**Tips for Behaving Less Aggressively**

If you want to be assertive but are concerned that others may find you too aggressive (or others have told you that you are too aggressive), here are some recommendations for turning aggressive behavior into assertive behavior.

**Give Others a Chance to Speak.**

It's important to express yourself, but if you're the only one speaking or you constantly control conversations, you may not be giving others the chance to express themselves.

**Respect Others' Opinions.**

You may disagree with other people's opinions (and some of them may be outrageous!), but everyone has a right to their opinion and the right to express it. If you disagree with someone, try to discuss your differences rationally.

**Avoid Thinking You Know it All - You Always Have Something to Learn.**

Acting as though you don’t need help in one or more areas because you know it all is a behavior that makes others not like or trust you. Avoid saying things like “I don’t need any help in that area”. There are people who have been around an industry for years but never took the time to find out how others perceived them. If they would slow down and do this they might find that they could learn a lot about themselves and make some changes that would enhance their own career. We should be continual learners.

**Be Diplomatic.**

Expressing your opinion is important, but not always at the expense of others. If you know what you are going to say could be painful, yet you feel it still needs to be said, try:

* Saying it in a kinder way (for example, "I disagree" instead of "You're wrong").
Cushioning your comment with a compliment (for example, "Mary has had some great ideas, but I just don't think this one will work" instead of "That's stupid"); or

Recognizing it's a difficult topic and handling it discreetly (for example, "You know, I really don't want to hurt your feelings, but I think you should know ... ")

**CHOOSE ASSERTIVE (NOT AGGRESSIVE) LANGUAGE.**

*Focus on specific behavior and facts instead of opinions* (for example, "These documents weren't filed in order" instead of "You're sloppy and disorganized")

*Avoid exaggerations* (for example, "You were late for the third time this week" instead of "You're never on time")

*Focus on "I" not "You" language* (for example, "I would like a chance to say something" instead of "You're always interrupting")

**AVOID BULLYING AND DEMANDING BEHAVIOR.**

When making requests, avoid phrases that may make people feel bullied like "you must" or "you have to" and focus on language like "I think it would be better if ... " Also, think about what you are asking of others -- are your requests reasonable, or are they unrealistic, unfair or selfish?

**AVOID PHYSICALLY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR.**

Behavior such as glaring, shouting, slamming doors, throwing things, or invading others' personal space (for example by speaking 'in their face', pointing or jabbing them, or grabbing their arm) is physically aggressive. This behavior both scares and alienates people. No matter how angry or passionate you are about an issue, it is important to exercise physical control. Others won't respect you if your behavior indicates that you don't respect them.

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