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Five ways to be more assertive at work

Learn how to speak your mind with confidence and get people to pay attention.

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Contrary to what you may think, being assertive is not the same as being aggressive. Aggression may help you get what you want, but it is usually at the expense of someone else. In the long run, you win yourself more unnecessary enemies than allies. Being overly aggressive at work may also jeopardise your career advancement and professional relationships at work. Now, assertiveness is about articulating your thoughts in a

respectful manner. In today's business environment, being assertive is more important than ever. The prevalence of text messaging and e-mails with lesser face-time interaction has made it harder for people to get their point across.

Mr Jeffrey Williams, 52, a corporate trainer and success coach, said: "Being able to assert yourself will increase your happiness in life, compared to someone who communicates aggressively or passively. People are more willing to hear what you have to say and respect you as an individual."



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HOW YOU CAN BE ASSERTIVE

1 Be positive even when you don't feel like it

People enjoy interacting with someone who is optimistic and has a positive mindset.

Mr Williams said: "Being positive makes it easier for you to reach out to people and increases your ability to be more assertive." Look at the positive side and be

careful not to use words which can cause unnecessary offence. "Being sincere and articulating yourself in a positive manner will help you influence and win them over," said Mr Williams.

2 Co-operation that is mutually beneficial

People are more willing to listen and cooperate with you when they sense that you want to help them achieve what they want.

3 Agree on needs and wants

Mr Williams said: "Be specific about your needs. You come across as confident when you are clear on what you want. Instead of saying 'I want some help doing this', say 'I need some help for about 15 minutes into a project I am working on.'"

"Ask open questions to clarify a person's standing on an issue. Listen and let them express their concerns. Go with 'what, when, who, how and why' questions." Once you know everyone else's objectives, you may find that there are few or no differences between what each party is trying to achieve. This makes it easier to reach a mutually satisfactory result.

4 Be objective

Focus on the issue at hand and manage your emotions. Being emotional can cause you to unintentionally behave in an aggressive or non-assertive way due to any unpleasant feelings you have about an issue.

Mr Williams said: "Set aside your emotions from the decision-making process. You feel more confident when you are able to think objectively and can better assert yourself by showing that you are capable of dealing with any problem successfully."

5 Listen and pay attention

To encourage people to listen to you, you must first be willing to hear what they have to say. This is about the law of reciprocity.

Mr Williams said: "Practice hard on your listening skills. If you show a genuine interest hearing what the other party has to say, they will have a natural obligation to hear your point of view when it is your turn to speak up. That is when you will come across as assertive and professional."