What is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is the ability to state positively and constructively our rights, needs or concerns while respecting the rights, needs or concerns of others.

- An assertive tone is clear, calm, and direct
- Assertiveness can invite discussion, work towards resolution or be a clear statement of “no.”

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What are some of the benefits?
When you use direct, open, and honest communication in relationships, you can:

- feel more in control of life
- improve ability to make decisions
- improve quality of relationships

How does assertiveness contrast with other styles of responding?

- **Passive**: accepting what is said or done even though it is contrary to your needs, rights or feelings, such as saying “yes” when you really mean “no.”
- **Aggressive**: forcing your thoughts, desires or feelings onto others regardless of their needs, rights or feelings.
- **Assertive**: clearly and honestly expressing your thoughts, ideas, and concerns while being respectful of the needs, rights and feelings of others.

Examples of assertive language:

- **Assertive**: “I would prefer not going to that restaurant. I would be happy with several others such as........”
- **Passive**: Say nothing and go (feeling resentful), or make an excuse not to go
- **Aggressive**: “that restaurant doesn't have anything I will eat and it's inconsiderate of you to suggest going there.”
- **Assertive**: “Before we move on to the next point, I have a comment to add to our current discussion.”
- **Passive**: “I don't suppose anyone wants to hear what I have to say? “ (or say nothing and feel ignored)
- **Aggressive**: “You’re going too fast, and you need to listen to what I have to say.”
- **Assertive**: “I would really like to keep our shared living space free from clothes and clutter. I would appreciate it if you would put your personal belongings in your room or the closet.”
- **Passive**: say nothing and feel resentful or tell a friend, “my roommate annoys me and never picks up his/her stuff.”
- **Aggressive**: “You really annoy me leaving your stuff all over. Pick it up and put it in your room!”
- **Assertive**: “It is my observation that you have had a lot to drink tonight, and I am concerned for our welfare if you drive. Either I can drive, or we need to call a cab.”
- **Passive**: say nothing and be a passenger with an intoxicated driver, risking your well-being.
- **Aggressive**: “You're drunk and there's no way I'm riding with you!”

Roadblocks to assertiveness:

- Fear of harming others
- Fear of rejection
- Feelings of shame
These roadblocks are based upon a belief that other people's needs, opinions, and judgments are more important than your own.

In other words, assertiveness allows you to:

- Ask for what you want
- Say “no” to what you don’t want
- Be respectful of others
- Be respectful of yourself

To make an appointment with the UW Bothell Counseling Center, please call us at 425-352-3183, email us at uwbcc@uw.edu, or stop by UW1-080 (lower level of Founders Hall)! Our services are available to both UW Bothell and Cascadia students.