The Educator Leadership Academy

Assertiveness Module

Questions?
For a quick reply, chat to us on Facebook.
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 Assertiveness Module

What to complete in this module.

1. Read module
2. Watch the Webinar Speaking Without Shaking – The Art Of Assertive Communication
3. Complete the Babe Assertiveness Challenge (videos are located at the TELA portal)
4. Complete the Stand My Ground Case Study

Welcome to the Assertiveness module, the final component of The Education Leadership Academy.

Do you remember the old fairy tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears?

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Goldilocks. She went for a walk in the forest. Pretty soon, she came upon a house. She knocked and, when no one answered, she walked right in. At the table in the kitchen there were three bowls of porridge. Goldilocks was hungry. She tasted the porridge from the first bowl.

"This porridge is too hot!" she exclaimed.

So, she tasted the porridge from the second bowl.

"This porridge is too cold," she said.

So, she tasted the last bowl of porridge.

“Ahhh, this porridge is just right," she said happily and ate it all up.

If your communication is too aggressive you risk destroying the relationship. If your communication is too passive you risk not getting what you want. Only when the temperature is just right are you able to maintain relationships and get things done.

Passive communication is saying something other than what we really feel. It can sometimes appear as being vague or indecisive. Sometimes being passive means we say yes when we mean no. It’s often adopting a position of being inferior. People who have a passive communication style hope they’ll get what they want but expect others to guess their wishes.

Assertiveness, on the other hand, is based on balance. It requires being forthright about our wants and needs while still considering the rights, needs, and wants of others. Assertiveness means stating clearly what we would like to happen, but without demanding it. Assertive people state their preference clearly and confidently without belittling or threatening others. Assertive people can initiate conversation, can compliment others and receive compliments gracefully, can cope with justified criticism—and can give it too.

It’s a positive way of behaving that doesn’t involve violating the rights of other people. Above all, assertive behaviour is appropriate behaviour. This can mean that it’s appropriate on occasion to be angry, or it can mean choosing not to be assertive in a particular situation or with a particular person.

In contrast, aggressive behaviour is based on competition. It means that you only act in your own best interest without regard for the needs or feelings of others. When you’re aggressive you fight for what you want regardless of how it might make the other person feel.

Aggressive behaviour is the kind that expresses feelings in a way which threatens or puts the other person down. The aim of this behaviour is for the person to get their own way, no matter what. When
we are sarcastic or manipulative, when we spread gossip or make racist or sexist remarks, we are behaving aggressively. If we win and get what we want, it probably leaves someone else with the bad feeling that they have lost. This type of behaviour destroys trust and tears apart relationships.

Aggressive behaviour reminds me of a quote from the great Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle. He said, “Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy.”

Being assertive is not necessarily easy, but it is a skill that can be learned. Assertiveness helps to build relationships at work and in other areas of your life as well.

When you act assertively you act fairly and with empathy. The power you use comes from your self-assurance and respect, not from intimidation or bullying. When you treat others with fairness and respect, you’ll be seen as a leader and someone they admire.
Write your notes from the webinar here...

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Five Traits of An Assertive Communicator

Being assertive is about respecting both yourself and the other person without compromising either person’s rights as a human being. Assertive behaviour builds strong relationships with others and allows others to feel heard and understood even though you may not necessarily agree with them.

Here are five traits of assertive people.

1. They have **confidence** in themselves. In order to be assertive you need to know what your boundaries are. You need to know what you like and what you don’t like. Some people who struggle with assertive communication allow others to make decisions for them. If you were to ask them, “What’s your favourite dessert?” they honestly wouldn’t know. For people like this, starting to make decisions for themselves is a great opportunity for self-exploration.

2. They **respect** the opinions of others. Assertive people feel confident about their opinions and beliefs, but don’t feel it’s necessary to insult or degrade another person’s opinions. Someone may feel very strongly about a particular pedagogy—in this situation an assertive person can disagree and share their opinions about the issue without denigrating the other person’s stance.

3. Assertive people have the ability to **validate** others’ feelings. An aggressive person may express the following, “You’re silly for getting angry about this”. Rather than minimising the person’s experience, an assertive person may say, “I understand you are frustrated with me, but I’m standing my ground on this decision”. Validating other peoples’ opinions often helps them to feel they are understood.

