



ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

CLEAR WORDS, CALM LIMITS, CONCRETE REQUESTS, AND CONSISTENT FOLLOW-THROUGH

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+ ASSERTIVE IS NOT AGGRESSIVE

- Assertive communication is clear, respectful, specific, and appropriately firm.
- It protects your needs and boundaries without humiliating, threatening, controlling, or attacking another person.
- Calm does not mean passive. You can be very clear while keeping your voice level and your words brief.

+ I FEEL - WHEN - I NEED

- "I feel overwhelmed when plans change at the last minute. I need more notice when possible."
- "I feel frustrated when I am interrupted. I want to finish my sentence, and then I will listen."
- Use this format for your own experience. Avoid turning it into disguised blame such as "I feel that you are selfish."

+ WHEN - THEN STATEMENTS

- Use a predictable action you control: "When homework is finished, then screen time can begin."
- "When you are ready to speak without yelling, then I am willing to continue this conversation."
- "When the requested report is prioritized, then I can move the other project to tomorrow. Which is the priority?"

+ STATE THE BOUNDARY

- "I am going to set a boundary with you. I will not stay in a conversation where I am being called names."
- "I am not discussing my private medical information."
- "Please call before coming over. If you arrive without checking, I may not answer the door."
- A boundary states what you will do; it is not a threat designed to force compliance.



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+ BROKEN RECORD

- Choose one short sentence and calmly repeat it without adding new arguments.
- Intrusive parent: "I am not discussing that."
- Demanding spouse: "I can talk about the problem. I will not continue while I am being yelled at."
- Boss: "I can complete A or B by 5:00. I need you to tell me which is the priority."

+ FIRM, FAIR, AND CONSISTENT

- Rules, rewards, and consequences work best when they are understandable, proportionate, predictable, and consistently applied.
- For children, match expectations to age, development, disability, communication needs, and the child's actual capacity.
- Do not threaten consequences you cannot or should not carry out. Notice and reinforce appropriate behavior, not only mistakes.

+ ENTITLED OR DEMANDING CHILDREN

- "You may be disappointed. The answer is still no."
- "You can ask once respectfully. Repeating the demand will not change the answer."
- "You may choose the blue shirt or the green shirt."
- Validate emotion without surrendering the limit: "I know you are angry. You are allowed to be angry. Hitting is not allowed."

+ INTRUSIVE PARENTS

- "I know you care. I am not asking for advice right now."
- "That decision belongs to me and my partner."
- "I will share updates when I am ready."
- "If you keep asking after I have answered, I will end the conversation and we can try again another time."



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+ DEMANDING BOSSES

- Ask for priorities instead of silently accepting impossible workloads: "I can complete two of these today. Which two are highest priority?"
- Clarify scope: "What does done look like, and what is the deadline?"
- Use documentation when useful: "I will send a short email confirming the priorities we agreed on."
- Assertiveness does not eliminate workplace power differences; discrimination, retaliation, or unsafe conditions may require HR, union, accommodation, legal, or other support.

+ ENTITLED SPOUSES OR PARTNERS

- "I am willing to discuss what you need. I am not willing to be insulted or threatened."
- "No. I do not consent to that."
- "We can discuss shared money. I will not hand over my paycheck or passwords."
- "I am taking a break from this conversation. I will revisit it when we are both able to speak respectfully."

+ OTHER USEFUL TECHNIQUES

- Ask directly: make a clear request rather than hinting.
- Say no without over-explaining: "No, I cannot do that."
- Offer limited choices when appropriate.
- Use neutral observation: describe what happened without mind-reading motives.
- Ask for time: "I need to think about that before I answer."
- Confirm understanding: "Tell me what you heard me say."

+ TONE, SAFETY, AND CONTEXT

- Keep volume and pace as level as you reasonably can; pause before responding when possible.
- Assertiveness does not require eye contact, a particular voice, or one cultural communication style.
- Direct confrontation may be unsafe with someone who is violent, coercive, stalking, or retaliatory. In those situations, prioritize safety, distance, documentation, third-party communication, advocacy, or professional/legal support.