



**WISECARER**  
Beyond Caregiving, Into Wellbeing

# HOW TO BE ASSERTIVE

The circumstances in which assertiveness is the most difficult are usually the ones in which it is most needed! For example, dealing with criticism, dealing with another's anger, dealing with requests/ demands from others, making complaints and receiving compliments.

## Assertive Communication

### Respect yourself

Your needs, wants, and rights matter just as much as anyone else's. It's perfectly fine to express what you want, as long as you're respectful toward others.

### Plan ahead

Before important conversations, think about what you need and want, and how you'll communicate it. Having specific phrases ready can make it easier.

### Express yourself calmly

Avoid giving the silent treatment, yelling, threatening, or shaming others. Instead, take responsibility for your emotions and express them calmly and factually. "I statements" can be helpful here (e.g., "I feel frustrated when meetings start late because it affects my schedule").

### It's okay to say "no."

You can't please everyone all the time. When you need to decline, be clear and honest about it—no need to make up excuses. If possible, offer to help find another solution.

**Being assertive is not** just about asserting your rights; it is important to respect the other person's right. In order for assertiveness to be effective it has to have a win/win approach.

It is important to use the I statements "I feel, I want" rather than blaming the other person as this can increase conflict and interfere with your goals.

**By focusing on your own feelings and needs it helps to keep conflict down and creates a better understanding on what you need from the other person.**

### For example:

- If you say "You're wrong" to a person, you could replace it with "I don't agree"
- If you say "I don't care" to a person, you could replace it with "I feel ignored"
- If you say "You hurt me" to a person, you could replace it with "I feel hurt"

**By using the “I statement” in 3 steps:**

- The activity (say what you see).... “I see that you are getting frustrated”
- How it is affecting you (Say what you feel)..... “I feel angry that you are shouting”
- What you would prefer to happen (say what you want) ..... I would like you to stop shouting and tell me what support you need”

**For example:**

Activity – Your loved one has not let you know where they are and returned home late

- “When I don’t know where you are”
- “I feel very worried about you”
- “I would like it in the future you could call me and tell me you are going to be late”

**Sentence starters to be more assertive:**

“I would prefer.....”  
“I care about you and it’s important to me that .....”  
“I am concerned about.....”  
“I like it when you did this.....”  
“I have a different opinion. I think that.....”  
“I have decided not to.....”

**Tips to be more verbally assertive:**

- Say “NO” when you mean it. The word no can be powerful.
- Deliver the message to the person that has control of the situation, rather than talking to others who can’t influence the situation.
- If you don’t understand the person, ask for clarification. Never assume what the person is thinking, humans are not mind readers. The wrong assumptions can lead to conflict.
- Avoid exaggerations such as “You always...” “You constantly.....” “You never....” “You are the most....”

**Body language tips when being assertive:****Respect yourself**

Looking directly at others helps communicate your message.

**Body Posture**

Assume an active, upright posture while facing the other person directly

**Distance/Physical contact**

Generally, arm's length is a good distance; not too close, not too distant. Be mindful of touching without invitation.

**Facial Expression**

Be aware of congruence, i.e. an angry message is clearest when delivered with a straight, non-smiling face.

**Voice tone, Inflection, Volume**

A level, well-modulated, conversational statement is convincing without being intimidating.

## Try the DEARMAN skill:

If you need more support, go to our [Communication Skills](#).



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