

2. *Recognize that passive or aggressive behaviors are just habits.* Condemn the habit, not yourself for having it, and resolve to change it.
3. *Practice!* Pick out a couple of areas to work on (such as saying no, starting conversations, or expressing disagreement) and then practice. Habits only change with work and effort.

Why bother learning to be assertive?

When we behave assertively, we increase our control of our environment and feel better about ourselves. We are able to meet our own needs without violating the needs of others because we value both equally. Being assertive opens the door to clear communication and honest, uncluttered relationships free of manipulation and sabotage.

Remember, being assertive is a skill that is learned with practice. If you are tired of feeling controlled by others, or of feeling a need to control others, call Aspirus Employee Assistance Services. We can help you learn to be assertive.

Help is available

Aspirus Employee Assistance Services has counselors available to help you and your family. You can call the confidential helpline 24 hours a day at:

715.848.4357 ~ 800.236.4457
TDD# 715.845.4928

Remember,
Aspirus Employee
Assistance Services
is confidential.



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EAS-034 mps 11/21/07

Being Assertive



steps to becoming
more assertive



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Do you often go along with what someone else wants because you are afraid to say no? Do you feel guilty when you do say no? Is it hard for you to ask someone for help? Do you have difficulty accepting another person's right to say no? Do you resist expressing your own needs because someone else might feel hurt or might not see your needs as justified?

If you often resist communicating honestly and clearly out of fear of being rejected, making a mistake, or hurting someone's feelings, your interaction with others will frequently be stressful and unsatisfying. However, you can learn to express your thoughts and feelings appropriately, while allowing others to do the same. You can learn to be assertive.

What is assertiveness?

- Expressing your legitimate rights as an individual: your wants, needs, feelings, and thoughts. Being appropriately honest.
- Accepting another person's right to respond with their own wants, needs, feelings, and thoughts.
- Being flexible and willing to negotiate an agreeable compromise.
- Being aware of both what you say and how you say it (eye contact, posture, voice).
- Being able to change your mind without needing to offer a reason.

- Being able to make mistakes and take responsibility for them.

People who are not comfortable being assertive often will substitute passiveness or aggressiveness

What is passiveness?

- Being emotionally dishonest by not communicating or by communicating indirectly (such as pouting or sarcasm).
- Believing you are not as worthy as others.
- Believing you are too weak to get what you want.
- Believing you should never make anyone uncomfortable or displeased (except yourself).
- Always trying to smooth things over, or simply avoiding any conflict.

What is aggressiveness?

- Blaming, judging, bullying, lecturing, or threatening.
- Believing you must get what you want.
- Believing you know what is best for everyone.
- Being inappropriately honest (tactless).
- Believing you must control others in order to protect yourself.

What keeps us from being assertive?

Often we think of being assertive as being selfish or as being aggressive. Being selfish, however, means being concerned for one's own welfare in disregard of others. Being assertive, on the other hand, implies concern for one's own welfare and that of others. Aggressive behavior implies acting against another person whereas being assertive means expressing oneself clearly, but not in an attacking manner.

The desire for approval can also keep us from being assertive. To say no, to express how one feels, or to ask for help means to risk disapproval, or even rejection. A person who does not attach their own personal worth to the approval of others, is more able to be assertive.

Three steps to becoming more assertive:

1. *Recognize the irrational beliefs that often underlie passive or aggressive behavior, such as:*
 - I must have this person's approval.
 - I would be selfish if I asked for what I want.
 - I could not stand it if anyone felt upset as a result of my actions.
 - I must dominate others or they will dominate me.