

## *The Formula Is*

**I feel . . .** (describes your feeling)

**when you . . .** (speaker objectively describes the other's behavior)

**because it affects me . . .** (describes the personal effect)

**I'd prefer . . .** (describes speaker's want)

### *You might need counseling help with being assertive if . . .*

- You believe that you can never “hurt” or disappoint anyone under any circumstance, even if it means hurting or disappointing yourself.
- You believe that you have to appease everyone and avoid conflict at all costs (to you).
- You express your thoughts and feelings in such an apologetic manner that others can easily disregard them.
- You express your thoughts and feelings aggressively and violate the rights of others.
- You believe that in order to get what you want, you need to be domineering and intimidating.
- You believe it is “better” to be agreeable and not cause other people “problems” or inconvenience.
- You have trouble identifying your needs, feelings and reactions when you interact with others.
- You feel you are often taken advantage of by others, or taken for granted.

- You often find yourself doing things and going places that are not much fun for you.

### *Helpful Books on this Topic*

*Don't Say Yes, When You Want to Say No*  
by Herbert Fensterheim & Jean Baer

*When I Say No, I Feel Guilty*  
by Manuel Smith

*Messages: The Communication Skills Book*  
by Matthew McKay, Martha Davis & Patrick Fanning



Counseling Center  
Consultation and Psychological Services

*Division of Student Affairs*

University of Kentucky  
201 Frazee Hall, Lexington, KY 40506-0031  
(859) 257-8701  
[www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling](http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling)

*An Equal Opportunity University.*

*The images used in this publication are not of actual University of Kentucky students. Information gathered and compiled by Sandra K. Lybarger, Ph.D. 2007, and updated 2011.*

## *stand up, speak out, reach out* **Assertiveness**



Counseling Center

## *Assertiveness Means*

- You generally speak up for yourself.
- If you have a preference or know what you want or need, you say so.
- You stick up for yourself if your roommate or significant other is not doing her or his fair share of the household chores.
- If a person has borrowed money, a book, garment, or something of value, and has not returned it, you will mention this to the person.
- If a person cuts in front of you in line or does something else unfair, you will speak out in protest.
- You are able to refuse unreasonable requests by your friends.
- When you differ with someone, you will speak up for your viewpoint.
- If someone is treating you very unfairly, or trying to take advantage of you, you will say so.
- You are able to take back merchandise that is faulty.
- You generally say how you feel in a direct manner.

## *Personal Rights*

You must be aware of your rights as a person and recognize when they are being violated, or others will define your rights, roles, preferences, etc. for you. If that happens, your personhood will then be diminished.

## *We All Have the Right ...*

... to be respected by other people.

... to have needs and to have those needs be as important as others' needs.

... to ask that other people respond to our needs and to decide whether we will take care of other people's needs.

... to have feelings – and to express these feelings in ways which do not violate others' rights.

... to decide whether we will meet other people's expectations or whether we will act in ways which are more characteristic or true to us, as long as we don't violate others' rights.

... to form our own opinions and to express these opinions.

## *Basic Assertiveness Beliefs*

- By standing up for ourselves and letting ourselves be known, we gain self-respect and respect for others.
- When we stand up for ourselves and express our honest feelings and thoughts in direct and appropriate ways, everyone concerned usually benefits in the long run.
- By telling others how their behavior affects us, we are giving them an opportunity to change their behavior and are showing respect for their right to know where they stand with us.

## *Assertiveness Responses*

Assertiveness is being aware of and respectful of your feelings, needs, and reactions and expressing them in a manner that is respectful of the other's feelings, needs, and reactions.

- **Basic assertion** refers to a basic expression of standing up for personal rights, beliefs, feelings, or opinions.
- **Empathic assertion** involves making a statement that conveys recognition of the other's situation or feelings and then making another statement which stands up for the speaker's rights.
- **Escalating assertion** involves starting with a basic assertion. When the other person doesn't heed the basic assertion and continues to violate your rights, the speaker gradually escalates the assertion and becomes increasingly firm.
- **Confrontive assertion** involves pointing out a discrepancy between what a person said and her/his actual behavior. You state what the other said would be done, what actually happened, and what you want. All is said in a matter-of-fact, nonevaluative way.
- **I-language assertion** is particularly useful for helping people to express difficult negative feelings and involves a four-part statement.