

Practicing Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is direct and respectful. When using assertiveness skills to handle a difficult situation, you tell the other person what is bothering you (in a tactful way) and ask for a specific response. Think about a situation involving a conflict with another person. Use the prompts below to practice how you can use assertive communication to help resolve the problem. Remember, the only person you can directly change is yourself. Do the best you can, but realize that there are no guarantees the other person will respond appropriately. Being assertive does give you a better chance for a positive response.

1. **Describe the problem between you and another person.** (For example, *"Bob is always late when we are supposed to go out together, and I've had it!"*)

2. **Plan how you will explain the problem to the other person.** Try to avoid words like "always" and "never," and to be as objective as possible. (For example, *"Bob, you were nearly an hour late today. You have been more than half an hour late the last three times we were supposed to go out."*)

3. **Explain how the other person's behavior has affected you.** Use "I" statements ("I feel...") and describe your reaction. (For example, "I'm feeling really frustrated and irritated because I don't like arriving late. We missed the first part of the movie, and that bothered me a lot.")

4. **Tell the other person what you would like them to change.** Be specific. You may also say what you will do differently. (For example, "I really need for you to be on time when we are going out. I would be glad to call or text you to remind you, if that would help. If you can't commit to being on time, I'm just going to go ahead separately and meet you there.")
