



Assertive Communication

Dare to assert yourself



Perhaps it is not what we do best, but communication is what we do most. The good news is that we can improve the quality of our communication by adopting various techniques, especially through assertive communication which is sometimes also referred to as non-violent communication.



In the etymological sense of the term, communication means entering into a relationship with another person to exchange, share and transmit information. The term “assertive” comes from the verb “to assert”, which means affirming your own view and stating your opinion in a hostile environment. From that starting point, we can therefore say that assertive communication consists in expressing clearly, directly and precisely our own feelings and needs to other people, without at the same time frustrating or offending them; in other words by respecting their particular needs and feelings. This type of communication applies in both professional and personal (family, friends etc.) life.

Being assertive enables interpersonal relationships to be strengthened by lessening tension and stress; acting in harmony with yourself; daring to express your views; seeking to satisfy your needs and, with that end in view, learning how to know and recognise them; taking a position and knowing when to say “no” or “yes” and accept the consequences of doing so,

Practising assertive communication

When a conflict arises, it is important to enter into a dialogue with your discussion partner in an attempt to find a solution. Do not start a boxing match! Assertive communication will make this dialogue possible. The first step is to analyse the situation. That analysis takes place in four different phases. To better memorise them, here is a useful reminder **S.E.L.F. (me)**

1) **S**ituation

Describe the facts, nothing but the facts, without any judgment, interpretation or assessment,

e.g. You are late (judgment)

We had an appointment at 19.00, it is now 20.00 (assertive communication)

2) **E**motion

Describe what I feel, how I feel in relation to the situation, once again without any judgment or interpretation.

e.g. When I see you turning up at 20.00 although we had an appointment at 19.00, I feel annoyed, I'm angry.

3) **L**ink to emotion

Our emotions are linked to our basic needs: love, respect, security, freedom... to our wishes.

e.g. When I see you turning up at 20.00 although we had an appointment at 19.00, I feel annoyed, I'm angry because I need respect.

4) **F**ormulating the request

I must formulate my request positively, in a concrete and feasible way so as to satisfy my need and open a dialogue.

e.g. When I see you turning up at 20.00 although we had an appointment at 19.00, I feel annoyed, I'm angry because I need respect, I would like you to telephone me to let me know you are going to be late.

In brief:

Take 5 minutes for yourself (**SELF**) before answering

Describe the **S**ituation objectively

Identify the **E**motion or emotions that are felt

Establish a **L**ink with the need(s)

Formulate a request

Advice on being assertive

To engage effectively in assertive communication, it is important to avoid factors that pollute communication, such as:

- The word « You »:
The « you » accuses and aggresses your discussion partner. Say « I » instead.
- « We, he, they, ... : » those words lack precision. Say : « I, we », name the persons.
- Avoid generalisations: « Often, always, never » which are subjective, be precise:
« 2 days ago, yesterday, 4 times a week »...
- Negative turns of phrase: our brain cannot understand them.
- Doubt and the conditional tense: this echoes an uncertainty, a risk of failure.
- Injunctions : « We must, I must » which suggests a constraint. Instead say « I propose, I choose »

To help you to be assertive, the following table summarises the Musts and Don'ts of Assertive Communication.

MUSTS	DON'TS
Clear and precise term (I, me).	Imprecise term (one).
Simple, positive formulations.	Negative terms of phrase.
Defend your own thoughts and feelings while respecting those of other people.	Use of « You ».
Be precise, concrete.	Generalisation.
Deal with matters privately before dealing with them in public.	Doubt.
Refer to your discussion partner's value system.	Use of the conditional tense.
	Do not let disputes build up, do not ask the impossible.
	Avoid comparisons.
	Avoid cutting irony.
	Avoid gestures (huffing & puffing, rolling your eyes).

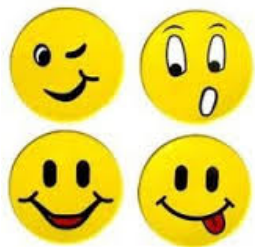
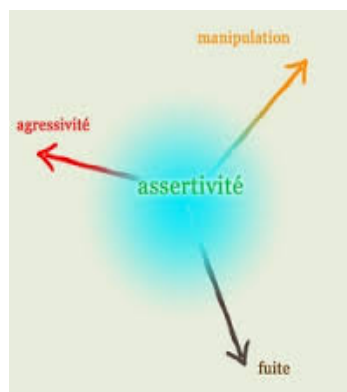
Being assertive means being neither a hedgehog nor a doormat; not trying to manipulate but seeking consensus



Don't be on the defensive all the time, ready to bite. Defend your point of view without aggressiveness, while accepting the fact that other people may have different opinions.



Don't do or say things to please other people, to gain appreciation. Trust yourself. If you meet with a refusal, it is not you who is being rejected but your request. Similarly, if you refuse that is not the same thing as rejecting the other person. In brief, draw a distinction between the object of the request and the person who is making the request.



Act without any kind of manipulation
Avoid flattery, making the other person feel guilty and exaggeration; but do assert yourself.



Find an agreement: win/win situation

Explain the facts objectively. Say what you feel, formulate your request and find a solution that suits everyone.