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Assertiveness

how to take more control over what matters to you

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Today

- What is assertiveness and why is it important for you?
- Strategies for building your assertiveness techniques
- An opportunity to practice, and receive feedback
- Resources and support



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What is assertiveness and why does it matter?



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Assertiveness

- Someone who is assertive behaves confidently and is not frightened to say what they want or believe (Cambridge Dictionaries Online)
- Confident and direct in claiming one's rights or putting forward one's views (Collins English Dictionary)
- Confident and forceful behaviour (Oxford Dictionaries Online)



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***Assertiveness is a form of
behaviour and a communication
skill that we can learn to use,
build strategies for, practice and
improve***



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Without assertiveness....

- Powerless
- Unheard
- Frustrated
- Resentful
- Regretful
- Unhappy
- Stuck



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And with assertiveness...

- In control
- Listened to
- Satisfied
- Respected
- More confident
- Happier
- Able to bring about change



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Your examples

- In threes, spend 15 minutes talking about examples where you have used, or observed, effective assertive behaviour
- What makes these examples of assertiveness?
- What did the people involved do?
- What can you say are the key components of effective assertiveness?



Effective assertiveness components

- Appropriate context and timing
- Discussion / interaction / conversation (2-way)
- Clear objectives
- Considered, researched, planned talking points
- Sources of advice / sounding-boards

What happens if you overdo assertiveness?



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Your assertiveness strategies



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Ask yourself:

- What are you thinking and feeling about the situation?
- What outcome are you looking for, and what needs to happen to bring this about?
- Why is the other person / people taking that position?
- How and when can you approach the situation to begin a dialogue?
- How can you put your point across clearly, and calmly?
- Where can you find additional support and advice?



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Now in more detail...



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Reflection

- Why is this situation important to you?
- How are you feeling about it as it stands?
- What has stopped you from addressing the situation before?
- How can you build an assertive strategy to engage with what you want to change?



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Outcome

- What precisely do you wish to address?
- What is your end goal?
- What exactly needs to happen to reach this point?
- What are your key parameters / non-negotiables?
- How can you track progress / establish markers for identifying that the right steps are being taken?



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Understanding

- What has led the other person / people to assume the stance they have?
- How can you illustrate you recognise their point of view?
 - ... but still maintain your own position?
- How can you start the discussion?
 - ... and at what point do you decide they have understood you?



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Approach

- Where and when are you going to have the conversation?
- How are you going to maintain a positive approach?
- What information do you need to prepare effectively?
- At what points might you decide to stop the conversation?



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Communication – words and phrases

- Prepare your key phrases in advance – practice them so that they are clear and non-escalatory
- Be prepared to repeat them, perhaps more than once
- Be prepared to clarify when asked, or check that your responder has understood
- Have some responses ready too – in case there is push-back / surprise



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Communication – Body Language

- Speak clearly, calmly and confidently
- Maintain good eye contact
- Stand or sit so that you feel comfortable, *and* in control
- Try to avoid ‘nervous in knots’ body language
- Don’t be afraid of pauses or moments of silence – you both might need them
- Remember to keep breathing



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Support

- Who could you ask for advice / to act as a sounding-board / practice your approach with?
- Would it be helpful to have someone else present?
- Who might support you after your assertive conversation?
- What other resources might be relevant?



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Time to practice...



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Assertiveness scenarios

- **At home** – challenging an assumption
- **At university** – defending a position
- **At work** – negotiating a role or decision



Assertiveness practice

- Work in threes:
 - Asserter **A, B, C**
 - Responder **B, C, A**
 - Observer **C, A, B**
- Preparation: agree who is leading on which example, review and prepare scenarios – **15 minutes**
- **A** leads dialogue with **B**, who responds, and **C** observes
- Swap round so each person acts as asserter, responder and observer – **10 minutes per rotation**



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Feedback

- How did the Asserter feel?
- How did the Responder feel?
- What did the Observer notice?



Resources and support

- Each other
- Tutor / supervisor
- Mentor
- Inspiring examples / stories
- Texts:
 - Anne Dickson, 2002, *A woman in your Own Right*
 - Gael Lindenfield, 2001, *Assert Yourself*
 - Susan Newman, 2006, *The Book of No*
 - Allan and Barbara Pease, 2005, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*



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To summarise

- A lack of assertiveness can impact our lives negatively
- We can all build strategies to be more assertive
- By practicing we can learn how to be more effectively assertive
- This will improve our confidence and help us to be more in control of what matters to us



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