BLUE PLUME

-Academy-

How to Be More Assertive:

A Practical Guide

Build habits. Set boundaries. Speak up without blowing up.

🧭 The Assertiveness Survival Guide

For People Who Are Done With People-Pleasing, But Not Ready to Yell About It

If you've ever said "it's fine" when it very much wasn't, or nodded your head while silently screaming "no," this guide is for you. Assertiveness isn't about being pushy or bossy — it's about speaking up in a way that respects both *you* and *the other person*. It's a life skill, not a personality trait. And the good news? It's totally learnable.

You don't need to become someone else. You just need to stop abandoning yourself in moments that matter.

Know Your Rights

Before you can confidently say what you need, you need to really believe that you're allowed to need things in the first place.

A lot of us were raised to be “nice,” not to take up space, or to think that putting our own needs first makes us selfish. So, when someone says, “You can say no,” your nervous system goes, “Uhh… are you sure though?”

Let’s clear that up.

You have the right to:

- Say *no* — without a dramatic monologue of excuses
- Speak up about your feelings
- Change your mind (yes, even mid-conversation)
- Ask for what you need
- Be treated with respect — always

Assertiveness starts by getting real with yourself: *You are allowed to exist in the room as an equal*. Not less than. Not louder than. Equal.

And if that makes some people uncomfortable? That’s okay. They’ll adjust. Or not. You’re not here to manage their feelings; you’re here to stop ghosting your own.

TOOL: Your Assertiveness Rights Card

Write these on a sticky note, phone note, or index card — and read them *daily* until they stick.

✅ I have the right to:

- Say no without feeling guilty
- Express my thoughts and feelings
- Ask for what I need
- Change my mind
- Be treated with respect — always

✍️ **EXERCISE: Rewrite the Rules**

List 3 beliefs that stop you from being assertive (e.g., “If I say no, people won’t like me”). Then reframe each one:

Example:

- **Old belief:** “Saying no is rude.”
- **Reframe:** “Saying no is honest. People can handle it.”

	Old Belief	Reframe
1		
2		
3		

Speak Clearly — You're Not a Vibe, You're a Human

We've all done it: dropped hints, over-explained, mumbled "I guess" when we meant "absolutely not." But no one — not your friend, not your boss, not your partner — can decode your discomfort if you wrap it in 17 layers of politeness and vagueness.

Being assertive doesn't mean being blunt. It means being **clear**.

You don't need a TED Talk. You don't need to justify your whole life. You just need to say what's true — kindly and directly.

Try this:

- Swap **"You always—"** for **"I feel—"**
- Stop softening everything with "just" and "maybe"
- Say what you *do* want, not just what you don't

And if you're thinking, *"But what if they take it the wrong way?"* — ask yourself this: Are you protecting the relationship, or just avoiding discomfort?

Sometimes we hide behind politeness to dodge the real conversation. But silence isn't neutral — it just delays the problem.

🛠 TOOL: Assertive Language Cheat Sheet

Instead of this...	Try this...
"I guess I can..."	"I'm not available for that."
"Sorry, but..."	"I want to be clear about something."
"Maybe we could..."	"What I'd like is..."
"You never listen to me!"	"I feel unheard when I'm interrupted."

✍️ EXERCISE: Flip Your Script

Think of a time you didn't speak up. Write how you *did* respond, then rewrite it assertively.

Example:

- What I said: "It's fine, don't worry about it."
- What I wish I said: "Actually, I was counting on that. Can we revisit it?"

💬 PRACTICE: Sample Pushback & Responses

Them: "Wow, you've changed."
You: "I'm learning to be more honest about what I need. It might feel different."

Them: "Why are you being so difficult?"
You: "I'm not trying to be difficult — I'm being direct so we're on the same page."

What I said:	What I wish I said:

Try the DESC Script — When Your Inner Chaos Needs a Map

Ever planned a calm, reasonable conversation in your head… only to black out halfway through because your voice shook and your brain froze? That's where structure comes in.

When emotions get messy, a script helps you stay grounded. Think of it like GPS for uncomfortable conversations.

Here's the DESC method — simple, steady, and sneakily powerful:

D — Describe the situation

Start by stating the facts clearly and without judgment or exaggeration. Avoid emotional language or assumptions.

