

Youth Club Young Volunteer Handbook

Skill Development



Assertiveness

This resource may be used free of charge by local authorities and community groups for the benefit of young People; its use for commercial gain is prohibited without the prior consent of Somerset County Council.



Training Plan

Aim: To enable young people to be more assertive

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the session the participants will:

- understand the basics of assertiveness
- judge how assertive they currently are
- practise being more assertive in the future

Time: 1 hour

Group size: 6 to 12

Venue: Medium size room with chairs

Materials: Flipchart stand, paper and pens
Prepared flipcharts (see below)
How assertive are you quiz
Basics of assertiveness handouts

Three steps to assertiveness handout
Aggressive / Assertive / Passive
Handouts

TIME	WHAT	WITH
5 mins	Explain aim of session and set basic ground rules including respect for each other, listen to who is speaking and only one person speaking at a time.	Flip chart, pens
5 mins	How assertive are you? Quiz. Ask participants to complete individually. They do not have to share their answers and should rely on their 'gut feelings'	How assertive are you? Quiz
10 mins	Ask if anyone would like to share anything about the quiz. Input - the basics of assertiveness, see handout to use as tutor note	Basics of assertiveness handout
10 mins	Assertive, aggressive passive input – prepare three flipcharts as per handouts (cartoons and speech bubbles only) and go through them, using the handout as a facilitators guide. Encourage discussion about examples of these behaviour.	Prepared flipcharts, Aggressive, Assertive, Passive handout
5 mins	How can you be assertive? Input - Three steps to basic assertion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listen • Say what you think and feel • Say what you want to happen Use handout as tutor note and then give handout	Three steps to assertion handout
15 mins	In pairs, ask each participant to identify a situation that they find difficult to cope with, and then role play each situation using the above method	
10 mins	Feedback from group about exercise	
5 mins	Ask the group to identify what they have gained from session and how it can be put into practice in relation to Youth Club Young Volunteer role.	

How assertive are you? Quiz

Before learning how to develop assertiveness, it is important to take a few moments to get some idea of where you are now. Answer the questions below honestly. They will help you to gain some insights about your current level of assertiveness.

Assign a number to each item using this scale: Always 5 4 3 2 Never 1

1.	I ask others to do things without feeling guilty or anxious	
2.	When someone asks me to do something I don't want to do, I say "No" without feeling guilty or anxious.	
3.	I am comfortable when speaking to a large group of people.	
4.	I confidently express my honest opinions to authority figures (such as my boss / teacher).	
5.	When I experience powerful feelings (anger, frustration, disappointment, etc) I express them easily.	
6.	When I express anger, I do so without blaming others for "making me cross".	
7.	I am comfortable speaking out in a group.	
8.	If I disagree with the majority opinion in a meeting, I can "stick to my guns" without feeling uncomfortable or being abrasive.	
9.	When I make a mistake, I will acknowledge it.	
10.	I tell others when their behaviour creates a problem for me.	
11.	Meeting new people socially is something I do with ease and comfort.	
12.	When discussing my beliefs, I do so without labelling the opinions or others as "crackpot", "stupid", "ridiculous", "irrational".	
13.	I assume that most people are competent and trustworthy and do not have difficulty delegating tasks to others.	
14.	When considering undertaking something I have never done before, I feel confident I can learn to do it.	
15.	I believe my needs are as important as those of others and I am entitled to have my needs satisfied.	
Total score:		

How assertive are you? Quiz Answers

If your total is 60 or higher, you have a consistently assertive philosophy and probably handle most situations well.

If your total is 45-60, you have a fairly assertive outlook. There are some situations in which you may be naturally assertive, but you may be able to increase your assertiveness through practice.

If your total is 30-45, you seem to be assertive in some situations but your natural response is either unassertive or aggressive. Working on assertiveness techniques to change some perceptions and practising new behaviour should allow you to handle things much more assertively in the future.

If your total is 15-30, you have considerable difficulty being assertive. If you work on assertiveness techniques, practise, and allow yourself time to grow and change; you can become much more comfortable in situations where asserting yourself is important.

