

Basic Tips for Assertive Communication

Use an "I" Message	When you are expressing yourself (your thoughts, feelings, opinions, requests) begin with the word "I" rather than "You." By starting with "I" you take responsibility for what you say. Statements that start with "You" tend to come out as more aggressive, blaming, threatening, and so on.
Be Specific	Address a specific behavior or situation and not general "personality" traits or "character." A specific request, for example, is more likely to result in a change, whereas general criticism is unlikely to get your needs met.
Be Clear	Say what you mean. Don't expect the other person to read your mind, to just "know" what you want or mean. When you make a request, make it clear and specific. When you respond to a request, be direct and definite. "No, I don't want to do that," is clearer than, "Well, maybe . . . I don't know." Your facial expression and body language should support your message. Speak loudly enough to be easily heard and use a firm (but not threatening) tone. Look the person in the eye (not at the floor). Don't leave long silences.
Be Respectful	Don't seek to intimidate, win, or control the other person. Speak to the person at least as respectfully as you would like to be spoken to. If you have something negative or critical to say, balance it with a positive statement before and after. Recognize that people have different needs and hear in different ways. In conflict situations, take partial responsibility for what has happened and is happening.