This sets a neutral tone. It's hard to argue with facts, and it avoids triggering defensiveness.

E — Express how you feel

Share how the behaviour impacts you, using "I" statements to take ownership of your feelings.

This humanizes the interaction. You're not accusing — you're revealing your experience. It invites empathy rather than blame.

S — Specify what you want

State clearly what change or behaviour you'd like to see going forward. Be realistic and actionable.

People can't meet your needs if they don't know what they are. This step makes your expectations clear.

C — Consequences (good or bad)

Explain the outcome — what will happen if the behaviour changes or continues. This can be a natural consequence, a boundary, or a potential benefit.

Consequences give weight to your request and provide motivation. They can reinforce collaboration or set boundaries if needed

Remember:

You're not accusing. You're not demanding. You're just laying it out — facts, feelings, and a clear ask.

Try this:

"When you don't respond to my messages (D), I feel left out and unsure what's going on (E). I'd appreciate a reply within a day (S), so we stay in sync (C)."

And yes, write it down first. Practice it out loud. Do it awkwardly before you do it confidently. That's how real growth works.

🛠 TOOL: Conversation Guide, keeping you on track before you take the training wheels off:

"When you *(D)*, I feel *(E)*. I'd prefer if *(S)*, so that *(C)*."	
Describe	
Express	
Specify	
Consequences	

Your Body Language is Screaming

You can say “I’m fine with that” all you want, but if your voice sounds like it’s trying to flee your body and your arms are crossed like a fortress, no one’s buying it — not even you.

Your words matter, but your body *delivers* the message. And if the delivery is shaky, the message gets lost.

Nonverbal cues account for the majority of how people understand you. That means your tone, posture, gestures, and eye contact are all part of the conversation — even if you’re silent.

Let’s get intentional about that:

- Stand or sit upright (no hunchback energy)
- Make natural eye contact (not creepy, not avoidant)
- Speak in a calm, steady tone (ditch the whisper-apology combo)
- Use open gestures (no finger-pointing or defensive folding)

If this feels weird? That’s normal. We’re not used to taking up space. But the more you practice — even in front of a mirror or camera — the more aligned your voice and body will become.

You’re allowed to take yourself seriously. Start showing it.

🛠 TOOL: Mirror Check

Use this checklist to self-correct:

- ✅ Standing or sitting upright
- ✅ Comfortable eye contact
- ✅ Steady, medium-paced voice
- ✅ Neutral hands (not clenched or fidgety)

✍️ EXERCISE: Body Scan Practice

Next time you're in a conversation, ask yourself afterward:

- Did my body match my words?
- What felt natural or uncomfortable?

📼 PRACTICE:

Record yourself practicing a boundary or DESC script. Watch it back. Adjust your tone, posture, or pace.

What looked/sounded good:

What do I need t worked on more:

Start Small — You're Not Trying to Conquer HR on Day One

You don't become assertive by tackling your biggest, scariest conflict right away. That's like trying to deadlift a car on your first day at the gym. You'll pull something — emotionally.

Start small. Think micro-moments. Everyday stuff:

- Ask your coffee shop to fix your wrong order
- Tell your roommate you're not up for chatting right now
- Say "No thanks" *without* adding "unless you need me to!!"

Every tiny assertive action is a rep. It builds confidence, competence, and your sense of self-trust.

And don't skip the celebration — seriously. Even if it was awkward. Especially if it was awkward. That's your growth showing.

Set one assertiveness goal a week. Something bite-sized. Something doable. One honest moment at a time, you're rewiring your default from *avoid* to *advocate*.

🛠 TOOL: Assertiveness Ladder

Start from easier situations and climb up:

1. Ask a waiter to fix your order
2. Say no to a casual invite
3. Correct someone who mispronounces your name
4. Ask for clarification in a meeting
5. Say no to extra work you didn't agree to
6. Have a boundary-setting convo with a friend/family member

✍️ **EXERCISE: Weekly Challenge**

Each week, pick **1** small assertive act. Use this format to track:

🎯 Goal: (e.g., Ask for help instead of struggling silently)

💬 What I'll say:

😕 Outcome:

✅ What I learned:

Handle Pushback Without Folding or Fighting

Here's the uncomfortable truth: being assertive won't always get you applause. Sometimes it gets you attitude. Some people don't love it when you stop being the agreeable version of yourself they relied on.

