

HOW TO BECOME MORE ASSERTIVE

This document has been produced by Clyst Vale Community College's Counselling Service.

- Do you have problems saying 'no' to people?
- Do you find yourself doing things you don't want to do because someone else has made you?
- Are you fed up with other people manipulating you?
- Do you wish you could let other people know what you really think and feel?
- Do you feel you are being overlooked, or under valued?

If the answer to any of the questions above is 'Yes!', then you may find this leaflet helpful.

WHAT IS ASSERTIVENESS?

Being assertive does not mean bossing or bullying other people. It simply means you are stating what you think or how you feel, even if the other person may not like what you have to say.

WHY BE ASSERTIVE?

When we are not assertive, other people can think we don't mind doing things or behaving in a way they tell us to, when in fact sometimes we do mind.

Other people may end up thinking we have no likes or dislikes, or will always help them, even when we don't want to.

Sometimes we can make ourselves feel very unhappy trying to please everybody else, when all we really feel like doing is relaxing or doing something we want to do. This can lead you to feel sad or fed up.

'BUT I DON'T LIKE UPSETTING PEOPLE...'

It's true, saying no to someone can make them angry, or feel let down by you, or disappointed in you. If you've never said no to someone before they might feel surprised, or that you don't like them any more. You may even hurt their feelings by saying no.

These are all reasons why some people don't like to say no.

Try to remember you have a right to say 'no'. You also have a right to feel good about yourself even if you aren't doing what someone else wants you to do. If they really like you they will respect your choice.

'I WANT TO BE LIKED...'

If you want someone to like the *real* you, they need help to discover what you do and don't like. We can hide this by saying 'yes' to everything, but then the other person will never know what we really think or feel.

You may end up being the person they want you to be, instead of being who you really are. This can leave you feeling unhappy.

Think about how good it would feel to be liked for who you really are.

'WHAT DO YOU MEAN I HAVE A RIGHT TO SAY 'NO'?'

Who owns your hands? Your left leg? Your right ear? Who owns you?

You do!!

It might sound obvious, but sometimes we can forget this simple truth. Surely it follows that if you own 'you', then you have a right to say what happens to yourself? Would you let someone else tell you what to do with your bike or your shoes? No, of course not.

Owning yourself gives you the *right* to say what happens to you.

Owning yourself gives you the *right* to think and feel whatever you are really thinking or feeling.

You have permission to say 'no', or express an opinion, to make choices and to live with the consequences.

OTHER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Just as you have rights, so do other people. They will need to make their own choices, to express their own thoughts and feelings, and to say 'no' when they want to.

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Let's think about an example for a moment. Your teacher wants you to do homework, but don't want to do it! What should you do?

You have the right to not do the homework. But you must then live with the consequences. This is where you make a choice. Sometimes, even when we don't want to do something we realise it's probably better to get on with it!

An example in the home might be a parent asking you to tidy your room. You have a choice, and you must live with the consequences. Maybe its better to spend 20 minutes tidying your room so your parent won't be cross?

While you do have the right to say 'no', to voice your preferences, we must balance this with the consequences that follow.

WHAT CAN THE COUNSELLORS DO FOR YOU?

If you feel you would like to learn more about being assertive, the counsellors can show you techniques that will help you voice what you really feel or think.

The counsellors can support you as you learn to be more assertive.

BEING ASSERTIVE IS A LIFE SKILL

Learning to be more assertive will help you for the rest of your life. You will find it easier to make choices that truly reflect your own preferences, which hopefully will make you a happier person.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2998551>