Basics of assertiveness

Assertiveness isn't: being aggressive, making others do what you want, always getting your own way

Assertiveness is: a way of communicating which enables you to be clear about what you want and protects you from being pressured, manipulated or 'guilted' into things by other people. It helps you negotiate or 'stick to your guns' but only works if you don't try to bully other people in return.

Assertiveness means:

Respecting yourself	that is who you are and what you do
Taking responsibility for yourself	that is how you feel and what you think and do. For example 'I feel angry when you put me down' is more assertive than ' You make me feel angry when you put me down'
Making clear 'I' statements	about how you feel and what you think. For example 'I feel unhappy with this decision' and 'I think that it is a good idea to do an action plan'
Recognising your own needs and wants independently of others	that is separate from what is expected of you in particular roles, such as 'girlfriend' 'boyfriend' 'daughter' 'son'
Allowing yourself to make mistakes	that is recognising that sometimes you will make a mistake and that it is O.K. to make mistakes
Allowing yourself to enjoy your successes	that is validating yourself and what you have done and sharing it with others
Changing your mind	if and when you choose to
Asking for thinking it over time	for example when people ask you to do something and you need time to consider whether or not to do it, 'I would like to think it over and I will give you my decision by the end of next week'
Asking for what you want	rather than hoping that someone will notice what you want and moaning later that you didn't get what you wanted
Setting clear boundaries	for example 'I know that you would like me to visit you and thank you for inviting me. However, I am unable to come this weekend and would like to visit you later in the year'
Recognising that you have a responsibility towards others	rather than being responsible FOR others. Parents have responsibility for and towards their children which is different from having responsibility towards each other as adults
Respecting other people	and their right to be assertive

Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour involves people trying to get what they want, at all costs, with no regard for the feelings of other, by bullying, sarcasm, threatening or putting down other people. It can also involve less direct aggression, using manipulation and devious means like emotional blackmail and flattery.

You do: try to get what you want in any way that works
often give rise to bad feelings in others
threaten, cajole, use sarcasm

You don't respect the fact that others have rights too
look for ways that you both get your needs met - 'win-win' situations

The Aggressive Person...

You are pathetic

It's all your fault

→ domineering, taking over, wanting to change other people

→ arrogant, 'I know more than you'

→ pushy, forces others, goes too far, over the top, no room for other's choices

→ bullying, cruel, offensive, rude, bloody-minded, argumentative, violent

→ punishing with words and or silences

That's typical of you

Are you calling ME selfish?

How did I come to have you as a friend?

