

Assertiveness

Learning to be **assertive** can reduce difficulties with anger.

- When we are **AGGRESSIVE**, we attack the other person.
- When we are overly *passive*, we allow others to attack us.
- **Assertion** is often described as the middle road between being **AGGRESSIVE** and *passively* allowing someone to take advantage of us.

Passive – Assertive – Aggressive



Example 1. Standing up for ourselves without attacking the other person.

For example, here are three responses to someone who calls us "stupid."

AGGRESSIVE: (shouting) "If you think I'm stupid, you are an idiot!"

Passive: (hanging head, saying nothing)

Assertive: (calm and firm) "You might think I'm stupid, but let's get back to the real issue, which is XYZ."

Or an assertive response may accept any truth to the criticism, but at the same time stands up for you. For example, you might say something like this: "I can see how that seems stupid to you, but actually I have some good ideas. I guess that didn't come across to you".

Example 2. Express our wants and needs in a straightforward way.

Suppose you are coming home from work, and your children all start asking for your attention at once.

If you are tired and try to satisfy all their needs (*passive*), you may start feeling overwhelmed and eventually blow up in anger at them (AGGRESSIVE).

It is often better to be assertive and say something like this: "I'm really tired and need a few minutes to myself before I can play with you."

This gives you time to regroup, remember how much you love your children, and prepare yourself for spending time with them and/or setting limits as necessary.

In this way, assertion can reduce the frequency of being treated unfairly or being taken advantage of, and therefore can prevent situations that give rise to anger.

Summary

- Being Assertive is standing up for ourselves without attacking the other person.
- An assertive response may accept any truth to a criticism, but at the same times you stand up for you
- Being assertive is expressing our wants and needs in a straightforward way

Four Strategies to Help You Plan and Practice Assertive Responses

1. Use "I" statements rather than "You"
2. Acknowledge any truth in someone's complaints about you, and at the same time stand up for your own rights.
3. Make clear and simple statements of your wants and needs, rather than expecting other people to read your mind or anticipate what you want.
4. Focus on the process of assertion rather than results.

Thoughts and Assumptions That Interfere with Being Assertive

1. "If you really like/love me, then you will know what I need."
2. "People won't like me if I say no."
3. "Why bother? I'm not going to get what I want anyhow."
4. "It's not worth the argument it is going to create."
5. "I can live with this the way it is."
6. "If someone is not speaking nicely to me, I don't need to respond nicely."