



BACKGROUND NOTES: BEING ASSERTIVE AND DECISION MAKING

Assertiveness is an important skill for getting along with others. Being assertive means standing up for yourself and being straightforward and honest with yourself and others about what you need and want. Being assertive can help you protect yourself from dangerous situations and can help you resist peer pressure to do things that you are uncomfortable doing. People who are not assertive are often submissive. Even if they are being treated poorly, they do not stand up for themselves. People who are not assertive often lack the confidence and self esteem to stand up for their own needs and to protect their feelings or body from being hurt.

Assertiveness is very different from being aggressive. People who are aggressive are rude and unkind. They do not care about other people's feelings. Being too aggressive is not very good for your emotional health because, deep down, you will feel bad about being unkind.

How to Be Assertive

Decide what you feel or want and say it. Don't be afraid to be honest about your feelings. Being confident about your own feelings will encourage others to respect them as well. Someone who truly loves you will not want to do things that make you feel unhappy.

Look people in the eye. Eye contact is an important part of being assertive. It tells the other person that you are serious about what you are saying and that you are paying close attention to whether or not they are listening to you.

Do not make excuses. Your feelings are the best reasons. For example, if someone is pressuring you to do something you do not want to do, tell them what you really feel.

Do not seek approval from others. If you do not want to do something, say so clearly and do not ask if it is alright. Show other people that you know your own mind and are not looking for their approval.

Do not get confused by the other person's argument. Keep repeating what you want or do not want. Stand your ground and do not give in.

You have a right to change your mind. If you have told a friend that you will go with them to watch a DVD and then you decide you do not want to go you must tell them the truth. Tell them: "I've changed my mind. I've decided I don't feel like doing that today." If they are a good friend, they will respect your right to change your mind



Decision making

A decision is a choice that we make between two or more possible options. We all make decisions every day. We will need to make more and more decisions as we go through life and some of these decisions will affect us the rest of our lives. One of the most important parts of decision making is looking ahead to see what might happen if you do something. This is called predicting outcomes or understanding consequences. The better you are at predicting outcomes, the better you will be at making decisions that result in the outcomes or consequences you want.

Key steps for good decision-making include:

- Describe the problem, situation, or issue that needs a decision.
- Get more information if you have questions about the situation.
- Think about the possible consequences or outcomes of each course of action.
- Think about your personal and family values, and which courses of action are consistent with these values.
- Think about the ways in which your decision may affect other people.
- Choose the decision that seems most appropriate based on your knowledge, values, morals, religious upbringing, and present and future goals.
- Re-think the decision and how you feel about it. Be sure you carefully considered all the alternatives and feel comfortable with the choice you made.