



# Becoming **assertive**

3 practical strategies to boost your assertive communication

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# Welcome!

It is a great pleasure to offer you this assertiveness toolkit. This toolkit is based on my years of experience coaching and providing skills development programmes on the topics of assertiveness, communication, resilience and leadership to hundreds of individuals and companies.

It aims to provide you with some simple tools to aid in your daily endeavours to assert your right to speak and be heard.

This content forms part of the wider assertiveness skills programme that we offer. Please feel free to share the link to this guide with anyone who may find it useful, or email Preferred Future at [info@preferred-future.com](mailto:info@preferred-future.com), or website [www.preferred-future.com](http://www.preferred-future.com) if you would like to discuss the skills development needs of you or your company in more detail.

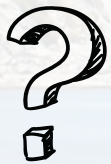
All the best! Reg Friddle



# Tool #1: the core principles of assertiveness

The basis of assertiveness and assertive communication are the principles that:

1. I have the **right** to be treated with respect
2. I have the **right** to be heard and listened to
3. I have the **right** to express opinions and feelings
4. I have the **right** to ask for what I want
5. I have the **right** to say 'no' and express what I don't want



When you look at these principles, ask yourself when you last behaved in a way that upheld these 5 rights.

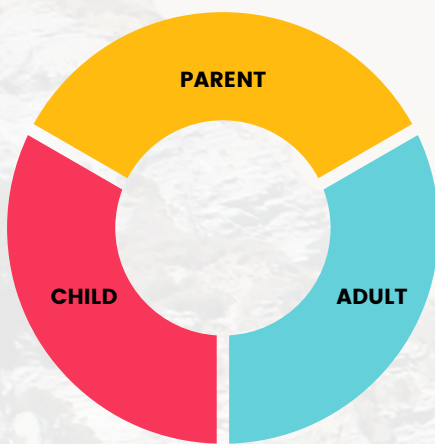
Did you display them in the way you think, act, behave and work?

Did you treat other people in a way that is consistent with these core principles?

What could you do today to make a positive step towards treating yourself and others in accordance with these principles?

# Tool #2: Understanding the role you play in communication

The psychologist Eric Berne (1910-1970) developed a theory and system of communication called Transactional Analysis. There are many parts to his theory; the one we'll focus on here is 'Ego States'. Berne outlined three ego states:



**Parent** state displays the behaviours, thoughts and feelings copied from parents and adult figures e.g. "let me help you with that..."

**Adult** state displays behaviours, thoughts and feelings which are direct responses to the here and now e.g. "how will we solve this problem between us"

**Child** state displays behaviours, thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood e.g. "can you help me? I can't deal with this situation on my own"

We can adopt all 3 states in when communicating but the best state for assertive communication is adult to adult: dealing with the reality of what's in front of us. We have to work hard to adopt the adult position, but it is the only state that allows for open and honest communication.



Think about a recent work conversation.

What is your default state in that conversation, parent, adult or child?

What could you do to adopt more of an adult style if you were to meet that person again?

# Tool #3: the gap between stimulus and response

Staying calm and choosing to use the adult to adult ego state can be very difficult when you're in a pressurised situation. We need to choose to create a gap between stimulus and response.

To stay calm when faced with a stimulus, for example a person asking us to do something for them or someone challenging the quality of our work, we need to:

1. Remember to **pause** before responding
2. Take a **breath** to calm yourself
3. **Step back** from the situation to get some perspective
4. Use this time to think about the most **assertive response** required for the situation
5. Now **respond** to the person from a position of calmness and detachment.



Think about an up-coming conversation or meeting you plan to have with a colleague.

How will you remember to follow the 5 steps above?

# Pulling it all together – your assertiveness action plan

To become more assertive, it is very valuable to think on paper. Take notes before and after your conversations, especially with people who cause you to feel nervous or anxious.

Journaling is a very powerful way of reflecting on what's gone on that day. Get a journal and at the end of every day, jot down your responses to the questions below.



Review what you've written from time to time and you will probably notice that you become more self-aware and more assertive in your communication.

## Assertiveness personal reflection questions

1. What did I do today to believe that I have the right to respect and be listened to?
2. How have I faced the reality in situations using the adult-to-adult state?
3. Who did I ask for feedback about my communication and assertiveness strengths and weaknesses?
4. Did I say 'no' to someone at work today and if so, how did it go?
5. Did I stay calm in 'difficult' situations?
6. Did I listen more than speak?
7. Did I make clear requests?
8. Did I ask for – and offer – help?
9. What small step towards more assertiveness did I take today?

# Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read through and engage with the material in this Becoming Assertive mini-guide.

I hope you found it useful in helping you reflect on how assertive you are and to take action to assert your right to speak and be heard.

This guide was written by Reg Friddle from Preferred Future, an experienced, qualified and friendly skills development and leadership coaching practice based in Ireland and working with a wide range of corporate and public organisations worldwide on leadership, management and communication skills development programmes.

Contact us at [info@preferred-future.com](mailto:info@preferred-future.com), or website [www.preferred-future.com](http://www.preferred-future.com) if you would like to discuss the skills development needs of you or your company in more detail.

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