

Quick Guide: Delivering an Assertive Message

How many times have you bitten your tongue recently and then beaten yourself up for it afterwards? Delivering an assertive message takes confidence and practice. And the more practice you get, the more your confidence grows, helping you develop the skill of assertiveness. So here are the top ten tips to help you deliver an assertive message:

1. **Know what you want to say.** You won't appear confident if you are unsure of what you want, and you could appear foolish by asking for something that you eventually realise is not what you want.
2. **Think through the possible outcomes,** deciding how you will respond in each situation. If you know what your bottom line is, everything else is negotiable, so decide what's acceptable and what isn't.
3. **Say it as soon as possible.** Do not let too much time pass as this builds up apprehension. On the other hand, wait for the peak of your anger to pass.
4. **Say it!** Don't hesitate or beat about the bush, come right out with it! Wherever possible, practise before you say it, listening to your tone of voice. Do you sound confident?
5. **Be specific.** Say exactly what you want or do not want, what you are happy or unhappy about, so that there can be no confusion. Begin with the word "I". Remember that long explanations are unnecessary.
6. **Look the person in the eye but don't stare.** People generally feel more comfortable if you look directly at them. You simply look shifty if you cannot look them in the eye and you certainly will not come across as someone who knows what they want.
7. **Look relaxed.** You'll convey anxiety by shifting from one foot to another, waving your arms around or, conversely, being too rigid. Practise looking relaxed in the mirror, or get your best friend to give you some feedback.
8. **Avoid laughing nervously.** Smile, if it's appropriate, but if you giggle or laugh you won't look as if you mean what you say. This will only confuse the person you are speaking to.
9. **Don't whine or be sarcastic.** Be direct and honest. Whining and pleading can either annoy the person or make them feel guilty: it is being manipulative. Being sarcastic communicates hostility, as you put down the other person.
10. **Congratulate yourself on getting this far** - even if nothing happens as a result of delivering your assertive message, you will know you have given it your best.

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