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| **Being Assertive**  **Assertiveness is a healthy way of communicating. It's the ability to speak up for ourselves in a way that is honest and respectful. Being assertive doesn't come naturally to everyone. Some people communicate in a way that is too passive. Other people have a style that is too aggressive. An assertive style is the happy medium between these two. An assertive communication style can help us do the things we want to do. But it goes further than that: Being assertive shows we respect ourselves and other people.**  **People who speak assertively send the message that they believe in themselves. They're not too timid and they're not too pushy. They know that their feelings and ideas matter. They're confident.**  **People who are assertive tend to make friends more easily. They communicate in a way that respects other people's needs as well as their own. They tend to be better at working out conflicts and disagreements. People who give respect get respect in return.** | | |
| **The Problems of Being Too Passive**  People who act too passively often end up feeling taken advantage of. They may begin to feel hurt, angry, or resentful.  When you hold back what you think and feel, others don't get to know or understand you as well as they could. The group doesn't benefit from your input or ideas.  If you start to feel like your opinions or feelings don't count, it can lower your confidence and rob you of the chance to get recognition and positive feedback for your good ideas. This can even lead to feeling depressed. | **The Trouble With Being Too Aggressive**  People who come across as too aggressive can find it difficult to keep friends. They may dominate conversations or give their opinions too boldly and forcefully, leaving others feeling put off or disrespected.  People with an aggressive style may get other people to do things their way, but many times they end up being rejected or disliked. They often lose the respect of others. | |
| **Look at these scenarios below and think about how you could act assertively** | | |
| **Scenario 1**  Your friends keep hanging around in your bedroom but always leave it in a mess. | |  |
| **Scenario 2**  Your friends want you to stay out with them but it’s late and you want to home. | |  |
| **Scenario 3**  Your friends offer you drugs/alcohol and you really don’t want any. They begin to tease you. | |  |
| **Scenario 4**  A family member usually with sarcasm or a putdown. She has a reputation for being bossy and insensitive | |  |
| **Create your own scenario** | |  |
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| **How to Be More Assertive**  Being assertive is a matter of practicing certain communication skills and having the right inner attitude. Some people are naturally more skilful when it comes to being assertive. Others need more practice. But everyone can improve. Here's how:  Start by considering which communication style (assertive, passive, or aggressive) comes closest to yours. Then decide whether you need to work on being less passive, less aggressive, or simply need to build on your naturally assertive style. | | |
| **To work on being less passive and more assertive:**  Pay attention to what you think, feel, want, and prefer. You need to be aware of these things before you can communicate them to others.  Notice if you say "I don't know," "I don't care," or "it doesn't matter" when someone asks what you want. Stop yourself. Practice saying what you'd prefer, especially on things that hardly matter. For example, if someone asks, "Would you like green or red?" you can say, "I'd prefer the green one — thanks."  Practice asking for things. For example: "Can you please pass me a spoon?" "Can you save me a seat?" This builds your skills and confidence for when you need to ask for something more important.  Give your opinion. Say whether or not you liked a movie you saw and why. Practice using "I" statements such as: "I'd like..." "I prefer..." or "I feel...".  Find a role model who's good at being assertive — not too passive and not too aggressive. See if you can imitate that person's best qualities.  Remind yourself that your ideas and opinions are as important as everyone else's. Knowing this helps you be assertive. Assertiveness starts with an inner attitude of valuing yourself as much as you value others. | | **To work on being less aggressive and more assertive:**  Try letting others speak first.  Notice if you interrupt. Catch yourself, and say: "Oh, sorry — go ahead!" and let the other person finish.  Ask someone else's opinion, then listen to the answer.  When you disagree, try to say so without putting down the other person's point of view. For example, instead of saying: "That's a stupid idea," try: "I don't really like that idea." Or instead of saying: "He's such a jerk," try: "I think he's insensitive."  Find a role model who's good at being assertive — not too passive and not too aggressive. See if you can imitate that person's best qualities. |
| Notice where you're best at being assertive. People behave differently in different situations. Many people find that it's easy to be assertive in certain situations (like with friends) but more challenging in others (like with teachers or when meeting new people). In tougher situations, try thinking, "What would I say to my close friends?"  When you speak assertively, it shows you believe in yourself. Building assertiveness is one step to becoming your best self, the person you want to be! | | |