

Assertiveness

Have difficulty telling people things they don't want to hear? Tend to over-commit yourself because you don't want to disappoint someone? People who answer "yes" to these questions tend to experience high levels of stress. Assertiveness is learning how to say "no" in a way that is respectful of the other person. It is being respectful of yourself by setting limits on the workload you require of yourself.

People who have difficulty speaking up for themselves or saying "no" to others are often "people pleasers." They also often are very committed to having others like them. So committed in fact that they may appear to their friends to often get walked on. Being someone's doormat usually provokes feelings of frustration, irritation, and resentment. There is often an expectation by the unassertive person that others will realize how much is being asked of that person and will offer to help or withdraw their request. However, that rarely happens, as assertive people tend to go merrily along assuming that anyone who would have wanted to say "no" would have.

Another type of non-assertiveness involves leaders who do not delegate responsibility to others because they do not want "to put too much on someone else." There is an assumption that because the leader has difficulty saying "no," so will everyone else. These leaders may do a great job; however, they are more likely to burn out and feel resentful of those they are leading.

Yet another type of nonassertive person is the aggressive person. This person has no problem saying "no;" however, they say it in such a way that they damage their relationships with others. Aggressive people may also have no difficulty telling others what they want. And they may get their way; but they get their way via intimidation. Aggressive people tend to allow anger to control them and tend to have high levels of stress as a result. They may have poor impulse control and tend to "blow up" easily.

Becoming assertive means learning a new way of interacting with others. It takes practice. A good place to begin may be with one of these books:

When I Say No, I Feel Guilty by Manuel J. Smith

Anger by Carol Tavris

The Anger Workbook by Lorraine Bilodeau.

These books are inexpensive in paperback and are available through most bookstores. If you want additional help learning to be assertive, contact **Counseling Services** in the **Powell Resource Center** (ext. 6923 or 6144).