

Becoming Assertive

A big part of being successful in college and the workplace is being able to be assertive without being aggressive. Learning this skill will help people stand up for themselves. These tips can also be used to diffuse situations and improve communication within any relationship.

Level 1:

Set a personal limit by politely making the request clearly understood. This is not a statement of superiority. It is a simple and honest expression of needs or wants. State how you feel and what you want the other person to do differently. To keep it respectful, use the “I” statement:

“I feel _____. Would you mind _____.”

Level 2:

Politely repeat your limits or boundaries. You can insist on your needs without becoming agitated or insulting. The fact that you haven’t backed down after your first request gives this request power without you having to change your demeanor or attitude. Try saying:

“Pardon me again. I really do need you to _____.”

Level 3:

If the conflict has still not been resolved, it is time to describe the consequences of not respecting your limits. This is the point where most people back down, even when their needs are vital to their well-being. Most of us have a hard time getting tough, but it is a fact of life that we must take action to protect our limits. Your consequence may be as simple as walking away, or it may be more complicated. State your side:

“This is something that is important to me. If you can’t _____, I’ll have to _____.”

Level 4:

Be careful what you say in level three, because you have to back up what you say if the behavior continues. Consequences could be walking away, calling for help, or refusing to talk to this person again. Be strong and follow through. This will be the difference between being someone’s doormat or having confidence and independence.

“I see you have chosen not to respect my wishes. As I said, this means that I will _____.”