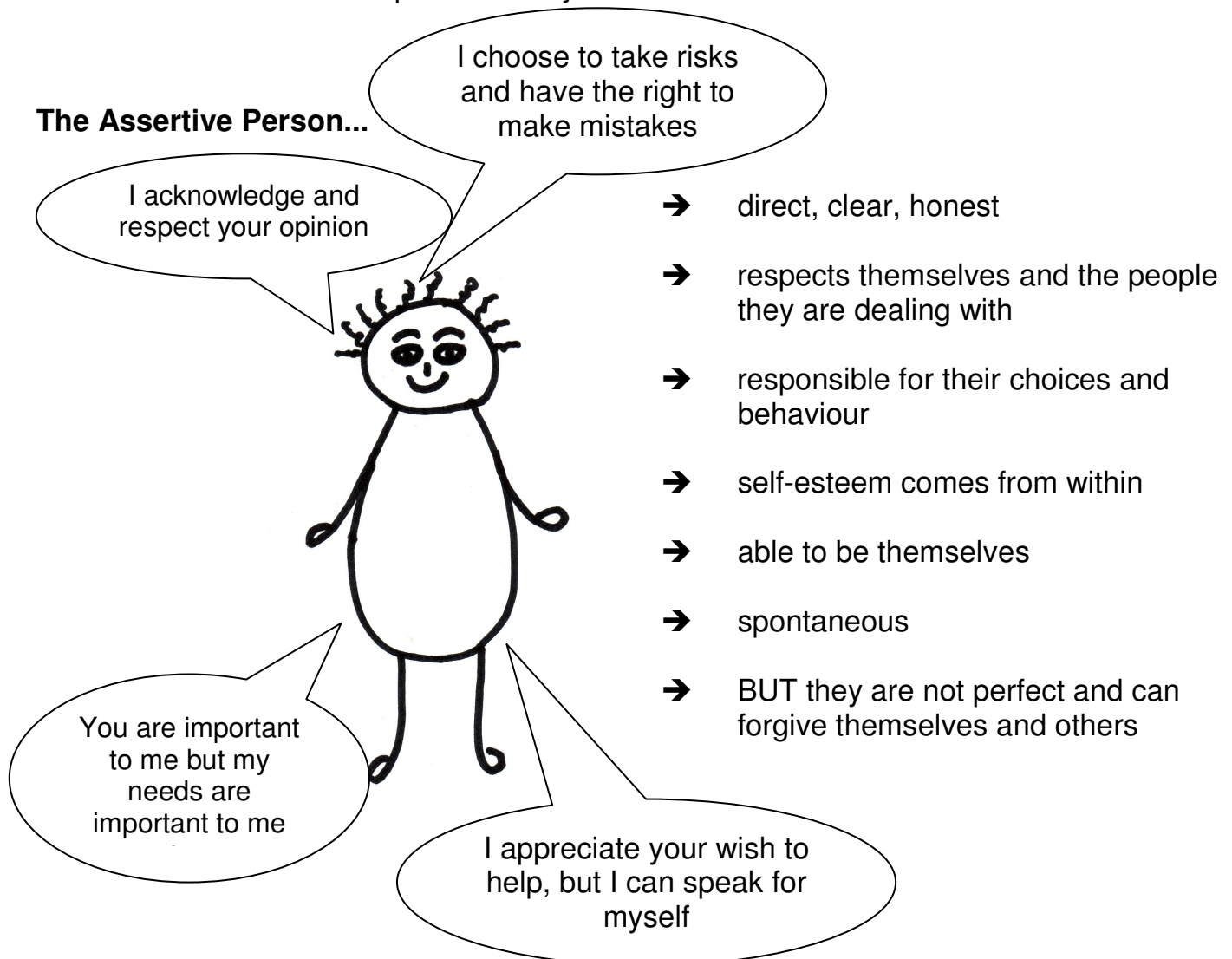
Assertive behaviour

Assertive behaviour enables people to act in their own best interests and stand up for their rights, whilst also respecting the rights and feelings of others. It enables people to express both positive and negative feelings comfortably and without undue anxiety.

You do: ask for what you want
behave openly and directly
believe in yourself
know you have rights
ask confidently and without undue anxiety
look for 'win-win' situations

You don't violate other people's rights
expect other people to guess what you want
freeze up with anxiety

The Assertive Person...



