

## **Assertive Communication**

Assertive communication is based on the belief that you have the right to have your say, to make decisions and to ask for what you need. Alberti and Emmons, in their book on Assertive Behavior, describe assertive behavior this way:

"Assertive behavior enables us to act in our own best interest, to stand up for ourselves without getting too stressed about it, to say honest feelings without getting upset, and to act on our own rights without stepping on the rights of others.

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**To act in my own best interest** means to make decisions about your life, to act on decisions, to trust your own judgment, to set goals and work to achieve them, to ask for help from others and to be comfortable with other people.

**To stand up for myself without getting too stressed** means things like saying "no". It means setting limits on your own time and energy, responding with your own point of view when others criticize you, and saying what you think.

**To express honest feelings comfortably** means being able to disagree, to show anger, to show people you like them, to admit when you are afraid, to let others know you agree with them, and to do what comes to you in the moment.

**To act on my own rights** means you can let other people know what you think, you can work for change, you can defend your own rights, and you can defend the rights of others.

**While not stepping on the rights of others** means that you do the things that you just talked about without cutting down anyone else, without hurting anyone else, without name calling, without forcing other people, or playing games with others or controlling them.

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A useful technique for making your opinions known is called an "I Statement". "I statements" are best in those times when you are bothered by what someone close to you says or does. The most important thing about an I statement is that you admit that you are bothered (or scared, excited, angry, etc.) rather than accusing the other person with a "you" statement.

# ASSERTIVENESS

## Assertiveness helps me to:

Act in my own best interest,

Stand up for myself without getting too stressed about it,

To express honest feelings comfortably,

Act on my own rights...

While not stepping on the rights of others.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN CHOOSING TO BE ASSERTIVE

1. My rights are important. Others' rights are important too.
2. I have the right to act in my own best interest.  
Others have the right to act in their own best interest.
3. Disagreement does not mean they reject me, or vice versa.
4. I am responsible for what I think and feel.  
I am not responsible for what others think and feel.
5. I can not read minds. I do not know what someone else is thinking.
6. Others can not read my mind.
7. Making my needs and wants known means I am more likely to get what I ask for.
8. Asking people to explain what they are saying will show that I am really interested.
9. I have the right to say "no".
10. Confidence or Assertiveness builds a little at a time. With practice it will come more naturally.

From: "Alliance Peer Advocacy Service" Training Manual, Syracuse, New York, 1988.