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## *Tips for Wellbeing Series No 5*

# Assertive Communication

## How to say what you need in a respectful way

Assertiveness is a key skill in maintaining healthy relationships. It can be defined as the direct and honest communication of your needs in a way that acknowledges and respects the needs and rights of the other person.

Without assertiveness skills, people often fall into patterns of either aggressive or passive communication. Both these are destructive to relationships by undermining trust and intimacy.

### Styles of Communication

Generally speaking, communication can be characterised by four different styles. See if you can identify your own style from those outlined below:

#### 1. Passive communication

- > Not standing up for your rights
- > Not setting limits or boundaries on another's behaviour
- > Continually putting others needs before your own
- > Taking on the role of "martyr"
- > Not being able to say "no"

#### 2. Aggressive communication

- > Bullying and intimidating others to get what you want
- > Threatening people
- > Ignoring needs and rights of others
- > Shouting, yelling, screaming or physically abusing others

#### 3. Passive-Aggressive communication

- > Indirectly communicating eg. Saying something that is designed for the other person to hear without saying it to them directly
- > Withdrawing love and affection
- > Using sarcasm and put downs
- > Using humour to be nasty or hurtful

#### 4. Assertive communication

- > Using a neutral tone of voice, neutral body language
- > Using respectful words – talk about behaviour, not labelling the other person
- > Being direct and honest
- > Being able to negotiate – having a sense of give and take
- > Asking for your own needs to be met, while respecting needs of others
- > Being able to say “no” and set limits
- > Being able to acknowledge when you are in the wrong

### Simple Recipe for Making “I” Statements

Assertiveness is best learnt by using a simple “recipe”, as shown below. It will help give you structure to what you want to say and keep you focussed. It also has the advantage of letting you work out what you want to say in advance and delivering it with greater confidence.

There are three ingredients used in making “I” statements:

1. The activity
2. How it is affecting you
3. What you would prefer to happen

This can be phrased as:

**When** ... you don't let me know where you are

**I feel** ... very worried about you

**What I would like is** ... if in the future you could call me and tell me you are going to be late

### For further reference

#### Website:

*Tips For Communicating* - [au.reachout.com/mental-fitness/communication-skills](http://au.reachout.com/mental-fitness/communication-skills)

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