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## Article: Using assertiveness to enhance your personal power

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Assertiveness is very often misunderstood. People are not formally taught assertiveness as they are History or English, so it's not surprising that many people are unsure about what it is and isn't. Assertiveness is also often misrepresented. It's a sad fact that in families and workplaces, assertive behaviour is sometimes not encouraged. People often don't want others standing or speaking up for themselves.

### So what is assertiveness?

***“Assertiveness is about letting others know what you do and do not want in a confident and direct way.”***  
*S Hadfield and G Hasson ‘How to be assertive in any situation’*

Assertiveness is **not** about winning at the expense of other people, being forceful and determined to get your own way. Behaving assertively means

- Knowing your boundaries and those of other people
- Using assertive language and non-verbal communication.

Behaving assertively means working collaboratively, focusing on achieving all win outcomes.

### The benefits of behaving assertively

There are many advantages of behaving assertively for yourself and others:-

- You demonstrate you know your purpose, responsibilities and objectives
- You enhance your self-esteem and self-respect
- You are more likely to be valued, less likely to be taken for granted or advantage of
- People know where they stand with you, this leads to trust in you
- Being more able to handle conflict and challenging situations effectively

## Five tips to help you behave assertively

### 1. State is everything, well almost

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At any time you are in a 'state' – a mental or physical condition.

Your state, how you are thinking and feeling, will impact on your behaviour – it cannot not. You can use this knowledge to prepare and support us.

- What states would assist you when you want to behave assertively?
- What states would resource you?

When you have identified the states, recall a time when you felt the state strongly, and have it in mind when you have the interaction where you want to behave assertively.

### 2. Keep it Short and Don't explain

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Useful advice when needing to assert yourself. If you give reasons for your decision you run the risk of people giving counter arguments. People will also judge – from their perspective – whether the reasons are valid or appropriate. So simply state your request or refusal in an assertive, short way:-

“No, thank you”  
“I want...”

“I prefer not to”  
“I require...”

“That's not convenient”

### 3. Know your rights

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Have you considered what your rights are?

#### **You have the right to**

- Express your feelings.
- Make mistakes.
- Ask for what you want.
- Be treated with respect as an equal human being.

What rights do you have, and know you have, that you can keep in mind when wanting to behave assertively?

### 4. Erect your boundaries

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In the workplace and out of work people behave in different ways and have different views of appropriate behaviour. This is fine as long as it doesn't negatively impinge on you.

Often it does, people behaving aggressively or manipulatively, making unreasonable requests, discounting you, making it difficult for you to assert your rights.

All these behaviours are possibilities and forewarned is forearmed. The clearer you have marked out your boundaries, the easier it is for you to notice if they have been trespassed and for you to defend them.

- What behaviour in others towards you is acceptable and what not?
- How are you going to communicate your boundaries and deal with trespassing behaviour?

### 5. Be objective

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How often do we respond to situations emotionally? It is very difficult not to feel strong emotion when we believe that people are behaving aggressively or manipulating us. The instinct to fight or flight kicks in, which can hinder our ability to behave assertively.

The intention may have been to do harm, or not. Notwithstanding the intention, it is useful to see things from an objective viewpoint.

We will be more able to 'see the wood from the trees' to see the situation more clearly and in doing so envision strategies to deal with the issues.

#### **Ways to gain more objectivity**

- Mentally distance yourself from the situation - dissociate yourself so you are looking at you from an observer's perspective, so you can see yourself, and the other person. What are you seeing, hearing? What information does this give you?
- Mentally give the issue to another person, perhaps a mentor or someone you respect, and ask them *'How would you deal with this issue? What would you say? How would you behave?'*



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## About the Author - Krista Powell Edwards

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Krista is a very experienced and highly qualified consultant, coach, facilitator, trainer and author.

She uses her experience and expertise to support individuals and organisations to enhance their effectiveness and performance.

Krista is currently writing her first book on how to effectively communicate credibility.

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### ***Expertise and experience***

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Krista has developed her expertise through

- An extensive track record of supporting organisations in the UK and internationally since 1995.
- Masters level research in the factors that affect the achievement of workplace performance.
- Extensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD), (including regular attendance at conferences and development programmes).
- Research of 'best practice' consultancy, facilitation and learning and development
- Qualifying as a Master Trainer, Master Practitioner and Practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).
- Designing and delivering 500+ training and development programmes.
- 20+ years as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) volunteer - branch chair, council representative - supporting the CPD and performance of 7500+ HR professionals.
- Lecturing at a university (International Human Resource Management).

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### ***Specialist areas***

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Krista specialises in three main areas:-

**Credibility** - How to communicate credibility for influence and positive impact in the workplace

**Credible HR** - Enabling HR to add value to the organisation

**Personal Effectiveness Skills** - Support in developing confidence, credibility, influence, time management and assertiveness and conflict management skills so that individuals and teams are able to perform effectively.

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### ***Services***

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Krista offers support in **workplace performance improvement**.

Tailored, cost effective

- Consultancy and Research
- Coaching
- Facilitation
- Training and Development

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### ***Contact Details***

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