

Assertive Responses

Aggressiveness is disrespectful. People are being verbally aggressive when they express opinions, feelings, or desires in ways that disrespect or violate the rights of others.

Assertiveness is the opposite of aggression. Assertive responses are ones which express our opinions, feelings, or desires in ways which respect the rights and opinions of others. Assertiveness is a way of getting your needs satisfied, not tolerating disrespect, and becoming empowered.

If someone talks to you in an aggressive way it is better to focus on the style of their message, not its content:

- **Do** let the speaker know that they are talking to you disrespectfully
- **Do not** enter into a conversation about the issue they are raising



Assertive responses exercise

For this exercise find someone you can practice with – a friend, partner, or relative. Take it in turns to say aggressive statements to one another and practice responding assertively. You can start with the statements below and then practice making up your own.

Aggressive statements

- *"You don't know what you're talking about"*
- *"Why are you being so defensive?"*
- *"Why are you being such a coward?"*
- *"You're being so manipulative"*
- *"That's so stupid, why don't you do it this way?"*
- *"It's almost as if you don't want to get over it"*
- *"Don't be such an idiot"*
- *"What's wrong with you?"*
- *"You're such a <swear word>"*

Assertive statements

- *"That's a really hurtful thing to say"*
- *"It hurts me when you say that"*
- *"I would appreciate it if you didn't speak to me like that"*
- *"I would appreciate it if you would lower your voice"*
- *"Could you please try asking me that another way?"*
- *"I don't appreciate being spoken to that way"*
- *"I don't deserve to be spoken to that way"*
- *"I think your intentions are good, but saying that does not help me"*
- *"I don't like to be labeled"*

Assertive "If ... then ..." statements

- *"If you are going to keep saying unkind things then I'm going to end this conversation"*
- *"If you are going to continue speaking to me like that then I'm going to walk away"*
- *"If you will not change the subject then I would prefer that you leave me alone"*
- *"If you stop saying things like that then we will have a better relationship"*