4. Assertive individuals are **good listeners**. They focus less on how they will respond and more on what the other person is saying. Assertive communicators actively listen—they make good eye contact, avoid interrupting and paraphrase to confirm understanding.

5. They are **good problem solvers** and always looking for a **win-win solution**. Not everyone gets everything they want in a work environment, but a win-win solution allows both parties to feel that they’ve had a partial victory.

Assertiveness can be a difficult skill to master. If you’ve had difficulty in the past standing up for yourself, assertiveness gets easier the more you practice. Remember that your needs are just as valuable as the needs of those around you. The more assertive you become, the more respect you’ll gain from other Educators.
Passive | Assertive | Aggressive

The differences between styles can sometime be subtle and is often dependent on the context and the relationship of the parties involved in the interaction. However, in general terms assertive behaviour includes:

- Being open in expressing wishes, thoughts and feelings, and encouraging others to do likewise.
- Listening to the views of others and responding appropriately.
- Accepting responsibilities and being able to delegate to others.
- Regularly expressing appreciation of others for what they have done or are doing.
- Being able to admit to mistakes and apologise.
- Maintaining self-control.
- Behaving as an equal to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking your needs don’t matter at all</td>
<td>Recognising that your needs matter as much as anyone else’s</td>
<td>Thinking that only your needs matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give in</td>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>Take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not talking, not being heard</td>
<td>Talking and listening</td>
<td>Talking over people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to keep the peace</td>
<td>Making sure things are fair—for you and others</td>
<td>Looking out for yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing yourself to be bullied</td>
<td>Standing up for yourself</td>
<td>Bullying others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not saying what you think, or not saying anything</td>
<td>Expressing your point clearly and confidently</td>
<td>Can lead to shouting, aggression or violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damages relationships—other people respect you less</td>
<td>Enhances relationships—other people know where they stand</td>
<td>Damages relationships—other people don’t like aggression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damages your self-esteem</td>
<td>Builds your self-esteem</td>
<td>Damages others’ self-esteem</td>
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Babe Assertiveness Challenge.

Online at the TELA portal you’ll find seven clips from the 1995 kids’ classic movie *Babe*. Watch each clip and identify whether the communication is Passive, Assertive, or Aggressive.

Characters

- Babe is the piglet voiced by Christine Cavanaugh.
- Fly is the border collie voice by Miriam Margolyes.

Circle the correct communication style in each clip.

**Clip 1 – Welcome Pig**

In this clip Fly introduces Babe to her family. Is Fly’s communication to Babe **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

**Clip 2 – Who Killed The Sheep?**

In this clip Fly tries to find out from the sheep who killed the old sheep. Is Fly’s communication to the sheep **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

**Clip 3 – Tell Me**

In this clip Fly tries again to find out from the sheep who killed the old sheep. Is Fly’s communication to the sheep **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

**Clip 4 – Show Them Who’s Boss**

In this clip Fly teaches Babe to dominate the sheep. Is Fly’s communication to Babe **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

**Clip 5 – Dominate Them**

In this clip Babe tries to dominate the sheep. Is Babe’s communication to the sheep **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

**Clip 6 – The Sheep Password**

a. In this clip Rex and the sheep negotiate the release of the *password*. Is Rex’s communication to the sheep **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

b. Is the Sheep’s communication to Rex **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?

**Clip 7 – Walk This Way**

In this final clip Babe tries to communicate to the sheep. Is Babe’s communication to the sheep **passive**, **assertive** or **aggressive**?
Developing Your Assertiveness

Assertiveness can be learned and developed by people for whom it doesn’t come naturally, and although it won’t happen overnight, by practicing the techniques presented here you will slowly become more confident in expressing your needs and wants.

As your assertiveness improves, so will your delegation skills and your ability to communicate effectively with parents. Start today and begin to see how being assertiveness allows you to work with people to accomplish tasks, solve problems, and reach solutions.

Below we list seven methods for assertive communication. Some methods may be more appropriate than others depending on the situation.

1. **Stating**

The stating strategy involves making your statement, including your emotions and following up with a consequence.

