

Setting boundaries Appropriately: Assertiveness Training

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Assertiveness Training suggests that there are essentially three different ways that people can relate to one another. They can be: **1) aggressive, 2) passive or 3) assertive.** Aggression is about dominance. Passivity is about submission and being invaded; it is fundamentally disrespectful of one's own personal boundaries. Putting one's own needs aside.

Assertiveness is about finding a middle way between aggression and passivity that best respects the personal boundaries of all relationship partners. Assertive people defend themselves when someone else attempts to dominate them, using any necessary method (including force) to repel the invasion attempt. Though they can be strong people who are capable of aggressive domination attempts, they never act in an aggressive manner, however, because they know that to do so would cause them to disrespect their relationship partner's boundaries. Another way to say this is that assertive people use aggression defensively, and never offensively. You don't have to "fight fire with fire" (i.e. aggression with aggression)

Assertiveness training is all about helping people to know that there really are situations where they have a perfect right to defend themselves from bullying attempts made by others. Once people realize that it is okay, and even proper for them to stand up for themselves; to allow themselves to feel angry when they are taken advantage of, they tend to find that actually defending themselves is not so hard. Assertive behavior basically consists of the following steps:

- realizing that you have been dominated, or taken advantage of
- feeling the angry feelings (directed towards the dominating partner, and/or to yourself for allowing yourself to be dominated)
- deciding to act to put a stop to the domination
- acting on your conviction (which involves finding a way to demand your rights be respected, while also being polite and civil about it so as not to become aggressive yourself)
- waiting for your dominating relationship partner to escalate his or her bad behavior, so as to put you back in line and force you to submit again and then
- resisting the urge to submit again in the face of escalation.

There is a certain inertia to how people relate to one another in relationships. A dominant partner is used to getting his or her way, and a submissive passive partner is used to giving the dominant partner his or her way. This pattern feels normal to both partners and any change will leave both partners feeling unsettled. **Expect to feel weird when you decide to become assertive** and change the pattern, and also **expect that your partner** (others) will feel weird too and will generally be motivated to act so as to reassert the old comfortable pattern. Because the normal amount of domination is no longer working, most dominant partners will "up the ante" and try coming on stronger so as to try to power you into submission. Don't fall for this. If you can stand your ground for a while, both of you will get used to the new pattern of you being assertive.

IMPORTANT: If you are in a relationship with this sort of abusive person, you are better off simply leaving the relationship outright rather than trying to change it. Use community resources (such as family, domestic violence shelters, court issued restraining orders and reporting to the police when incidents occur) to help protect yourself.

Read more about abuse here. ****Document created from www.mentalhelp.net ****