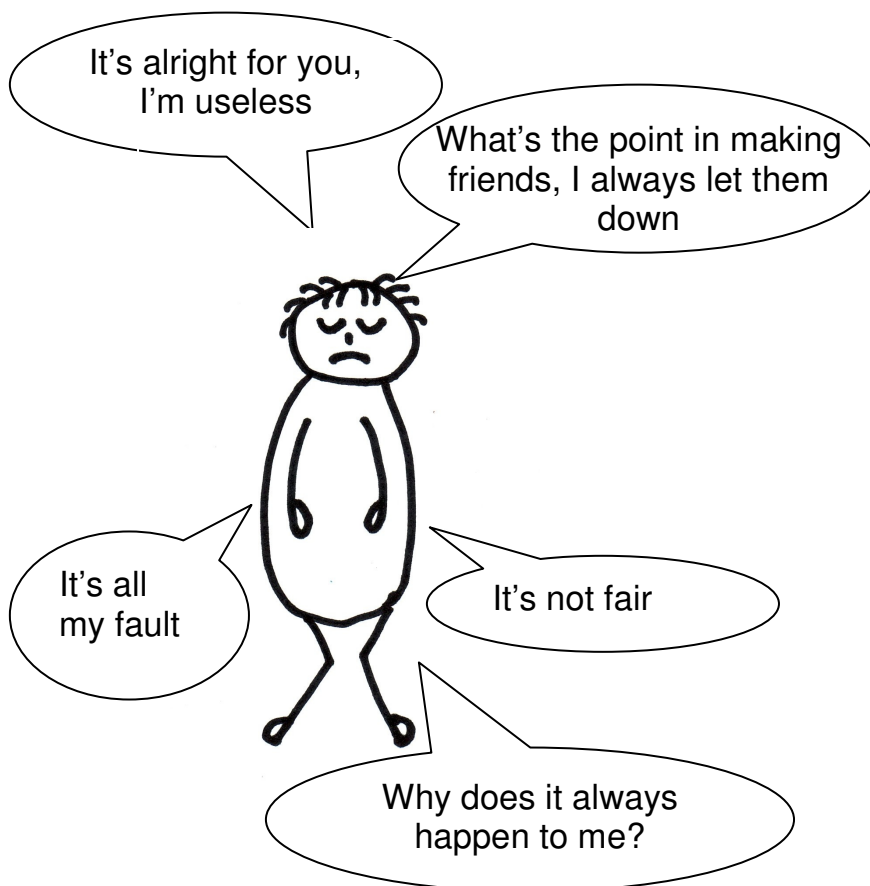
Passive behaviour

Passive behaviour involves the denial of personal feelings and rights which are rarely expressed openly. Needs are therefore seldom met, with a consequent loss of self-esteem. Typical behaviours and sighing, hinting, wishing and sulking.

You do rely on others to guess what you want
hope that you will get what you want
'Sit on' feelings
sigh, sulk, hint, wish...
feel trampled on

You don't ask for what you want
express your feelings
usually get what you want
feel good about yourself

The Passive Person...



- suffers in silence
- timid
- holds back
- finds it difficult to make decisions
- plays helpless
- inhibited
- unable to be themselves
- always apologising
- self-hating
- self-blaming

Three steps to assertiveness

Step One **Actively listen.**

Concentrate on what the other person is saying, or what their position is. Too often we spend our time thinking about our reply whilst they are speaking so that our defence or attack is ready for when they stop. By listening effectively you can demonstrate an understanding of their views or argument even if you don't wholly agree with them.

Step Two **Say what you think and feel.**

Saying what you think allows you to state your own thoughts and feelings. This should be done in a direct way by the use of 'I' Statements. Whilst this may sound easy it can prove to be a bit of a struggle to say it with confidence. Once you have taken the plunge and done it once, it becomes easier on successive occasions.

Step Three **Say what you want to happen.**

This is the most essential of the three. You need to be able to present a different or alternative view. It should be communicated in a clear straightforward way without hesitation or being too insistent. This response focuses clearly on exploring situations and not on self defence.

When you are linking steps two and three avoid using the word 'but' as your linking word. It can contradict your first statement and undervalue it. 'But' is a stopping word and can be negative and unhelpful. Think of other link words or phrases, for example:

- ◆ on the other hand
- ◆ nevertheless
- ◆ even so
- ◆ alternatively
- ◆ however
- ◆ another consideration is

For example...

One everyday situation where this technique would work is refusing a request from someone sitting next to you saying 'You don't mind if I have a cigarette do you?'

An aggressive response would be 'I certainly do mind, it's a disgusting habit!' or you could respond passively by saying 'Well no I don't really mind' when in reality you do mind.

An assertive response would be 'I can see that you would really like a cigarette, and I appreciate you asking, however I feel very uncomfortable with cigarette smoke and would prefer you not to.'

Remember:

Step One: Actively listen to what is being said and then show the other person that you both hear and understand what is being said.

'I can see that you would really like a cigarette, and I appreciate you asking'

Step Two: Say what you think and feel.

'I feel very uncomfortable with cigarette smoke'

Step Three: Say clearly what you want to happen

'I would prefer you not to'