

Strategies and Resources: Assertiveness Issues and Solutions


What does the word 'assertive' mean to us?

- Assertiveness can be us sticking to our opinions in a non-confrontational manner. Being assertive and being aggressive are both different things. Try to be aware of not moving over to being aggressive or bullying - this can feel like a fine line at times, especially if emotions are running high.

What does being assertive look like? What types of people and attributes do we associate with assertiveness?

- Confidence and remaining calm and in control- being assertive can be done in a quiet but forceful manner. How we are feeling regarding our place within the power balance of a relationship can impact how confidently we feel about showing assertiveness.

It may feel easier and more natural to be assertive within a professional or work role, as our position and knowledge of the situation are concrete, and understandable boundaries are in place. Things are not always as clear and easy to see within personal relationships.



What kinds of situations do we wish we could be more assertive in? Can we identify what stops us from being assertive?

- Within difficult or strained relationships our self-belief in our ability to be assertive can be lacking. Some of those close to us may know how to upset us and ‘push our buttons’.

This can make it tough to remain level-headed. We cannot always change others’ opinions of ourselves no matter how hard we try. This can lead to replaying events over and over in our heads building up emotions of frustration, despair or even anger.

We may have difficulty in letting these feelings and re-enactments go. Try not to enter into a conversation if you are feeling highly emotional. Take some time out first.

A fear of unknown reactions may prevent us from being assertive. We may worry about our professional reputation or personal relationships.

What strategies can we use/put in place to help us assert our needs/wishes in the future?

- Practicing being assertive with those we trust is a safe starting point. It helps to try skills out within an equal and mutually respectful relationship.
- Within professional roles the types of clothing we wear may help us to feel more confident and able to speak up about our opinion. Almost like putting on armour.
- ‘Faking’ assertiveness or putting on a persona may be another tactic to use within a working environment to protect and guard ourselves. If you are doing this, try to make time to speak to someone you trust about how you are truly feeling and remember to give yourself plenty of recovery time. Any kind of masking or faking is exhausting.
- Remember that some people will not budge or change their opinions. Work out how much of your energy is worth going over the same ground with these people.

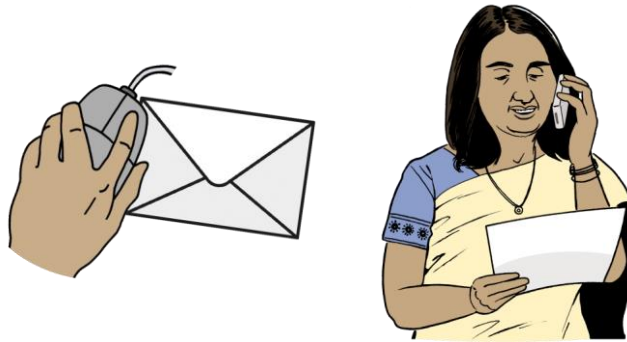


Things to Consider:

- Take time to think about what your needs are and what boundaries you would like to have in place with people
- These boundaries may change depending on factors such as; our mood, the environment, how well we know people etc.
- Take time to consider situations that may come up that feel challenging or difficult
- What do you need to prepare in advance to help prevent getting into an uncomfortable position or feel like you are being taken advantage of?

Contact Us

This guide was produced by **Autism AIM**, part of The Advonet Group. We are a free service co-led by and run for autistic adults (aged 18+) in the Leeds, Bradford and Craven areas.



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