**[At work try to be more assertive!](http://www.fropki.com/work-try-more-assertive-vt6223.html)**

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**Let's say it's 5 pm on a Friday and you are hurriedly collecting your bag to go home, as you have big plans for the weekend. Suddenly, your boss asks you to report to work on Saturday morning. All you manage to say is a meek "Okay." And, with that, you ruin your entire weekend.  
  
Sounds familiar? It probably does if you are like most people who, at some time or another, exhibit 'unassertive behaviour'. That is, they are not able to stand up for themselves and convey their thoughts or feelings in an appropriate manner.  
  
What is assertiveness?  
Assertiveness refers to being able to express your thoughts, beliefs and feelings in a confident, open and honest way. "It increases self-confidence and facilitates the communication of ideas at work. With increasing competition, the importance of being assertive at the workplace is being realized to a greater extent. It's not just seen as a matter of survival, but as an indirect, powerful tool to increase productivity and efficiency," says Gaurav Agarwal, a 28-year old executive in Noida.  
  
Assertiveness, aggressiveness, passiveness  
These are different categories that are part of the behaviour continuum.  
  
Passiveness: You are uncomfortable expressing yourself honestly. You feel you don't have the right to be heard. You back down easily to avoid conflict.  
  
Aggressiveness: You force your point of view, even at the expense of another's. You always want your way, and use strategies like loud talking, sarcasm, desk pounding and forcefulness.  
  
Assertiveness: You are comfortable expressing your thoughts and feelings. You can put forth your views without compromising on your own needs or provoking others. You aim for a win-win solution.  
  
Although people interchange the terms assertiveness and aggressiveness, you can see there is a difference between the two. "Assertive people exhibit a positive, open style of communication that is neither submissive nor aggressive," says Harish Srivastava, a 29-year old sales manager. When you're being assertive, you are not attacking someone else. You are not being rude. You are simply standing up for your rights.  
  
Being assertive is essential for those who want to learn how to stand up for themselves in different situations, such as responding to putdowns, handling and expressing anger, speaking up to a rude salesperson, asking the boss for a raise, asking for a better table at a restaurant, etc.  
  
"I was not assertive before and didn't feel good about myself, either because I couldn't get things I planned done efficiently, or because I couldn't fulfil everyone else's requests and felt guilty," says Dipti Srivastava, a housewife from Lucknow. "I then made attempts to change myself and can now say I am an assertive woman."  
  
Assertiveness affects your life  
A culture of assertiveness is especially important if you deal with a lot of pressure in your personal life or at work, or if you have direct contact with customers or clients. Not only will you be able to recognise problem behaviours when they occur, you will also be better equipped to deal with them.  
  
Assertiveness helps you plan and carry through difficult encounters more effectively. It helps you make requests, say 'No' effectively, give and receive criticism appropriately, cope with put-downs, communicate effectively, express your feelings (whether positive or negative) in a confident manner, and set self-imposed limits and boundaries so you don't lose out on account of others.  
  
Setting self-imposed limits refers to sometimes having to say 'No' to people. "Sometimes, it is necessary," says 28-year old banker Anupam Misra. "For example, when doing someone else's work may actually result in your own work not being completed in time." Saying 'No' can be very difficult for an unassertive person, since such people find it difficult to even stand up for themselves. They also usually find it hard to ask for what they want, or express their opinions effectively.  
  
Why say Yes when you want to say No?  
"One reason is such people want others to like them. They are afraid of losing their friends, or afraid their boss may use their refusal as grounds for negligence. They might also want to be known as the 'go-to' person, who is dependable and can always accomplish the task. It makes them feel wanted and more valuable," says Harish.  
  
Unfortunately, this inability to say 'No' can be harmful. It builds up stress hormones, such as adrenaline. Consequently, your heart will beat faster than normal, your blood pressure will rise and blood vessels will become narrow. According to doctors, these conditions can contribute to your risk of heart attack, stroke, and even cancer.  
  
10 tips that can help  
  
According to Harish, "What employees must learn to inculcate is a confident, open and honest tone of voice that leaves no room for doubt and puts across the intended point in a healthy manner." The following tips can help:  
  
1. When you need to say something, speak clearly and with confidence. Your body language should also give the impression that you are calm and confident.   
  
2. Learn to strike up and carry on conversations with ease. Practice your conversation skills in different social situations. You can also consult books on etiquette.  
  
3. Use "I feel" statements to put across your thoughts. For example, "I feel \_\_\_\_when you \_\_\_\_".   
  
4. Learn to say 'No'. Saying 'yes' to everyone and everything is impossible. Figure out your priorities. If saying 'No' seems too blunt at first, say you'll think about it before answering.  
  
5. Accept compliments with a smile. Simply say 'thank you' instead of making excuses.  
  
6. Express your worries and concerns. Otherwise, they will gnaw into your mind and create tension. Also, tackle minor irritations before your anger builds.  
  
7. Develop self-esteem. Be around positive people who make you feel good about yourself.  
  
8. Don't dilute your words or beat around the bush. "People often make excuses or give long explanations and the person listening gets a mixed message," explains Gaurav. Be concise and direct. Use the first person part-of-speech. For example, 'I feel frustrated when my work is not acknowledged.' The lesser words you use, the bigger the impact.  
  
9. Do not speak apologetically. Stand your ground if you know you are correct. Ask questions whenever you need clarifications. You shouldn't accept rules or practices without understanding them.  
  
10. Express negative emotions in a healthy manner. For example, if someone has hurt your feelings, let them know without escalating the situation. It doesn't help to take out your aggression or frustration on others. Express valid feelings in time, instead of bottling things up until you explode. Sometimes, it is better to walk away until you feel calmer and more in control. Make sure your body language is not aggressive. Avoid pointing at people, banging the table, raising your voice, or making other aggressive gestures.  
  
When to say Yes when you mean No  
There are some situations that may actually warrant your saying 'Yes' even when you want to say 'No'. For example, certain entrepreneurs claim they do in fact have to "go out of their way" and say yes when they want to say no, to cultivate new clients and maintain existing ones. "Sometimes, you have to learn to say Yes even when you mean No, just to get clients to go along with you," reveals Rohit Jha, a 27-year old entrepreneur from Pune.  
  
It is also common for employees to do it to survive in the corporate culture, where cutthroat competition exists. Even on the domestic front, it is quite possible that, at some time or another, you will have to carry out family obligations or responsibilities even though you want to refuse.  
  
In effect, whether to say Yes or No in a particular situation is a decision you must use your judgment to make.**

**Pretend that every single person you meet has a sign around his or her neck that says, Make Me Feel Important/good. Not only will you succeed in sales, you will succeed in life……!**