

ASSERTIVENESS

Having good boundaries and self-care makes being assertive much easier. As you know and understand more about your needs you are better able to assert them.

Being assertive takes time and practice. We may not learn it overnight but as we continue to incorporate assertiveness skills into our interactions we see how effective they can be.

An unassertive “No” can be accompanied by defending explanations as a result of feeling guilty or not worthy of saying no. E.g. “I don’t think I can meet you tonight. I worked a lot today, I had people stay over all weekend, I have to feed my cat and cook and I’m not feeling well, etc.”

An aggressive “No” is done with anger and force (sometimes the anger can be subtle and/or passive aggressive). E.g. “No, leave me alone, you are so manipulative.”

An assertive “No” provides simple explanation and is direct. E.g. “I cannot meet you tonight. I need some time alone.”

Try to notice voice tones and what they convey. For example, raising your voice at the end of a sentence interjects a note of uncertainty and implies asking rather than telling.

Try standing up straight and tall when you want to be assertive. Find the balance between unassertive and aggressive posture.

Unassertive eye contact involves very little and/or is directed to the ground. Aggressive eye contact never breaks. Assertive eye contact is direct and occurs about 50 % of the time.

Note: Body language changes depending on culture and upbringing. Be aware of different non-verbal communication styles. **For more on cross cultural communication check out:** www.diversitycouncil.org/toolkit/Resources_TipSheet_NonverbalCrossCulturalCommunication.pdf

“Assertiveness is about openly communicating our feelings and establishing boundaries without guilt or fear.” ~**Cloris Kylie**

“Whenever we avoid conflict by keeping our feelings to ourselves, we do ourselves and others a disservice.” ~**Doreen Virtue**

If you say, “Yes,” when you want to say, “No,” you’ll resent what you agreed to do. **It’s honorable and authentic to say “No”.**