And guess what? That's not your cue to back down; it's your cue to stay grounded.

People might push back because:

- They're used to you saying yes
- They don't like boundaries
- They feel defensive (even when you're respectful)
- They're just having a day

Let them have their reaction. You don't need to fix it. You *do* need to stay steady.

Try saying:

- "I understand this might be surprising."
- "I hear you… and I'm still not okay with that."
- "We may not agree, but I need to be honest."

And hey; this is a good moment to check yourself too. Have *you* ever been the one who didn't take no for an answer? The one who guilt-tripped someone for changing plans? We've all been the problem sometimes. Own it. Apologize. Do better.

Assertiveness isn't just about speaking — it's also about listening when others do it to *you*.

💬 COMMON RESPONSES + YOUR OPTIONS

Them: "You're overreacting."

- "I'm sharing how this affects me. That matters, even if it's not your experience."

Them: "You've never had a problem before."

- "That's true. I didn't speak up before — but I am now."

Them: "I don't have time for this."

- "Let's revisit it when you do. It's important to me."

🛠 TOOL: The Broken Record

Use this when someone won't take your no:

"I'm not available for that."
"I understand, but I'm still not available."
"Like I said, I won't be able to do that."

You don't have to escalate. Just **repeat calmly and consistently**.

✍ EXERCISE: Prepare for Pushback

Pick a boundary you need to set. List 2 likely reactions, and how you'll respond assertively.

Boundary I need to set:	
Reaction 1	Response
Reaction 2	Response

Reflect Like a Real Leader

You don't get better at anything by just doing it. You get better by **doing + noticing + adjusting**.

After any assertive moment — especially the weird, clumsy ones — take a beat to reflect. Not to judge yourself, but to learn.

Ask:

- What went well?
- Where did I over-explain, soften too much, or get defensive?
- Did I honour both *my needs* and *the relationship*?

Even five minutes of journaling or mental recap can turn a "meh" moment into a powerful lesson. You'll start spotting patterns. You'll start trusting yourself more.

And if you keep having the same conflict with different people... it's worth asking: *Is it them? Or is it how I'm showing up?*

You're not here to be perfect. You're here to be *real*. And that starts with being honest with yourself.

🛠 TOOL: The Assertiveness Reflection Journal

Use after any assertive moment, whether it went great or crashed and burned.

What did I say or do that I'm proud of?
What felt awkward or unclear?
What would I try differently next time?
Did I show respect to myself *and* the other person?

✍️ EXERCISE: Weekly Wrap-Up

Each Friday or Sunday, journal:

- A moment I stayed silent when I could've spoken
- A moment I stood up for myself
- Something I learned about myself this week

💬 BONUS: Assertive Phrases to Steal Shamelessly

Need some backup? Here are phrases you can pocket and pull out when your brain blanks or your people-pleasing kicks in:

Situation	Assertive Phrase
Saying no	"I'm not able to take that on right now."
Setting boundaries	"I need some time to myself this weekend."
Asking for support	"Can we talk about dividing this more evenly?"
Disagreeing respectfully	"I see it differently. Can I share my view?"
Giving feedback	"When this happens, it affects me. Let's adjust."
Requesting change	"Can we try a different approach next time?"
Setting limits	"I'm not available for that right now."
Calling out a pattern	"I've noticed this keeps happening. Can we talk about it?"
Holding a line	"I've made my decision, and I'm sticking with it."

Practice them. Use them. Make them your own. They're training like wheels, you won't need them forever, but they'll help you find your balance.

🌟 Final Thought

You don't need to be fearless. You just need to be honest even if your voice shakes.

Assertiveness isn't a personality. It's a practice.
And the more you use it, the more it becomes part of who you are not something you have to "work up the courage" for.

But remain humble, assertiveness isn't about being right, it's about being true to who you are and what you believe but remain open to change.

⏱ **Quick-Start Plan**

Daily (5 mins):

- Read your Assertiveness Rights card
- Practice 1 phrase aloud
- Reflect on 1 moment you could've spoken up

Weekly (15–30 mins):

- Set 1 assertiveness goal
- Try 1 low-stakes assertive act
- Use the Weekly Wrap-Up to reflect