- Make the statement—direct, don’t ask
- Add emotion
- Introduce consequences

Example:

“As a senior member of staff you are expected to wear your hat outside. I’m frustrated that you don’t wear your hat. If you continually fail to wear your hat, you’ll have to wear the special hat that I’ve designed, and do a presentation to staff at the next team meeting about the importance of sun protection.”

2. **Broken Record**

The broken record strategy involves restating your message using similar language over and over again. Choose a phrase with which you will feel comfortable and, without getting angry or shouting, repeat the original assertive statement each time the person tries to divert you or asks you to change your mind. Resist the temptation to justify, answer or get angry. Eventually the person is likely to realise that you really mean what you are saying.

Example:

“I would like you to work on your portfolios now.”

“You, just finishing my lunch.”

“Your lunch break is over; I’d like you to get to your portfolios now.”

“I just need to check if I’m needed in the room.”

“I’ve organised the room. You need to do your portfolios now.”

“Ok, I’ll just put my lunch in the bin.”

“You need to do your portfolios now, you can use the bin in the programming room seeing as you’re going there anyway.”
3. Win-Win

The win-win method is a negotiated solution in which both parties see some of their interests met. This method shows that you respect the other person’s wishes and are willing to work with them to achieve your goal.

Example:

“I can see that you are very busy right now, can we arrange a time that is convenient for both of us?”

4. Ask for More Time

Sometimes, you just need to put off saying anything. You might be too emotional or you might really not know what you want. Be honest and tell the person you need a few minutes to compose your thoughts.

Example:

“Interesting idea, let me think about it and we can chat tomorrow.”

5. Reflecting

The reflecting method allows you to display empathy whilst still communicating in an assertive way.

Example:

“I understand that you’re frustrated and you need an early shift tomorrow but I can’t change people’s shifts so late in the day.”

6. Accepting

The accepting strategy is good for negotiating and building relationships. When using this strategy, you find something that you can first agree on before using a point for rebuttal.

Example:

“I agree that at times it can be inconvenient and frustrating. But you need to greet the parents with a smile when they enter. You need to do it every time, without exception.”

7. Inquiring

Using the inquiring strategy you can use questions to clarify other people’s perception of the situation.

Example:

“Were you upset by the way I addressed the topic of staff leave in the team meeting?”
Stand My Ground – Case Study

You are the co-owner of Capsicum Childcare and you have recently promoted Mary-Anne to be the Nominated Supervisor. Mary-Anne's co-worker Jackie is not happy about the promotion.

Everyone in the organisation used to get along well together but now there are frequent problems. Jackie feels she should have received the promotion and now constantly complains about it to everyone. Jackie is doing everything possible to undermine Mary-Anne and make her feel that she does not deserve the promotion. Jackie is vindictive and believes that Mary-Anne is the cause of her problems, both business and personal.

While Jackie complains to all the new employees in the centre, Mary-Anne tries to carry on with her work. She does not want to think about what is going on or even hear about it. She knows she has a centre to manage and believes that she does not need to deal with Jackie or her attitude.

Whenever the other co-owners, Tasha and Lilly hear about the situation between Jackie and Mary-Anne, each take a different position. Tasha becomes furious. She does not particularly like Jackie, and has always believed Jackie has a bad attitude. Tasha lets her temper get the better of her.

Lilly, on the other hand, thinks the whole situation is hilarious. She believes that Mary-Anne was the right person for the job and that everyone knows it, even Jackie. Whenever anyone discusses the tension in the company, Lilly makes a joke of it because she does not believe people are serious. She thinks they should all act their age and get over it. She handles the situation by making light of it.

1. Using a reflecting strategy, script out an assertive piece of communication to Jackie asking her to remain future-focused and open to change.

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2. Using a stating strategy, script out an assertive piece of communication to Jackie asking her to publicly support Mary-Anne in her position and respond positively to her ideas and opinions.

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3. Using an inquiring strategy, script out an assertive piece of communication to Tasha. Remind Tasha to respond to staff in a manner that’s respectful and engaging.

4. Using a Win-Win strategy, script out an assertive piece of communication to Lilly. Request that together you decide on a way to support Mary-Anne and resolve and respond to staff concerns appropriately.