're talking to them?

How to be Assertive

Being assertive can be difficult for many people, for many different reasons. However, all of us can benefit from knowing and respecting our own values, boundaries, and needs. If you know what you want and what you believe going into a situation, it can be easier to express yourself in a clear and assertive manner to others.

Other Tips for Being Assertive Include:

- Give yourself permission to be angry, say "no," ask for help, and make mistakes
- Learn assertiveness skills by understanding and practicing
- Practice good communication skills, including
 - Direct eye contact
 - Steady, confident voice
 - Facial expression and body posture matching your statements
- Practice asserting yourself with people you feel safe with, such as friends and family and ask for feedback.

