

Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a communication skill that can be helpful in a variety of contexts, including academia. In a qualitative study by Jackson, Smith, and Hill (2003) that examined academic persistence among Native American college students, assertiveness was identified as a factor that helped Native American student success. So what is assertive communication anyway?

Assertive Communication is HARD.

H: Honest-How do you feel?

A: Appropriate-There's a time and a place for everything.

R: Respectful-How would you like to be treated?

D: Direct-Specifically, what do you want?

Assertive Communication	Non-Assertive Communication	Aggressive Communication
Honest	Not Honest	Honest
Appropriate	Appropriate	Not Appropriate
Respectful	Respectful	Not Respectful
Direct	Not Direct	Direct

Simple Assertive Responses: Used to communicate your preferences, needs, wants, or decisions in a simple, brief, and straightforward manner. By responding with a simple assertive response, you are communicating that you 1) have the right to have your preferences and 2) it's good for the relationship to let your preferences be known.

Simple Assertive responses can be used to 1) respond to a request made of you, or 2) present your request to another person.

Main Ingredients of a Simple Assertive Response:

1. Start out with the word "I".
2. Use a verb conveying preference ("want", "need", "prefer", "would like").
3. State what the preference is without lengthy apology or explanation.
4. Examples:
 - A. *I really would like your help with this group project.*
 - B. *I prefer not to go to the movies tonight.*
 - C. *I very much want to talk to you about a problem I'm having with the kids.*

- D. *I need to finish my homework first. Then I can discuss plans for this weekend.*
- E. *I don't understand the material we are covering in class. Can I schedule an appointment during office hours to talk about this further?*

Confronting Assertive Responses: Used to communicate 1) what your feelings or views are 2) about the other person's specific behavior that is having 3) a specific impact or inconvenience for you.

Confronting Assertive responses can be used when you realize that you are having difficulty with another person's actions, particularly if you have expressed your feelings or preference before.

Main Ingredients of a Confronting Assertive Response:

1. I feel (type of emotion) about; or I'm having difficulty with...
2. One of your behaviors (be specific)
3. Because it has this result for me (be objective in stating facts)
4. You may ask whether the person is willing to respect your wishes.
5. Examples:
 - A. *I feel frustrated having to bring the dirty dishes in the sink to your attention again because the problem seems to be continuing. I don't like having to load the dishwasher for dirty dishes I did not use. It's important to me as roommates that we each are responsible for keeping a clean kitchen area.*
 - B. *I feel disappointed that you have not returned my phone calls as it leaves me wondering if you are upset with me. I understand that you are busy and I am wondering if there is some way for you to acknowledge my calls even if you don't have time for a lengthy discussion.*

Discussion Question:

1. What do you find challenging in asserting your thoughts, feelings, and/or needs (e.g., asking for help)?
2. What has helped you to assert your thoughts, feelings, and/or needs?

