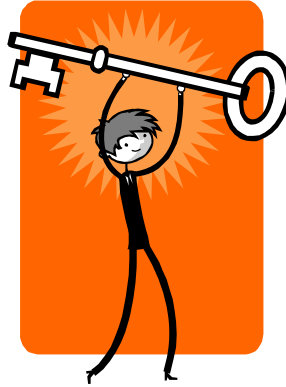


## Assertiveness and Student Success



Extracted from

<http://www.betterhelath.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Assertiveness?OpenDocument>

Do you have trouble speaking up or saying no? Do you have trouble finding the time to do the things that are important to you? If so you may need some assertiveness training. Self confidence is a very important part of attaining success as a student. Being assertive means communicating your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions to others in a direct and honest manner, without intentionally hurting anyone's feelings. Therefore it is important not to confuse assertiveness with aggression! You want to be able to be assertive which is neither aggressive or passive. You can stand up for what you want. Assertiveness is a skill that anyone can learn.

### What are the advantages of assertive behavior?

The advantages of using assertive behavior in all dealings with others include:

- Your needs, wants and feelings are understood
- Nobody's feelings are hurt
- Both parties feel respected and heard
- The relationship is strengthened by the exchange
- You experience fewer conflicts and arguments
- You feel in control of your own life (especially your academic goals!)
- Your confidence and self-esteem are enhanced (resulting in higher grades)
- You have a better chance of getting what you want. (completing your education)

### A learned skill

Like any other skill, assertiveness takes time to learn. Suggestions include:

- Decide that you want to be assertive rather than aggressive or passive.
- Think about a recent conflict and imagine how you could have handled it in a more assertive way.
- Respect the wants, needs and feelings of others, and accept that their viewpoints may be different to yours. For instance if your family or friends do not consider education important, try to explain in a factual manner why it is important to you but show respect for their opinion.
- Take a problem-solving approach to conflict, and try to see the other person as your collaborator rather than your opposition.
- Use assertive language such as 'I feel' and 'I think', rather than aggressive language such as 'You always' and 'You never'
- Don't interrupt the other person when they are talking, and try hard to listen and understand their point of view.
- Suggest that you brainstorm ways to solve the problem together. Describe why your education will improve your life and perhaps theirs.
- If the exchange doesn't go well, learn from the experience and plan how you will do things a little differently next time.

### **Body language**

When asserting yourself, suggestions include:

- Look the person in the eye
- Hold your body upright
- Consciously relax your shoulders
- Try to breathe normally and don't hold your breath
- Keep your face relaxed
- Speak at a normal conversational volume (don't yell or whisper).
- Dress appropriately, don't forget this is an important part of being taken seriously as a student and as a person!

### **Keeping your head**

Despite your best efforts to be direct and calm, the other person will sometimes behave like you're having an argument and want to yell, criticize and goad. Suggestions include:

- Tell the person you'll take up the subject again at another time, and leave.
- If you decide to stick it out - remain calm, steer the conversation back to the original point, and try to understand the other person's point of view.
- Appreciate there may be other issues motivating their behavior.
- Don't take heat-of-the-moment criticisms to heart.
- Afterwards, learn from the experience and try to think up better ways to negotiate a similar scenario.