

Quick Guide: Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a life skill; useful both inside and outside work. However, the reactions and behaviours we employ now are the result of years of fine tuning. Being assertive doesn't happen overnight, but the more practice you get, the more skilled you become. And while you may not always get what you want, you will always know you gave it your best. So here are the **top ten tips** for improving your assertive behaviour:

1. **Believe in yourself more** - always think positively and feed yourself with positive inner dialogue. Stand in front of a mirror, look yourself in the eye, and tell yourself how wonderful you are!
2. **Recognise that you can never change other people.** You can only change what you do; and that a change in your behaviour will afford others the opportunity to behave differently towards you.
3. **Learn to respond, not react.** Start choosing how to behave, based on admitting and accepting the consequences. Accept that you – and only you – have made that choice: nobody has forced you into it.
4. **Stop beating yourself up** for your decisions and behaviours. Instead, turn every situation into a positive learning opportunity for future behaviour change.
5. **Watch your body language.** Make sure it matches your words: people tend to believe what they see rather than what they hear.
6. **Use the green cross code:** Stop Look Listen - then think about how you want to respond. This will ensure you stay in control of you and the situation, and afford others the opportunity to do so as well.
7. **Aim for situation resolution, not self defence.** Concentrate on the situation rather than your own feelings, and recognise that the other person is most probably angry about the situation - not with you.
8. **Consider and choose your words.** Lose the words that signal "I'm a pushover" such as "I'm terribly sorry", or "I'm afraid", or "Could you possibly...?" or "Can I just ...?". Substitute big "I" statements followed by factual descriptions instead of judgements or exaggerations. This will encourage the other person to do the same.
9. **Say "no" when you want to.** Don't forget to afford yourself all of the rights you allow everyone else to have. And if it helps, remember that you are not refusing them personally, you are refusing their request.
10. **Take a "can do" attitude.** Believe that things don't just happen to you – but that you can make them happen.

Compiled by Des Whitehorn