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# Asserting Ourselves

Damilola Odimayo

Careers Adviser – Oxford University



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# What does the word “Assertive” mean to you?

Collins English Dictionary:

“Confident and direct in claiming one’s rights or putting forward one’s views”



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# Are you comfortable with being “assertive”?

Take a couple of minutes to think about this question individually.

- If YES.....why?
- If NO.....why?

(hint: there is no “right” or “wrong” answer)



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# What are some of the “positives” of being assertive

- In control
- Listened to
- Satisfied
- Respected
- More confident
- Happier
- Able to bring about change



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# What can be some of the “negatives”

- Bossy
- Opinionated
- Uncompromising
- Individualistic (not a team player)
- Etc.etc,etc,etc,etc



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# What happens when we are not assertive

- Powerless
- Unheard
- Frustrated
- Resentful
- Regretful
- Unhappy
- Stuck



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## Exercise: Saying “NO”

- Individually think of something you would like (eg: to borrow your colleague’s pen etc )
- In pairs (A&B)
  - **A** ask
  - **B** refuse as you would normally do
  - **A** ask again
  - **B** say “NO”
  - **A&B** How do you feel?





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**I believe in “No” as a complete sentence.....**

It's very interesting how hardwired we are to give a thousand reasons as to why we can't do something.....

almost as if we feel the need to defend our niceness.....”

**Shonda Rhimes**

(TV Producer - Grey's Anatomy, Scandal, How to Get Away with Murder)



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## Share examples of assertive behaviour

- In pairs/threes, spend 5 minutes talking about examples where you have used, or observed, effective assertive behaviour
- What makes these examples of assertiveness?
- What did the people involved do?
- What can you say are the key components of effective assertiveness?



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# Effective assertiveness components

- Appropriate context and timing
- Discussion / interaction / conversation (2-way)
- Clear objectives
- Considered - delivered in a way that the other party understands



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# Assertiveness Strategies



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## Ask yourself:

- What are you thinking and feeling about the situation?
- What outcome are you looking for, and what needs to happen to bring this about?
- Why is the other person / people taking that position?
- How and when can you approach the situation to begin a dialogue?
- How can you put your point across clearly, and calmly?
- Where can you find additional support and advice?



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# Communication – words and phrases

- Prepare your key phrases in advance – practice them so that they are clear and non-escalatory
- Be prepared to repeat them, perhaps more than once
- Be prepared to clarify when asked, or check that your responder has understood
- Have some responses ready too – in case there is push-back / surprise



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# Communication – Body Language

- Speak clearly, calmly and confidently
- Maintain good eye contact
- Stand or sit so that you feel comfortable, *and* in control
- Try to avoid ‘nervous in knots’ body language
- Don’t be afraid of pauses or moments of silence – you both might need them
- Remember to keep breathing



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# Support

- Who could you ask for advice / to act as a sounding-board / practice your approach with?
- Would it be helpful to have someone else present?
- Who might support you after your assertive conversation?
- What other resources might be relevant?
- Books, TEDTalks, Podcasts etc.
  - *The Definitive Book of Body Language* - Allan and Barbara Pease
  - *“Brave Enough”* - Cheryl Strayed
  - *“The Subtle Art of not Giving a.....”* - Mark Manson
  - *“When Women Win”* - podcast (<https://whenwomenwinpodcast.com/>)





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# Summary

- By practicing we can learn how to be more assertive
- We can all build strategies and seek help from those around ourselves
- This can improve our confidence and help us to be more in control of what matters to us

**BE KIND TO YOURSELF!**



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**THANK YOU**