

# Assertiveness

## Being assertive means:

- Standing up for yourself and your rights.
- Feeling comfortable enough to let your honest feelings and opinions be known.
- Acting in your own best interest while showing respect for yourself and others.

## Being aggressive means:

- Standing up for your rights while violating another person's rights.
- Expressing your feelings in a way that hurts another person.
- Getting what you want at the expense of others.

## Sometimes, it is hard to assert ourselves with others. Here are some ways to act and respond assertively:

- Try starting a conversation or planning an activity with others. If someone criticizes you or puts you down, respond to what he or she said in clear language. Use “I” statements, for example: “I do not like that”. Avoid “you” statements, for example: “You make me feel awful”. Focus on the behaviour that is upsetting you—not the person's character. Avoid negative labels, for example: “You're a rotten person”.
- Make goals for yourself and defend your right to achieve them.
- Look people in the eye and hold your head up.
- Be honest and direct when you express your needs. Do not manipulate (bully) someone into getting what you want. State clearly what you need and want rather than staying silent and looking angry.
- Your thoughts and feelings matter. Do not be afraid to express them.
- Say no to extra work or responsibilities if you have too many other things to do.
- Show your anger or disappointment in a way that does not hurt others. For example, say “I am angry and upset that we cannot go out”, rather than “I am mad at you and hate you”.
- Show respect for yourself and for others in your actions and words.