

How to Be More Assertive

If you have difficulty with assertiveness, you might have a history of being invalidated, criticized, bullied, or abused.

Maybe when you did stand up for yourself in the past, you were attacked. So it felt safer to go with the flow.

There are some situations, however, when you need to take a stand. And if you're ready to do that, these are the worksheets for you!

Here's how to cultivate assertiveness in five steps.

Step 1. Establish Your Why

Being more assertive is hard. Figuring out how assertiveness will benefit you will help you stay motivated - even when it gets tough.

Here are just a few reasons why assertiveness is a good thing. Tick the reasons that speak to you. Elaborate on them and note anything else you can think of in the box below.

- Assertiveness will help me get my wants and needs met.**
 - By being more assertive, people will know what my wants and needs are.
 - Them knowing increases the likelihood that they will help me or change behaviors that are unhelpful.
- Assertiveness will bring me closer to the people in my life.**
 - If they know my wants and needs, they'll know me better, too.
 - Sharing more about myself will help them feel comfortable sharing more about themselves, therefore bringing them closer.
- Assertiveness will help me clarify who is worthy of my energy and time.**
 - If I repeatedly ask for my wants and needs to be met and the other person doesn't honor those wishes, it may be in my best interest to reduce their role in my life.
- Assertiveness will increase my self-esteem.**
 - Standing up for myself will help me be myself.
 - When I am more myself, I will feel like I am living in better alignment with my values.
- Assertiveness will help me advance my career.**
 - Like everyone else, my boss cannot read my mind. If I don't ask, I won't get.
 - By asking, I increase my chances of a getting a raise, a promotion, etc.



Step 2. Practice Assertiveness

Tip 1. Develop a Script

Sometimes, in the moment, it can be hard to think of what to say. So, decide on some go-to lines.

- "No, thank you."
- "Please stop."
- "I'm not comfortable with that."
- "That won't work for me, but this is what would..."
- "When you [name a specific behavior], I feel [emotion], because [reason]."

Tip 2. Practice Scripts in the Mirror, With a Friend, or With a Therapist

It may feel silly, but role playing really does help! It shows that you're capable of being assertive and increases your confidence.

Role play with situations you're currently facing, even if you don't actually plan to be assertive in those situations in real life.

How and when will you practice your scripts? Plan below.

Tip 3. When in Doubt, Delay

In the moment when you're presented with an opportunity to be assertive, you may freeze and forget your scripts.

When this happens, delay giving a firm answer so you can buy yourself more time to think.

Here are some ways to do that. Plan how you'll delay below.

- "I need some time to think about it."
- "Let me get back to you on that."
- "I need to get some more information before I decide."



Step 3. Make and Rank a List of Situations / People Where You Want to Be More Assertive

Here's an example list. Tick the boxes that apply and add more as appropriate.

- At work
- With my co-workers
- With my boss
- At school
- With my teacher
- With my peers
- With my parents
- With my brothers / sisters
- With my friends
- With my therapist
- On social media
- In public
- With acquaintances

Some people find it easier to be assertive at work than at home. For others, it's the opposite. So, rank each item in your list, beginning with the easiest situation to be assertive in (starting with #1), and ending with the hardest.

If 2 or more items are about the same, go by your personal preference. Where would you rather start practicing?

Example Ranked List

- 1: *With my soccer team - I'll start practicing here!*
- 2: *With my co-workers*
- 3: *With my friends*
- 4: *With my mom*
- 5: *With my boss - this is the hardest one that I'll practice last*

My List

- 1:
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5:



Step 4. Go Time!

Now comes the hardest part - putting your assertiveness skills into practice!

Starting with your easiest ranked situation, begin looking for opportunities to be assertive.

Notice whether or not you're able to implement your assertiveness skills. If not, ask yourself what got in the way.

Use the space below to note down your experiences and insights.

Share these experiences - *no matter how they turned out* - with a good friend, [buddy](#), or your therapist. This person can cheer you on and offer specific feedback to help you.



Step 5. Coping With Missed Opportunities and Pushback

You know when you agree to something in the moment, and then look back and think, “*Man, I wish I hadn’t done that?*”

Or when someone crosses one of your boundaries, you knew you should've spoken up, but for whatever reason, you didn't?

Here are some tips for how to cope.

Show yourself grace. Assertiveness is hard. Of course you're going to flub up now and then! Mistakes are part of the learning process. And hey, maybe there's a good reason you let this one slide.

Change your mind. Short of signing a contract, nothing is set in stone. It's totally within your rights to say any of the following:

- *“I changed my mind.”*
- *“After looking at my schedule, I don't actually have time to commit to this.”*
- *“Remember the other day when you [did a specific behavior]? I didn't know how to bring it up at the time, but that really bothered me.”*

Remind yourself that there will always be opportunities for practice. Missing one chance to be assertive is okay, because there will be more chances!

Show them grace. It's hard to cope with change. With time, people may get used to your increased assertiveness. And if they don't...

Adjust accordingly. If people aren't willing to make accommodations for reasonable requests, it may be time to re-consider the relationship. That doesn't necessarily mean you need to cut the person out entirely. You may want to reduce the time and energy you put into the relationship, knowing that you can and will find people who are able to meet your needs.

Remember that getting your wants and needs met is not selfish. No matter what the people in your life tell you, being assertive is not selfish. In fact, just the opposite. When your wants and needs are met, you're more available for the people in your life when they need you.

Summary

We first figured out why becoming more assertive is important to you.

Second, we outlined how to practice your assertiveness skills.

Third, you made and ranked a list of situations where you want to be more assertive.

Fourth, we covered putting your skills into practice, beginning with the easiest scenario on your list.

And last but certainly not least, we outlined suggestions to cope with the pushback.

We hope you found these worksheets helpful! Interested in more practical self-help tools? Check out [The Mental Wellbeing Toolkit](#) today.

