

ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness has been associated with psychological wellbeing among university students (Pourjali & Zarnaghash, 2010; Shafiq, Naz & Yousaf, 2015). Among those who experience numerous stressful events, a lower level of assertiveness increases the risk of suffering from symptoms of depression (Blanco, Rohde, Vázquez & Otero, 2014). Similarly, a sense of hopelessness is also associated with less assertiveness (Chioqueta & Stiles, 2005). Importantly, it has been found that assertiveness training is associated with decreased levels of social anxiety and increased levels of happiness (Ghasemian, Yadollahi, Kamkar, Jadidi & Moghadam, 2014).

Assertiveness is often defined in contrast to the personal qualities of aggression and submissiveness. When we behave aggressively, we deny others their rights (Garner, 2012). And when we behave submissively, we deny our own rights. However, when we behave assertively, we acknowledge our own rights as well as the rights of others. Below are some general 'assertive rights' (Holland & Ward, 1991, p. 11):

- I have the right to be treated with respect as an equal human being.
- I have the right to acknowledge my needs as being equal to those of others.
- I have the right to express my opinions, thoughts and feelings.
- I have the right to make mistakes.
- I have the right to choose not to take responsibility for other people.
- I have the right to be me without being dependent on the approval of others.

People often think they are being overassertive – not realizing that others might view them as exercising assertion to an appropriate degree (Ames & Wazlawek, 2014). Assertive behaviour includes “being open and honest,” “standing up for yourself,” “refusing to be intimidated,” “finding win–win solutions to a conflict,” “being equal with others while retaining your uniqueness,” “listening to others” and “showing understanding” (Garner, 2012, p. 12-13). Other applications of assertiveness include accepting compliments gracefully, not taking criticism personally, sometimes saying ‘No’ to others, as well as admitting when you’ve made a mistake (Garner, 2012).

Assertiveness can assist us in decreasing fear and stress in our daily lives. It provides us with more personal control to act rather than simply react. Most importantly, assertiveness creates the space for us to view both ourselves and others with love and respect.

References

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