


Introduction

Do you often find that others coerce you into thinking their way? Is it difficult for you to express your positive or negative feelings openly and honestly? Do you sometimes lose control and become angry at others who don't warrant it? A "Yes" answer to any of the above questions may be an expression of the common problem of lack of assertiveness.

Learning to be assertive can help you express yourself in a manner that neither sells yourself short nor threatens others.

What is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is the ability to express your feelings, opinions, beliefs and needs directly, openly and honestly, while not violating the personal rights of others. Assertiveness does not in any way mean being aggressive. Aggressive behaviour is self-enhancing at the expense of others. It does not take the other individual's rights into consideration. Assertiveness is not the same as selfishness. Selfishness means being concerned about your own rights only.

What will Assertiveness do for you?

- Develop your communication skills
 - Allow you to feel self-confident
 - Increase your self-esteem
 - Help you to gain the respect of others
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Knowing Your Rights

Knowing your rights is an important step towards becoming more assertive. These basic human rights apply to all of us. They are not new or startling or revolutionary. In fact they may strike you as quite ordinary at first but many people have been helped to make a start in changing their behaviour by reviewing these rights. Simple though they sound, it takes a very long time for some of them to sink in.

1. You have the right to decide how to lead your life
2. You have the right to your own values, beliefs, opinions and emotions
3. You have the right not to justify or explain your actions or feelings to others
4. You have the right to tell others how you wish to be treated
5. You have the right to express yourself and say "No", "I don't know", "I don't understand", or even "I don't care"
6. You have the right to ask for information or help
7. You have the right to change your mind, to make mistakes
8. You have the right to like yourself even though you're not perfect
9. You have the right to change, enhance or develop your life in any way you determine
10. You have the right to have positive, satisfying relationships and the right to change or end relationships if they don't meet your needs



Learning to become more Assertive

1. Identify your personal rights, wants and needs
 2. Identify how you feel about a particular situation (e.g. "I feel angry", "I feel embarrassed", "I like you")
 3. In describing your feelings, use "I" messages. Use these "I" statements to express your feelings instead of evaluating or blaming others, (e.g. "I feel hurt" vs. "You hurt me" or "You are inconsiderate")
 4. Connect your feeling statement with some specific behaviour in the other person, (e.g. "I felt hurt when you left without saying goodbye" vs. "I felt hurt because you were inconsiderate")
 5. Be direct - deliver your message to the person for whom it was intended. Express your request in one or two easy to understand sentences. State your point of view without being hesitant or apologetic.
 6. Try not to make assumptions about what the other person is thinking or feeling, about what their motives are, or about how they may react. Check things out with them first.
 7. Avoid sarcasm, character assassination or absolutes (e.g. using words like, "you never...", "you always...", "you constantly....", etc)
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8. Avoid statements beginning with “Why”, “You.....”. This may put the other person on the defensive

9. Ask for feedback: “Am I being clear?”, “How do you see this situation?”. Asking for feedback helps correct any misperceptions you may have, as well as helping others realise that you are open to communication and are expressing an opinion, feeling, or desire rather than a command.

10. Evaluate your expectations. Are they reasonable? Be willing to compromise.

Where to find help:

Student Counselling Service

Room 010 on the ground floor of the main building. Left after the yellow staircase on the main corridor and left again.

Tel: ext 2635 (from outside 4042635)

E-mail: aisling.obrien@it-tallaght.ie

Some Reading

There is a wealth of literature on assertiveness in most large book shops. Below are some books available in the **College Library**:

Assert Yourself: a self-help assertiveness programme
- Gael Lindenfield

How to stand up for yourself
- Paul Hauck

Managing Anger
- Gael Lindenfield

Assertiveness: A Practical Approach
- Stephanie Holland

Assert yourself: how to do a good deal better
- Robert Sharpe

A woman in your own right
- Anne Dickson

Assertiveness for managers
- Terry Gillen

Assertiveness



Student Counselling Service

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