

Teen Situations for Assertiveness

What is Assertiveness?

- Interacting with people while standing up for your rights
- Avoiding aggressive or passive behavior
- Correcting the situation if your rights are being violated
- Seeking respect and understanding for your feelings
- Interacting with others in a mature way, even if they are acting nasty, defensive, or aggressive
- Confronting problems, disagreements, or personal discomforts “head on”
- Finding a “win-win” solution when handling problems
- Instead of fearing rejection or disapproval, tell yourself (and believe), “I deserve to stand up for my rights.”

Situation and possible responses: “There is someone that always asks me to do his work for him. I want to tell him “no”, but how can I say it?”

- **Passive** (avoiding eye contact): “I don’t have time right now to do your work. Maybe I can do it later.”
 - **Aggressive** (loudly, with intense eye contact): “I am so sick of doing your work for you! Why don’t you do it yourself?”
 - **Assertive** (Kindly, but firmly): “I am overwhelmed with my own work, and I don’t have time to add more. If it would help, I can spend a few minutes talking about how I would go about it, but I can’t do your work.”
- An assertiveness example: **DESC Scripting** stands for:
 - **D**escribing the situation
 - **E**xpressing what you are feeling
 - **S**pecifying what you would like to happen
 - **C**onsequences
 - **Situation:** A teenage boy was watching an intense movie and his friend started talking loudly on his cell phone.
 - **Teen:** I have a hard time hearing the movie when you are on the phone.
 - It’s really distracting to hear two conversations going on at once.
 - I need you to go to another room to use your phone, please. Or cut your call short so we can get back to the movie.
 - If you don’t, neither of us will be able to enjoy the movie, and we might as well turn it off.

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- **Friend:** OK. I'll finish this call in the kitchen and then turn off my phone. I want to watch it, too.
- **Teen:** Good. It's a really good movie and I don't want to miss any of it.

- An assertiveness example: **Broken Record Technique**
- **Situation:** A friend tells you he will take you to concert but doesn't show up
 - **Teen:** Where are you? I have the concert tickets for tonight and you said you would take me.
 - **Brother:** I can't. I have too much homework. Besides, it's not my job to drive you around.
 - **Teen:** But I bought concert tickets and you said you would take me. If you break your promise, I'll be really mad.
 - **Brother:** It's not my fault that I have so much homework. It will take me at least 2 hours to do it all.
 - **Teen:** I need to use the concert tickets I bought. You said you would take me. Mom has a meeting until late tonight. If you bring me to the concert now, you can be back home by the time you usually do your homework. I'll ask Mom to pick us up after the concert.
 - **Brother:** OK. I'll drop you off but I won't be able to stay.

- An assertiveness example: **Using "I" Statements**
- **Situation:** A girl wants her friend to stop smoking in her house.
 - **Girl:** I am worried about you smoking in my house. It is something that leaves a strong odor on you and in the place where you smoke.
 - **Friend:** It doesn't smell very strong in here. I am careful to stay by the window when I smoke indoors.
 - **Girl:** I can smell it on you. You probably don't notice it because you are used to it. I don't think smoking is good for you anyway.
 - **Friend:** I smoke to help me relax when I'm "hanging out" with you.
 - **Girl:** I don't want to breathe in the smoke from your cigarette or have the smell on my curtains and clothes. I'm worried that my mother will smell it in my room, and she'll think I am smoking.
 - **Friend:** My mother knows that I smoke and she doesn't care.
 - **Girl:** Still, I need you to go outside if you smoke. I don't want you to have cigarettes in my house anymore.
 - **Friend:** OK. I guess I should smoke less anyway.

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- An assertiveness example: **Fogging**
 - Stay calm when someone is criticizing you.
 - You may agree with parts of the statement that may be fair or useful.
- **Situation:** Your family is discussing politics at the supper table with some guests. They disagree with something you said.
 - **Young Man:** I'm glad that Congress took a stand and changed that law.
 - **Older Guest:** You are wrong. Changing that law will cause a lot of other problems. In my experience, it should have been done like this...
 - **Young Man:** I know I am not as experienced as you are, but my ideas are worth listening to. I believe
 - **Older Guest:** You do have a point there, but it wouldn't really work that way.
 - **Young Man:** When you have been through situations like this before, it was during different times. Our society is changing.
 - **Older Guest:** I wish things would go back to the way they were.
 - **Young Man:** Let's agree to disagree on this subject.
- Assertiveness example: **Negative Assertion (Agree in Part)**
 - **Father:** When I gave you a check last week, you didn't write down the amount in the checkbook. How could you forget something so important?
 - **Son:** I wrote the check for what the school told me was due, but then I wrote the number on my notebook and forgot to bring it home.
 - **Father:** I need to know how much money is left in my checkbook. Don't you know I have other bills to pay?
 - **Son:** It would have been better if I told you right away. I'm sorry the checkbook can't be used because of the missing check. I'll call and let you know as soon as I get to school tomorrow morning. In the meantime, please don't yell at me about it anymore. OK?
 - **Father:** Yes, that would be OK to write it in tomorrow. I'll pay the rest of the bills tomorrow night.
- **Accept Compliments**
 - It is OK to agree with nice things that are said about you. If you disagree, don't argue about it
 - It is OK to give credit to others as well as yourself for a job well done

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- Be kind to yourself. When you judge yourself, don't be any harsher than you would be to anyone else in your situation
- If you don't know what to say, just say "Thank you"
- **Woman:** I really messed up that dance. That was terrible.
- **Friend:** That wasn't so bad. It was still fun. You are usually such a good dancer.
- **Woman:** Thank you. I really like to dance.
- **Friend:** Remember, it's OK to make mistakes. No one is perfect.

- **Decrease co-dependency** – Avoid being an “enabler,” and having your self-esteem lowered. Enablers often protect addicted people who then continue their negative, destructive, or dependent behavior
 - Enablers may detach themselves to help deny, ignore, or avoid difficult emotions
 - They focus on the person who is ill or addicted, not their own health and safety
 - **Teen:** We are supposed to go to a meeting at school tonight about sports. Have you been drinking?
 - **Friend:** I had a drink before going to that boring meeting.
 - **Teen:** I have been trying to keep you out of trouble, but I can't do that anymore. You need to quit drinking alcohol because it hurts both you and the team.
 - **Friend:** Just go without me. You can tell me later what they said at the meeting.
 - **Teen:** I won't be making excuses this time. You need to take the consequences if you keep drinking.

Discussion:

How is assertiveness different from a passive or aggressive response?

What are some benefits of using assertiveness?

What is a risk of being assertive?

How could being assertive help your relationships?