

TWU Counseling Center

Irrational Beliefs about Assertive Behavior

Listed below are several common irrational beliefs about being assertive and disputing statements for each:

1. *If I am assertive myself, others will become angry at me.*
 - Effects may be positive, neutral, or negative. I have a legitimate right to be assertive.
 - You have a right to ask for what you want and need, just as the other person has a right to refuse. The best way to get your needs met is to be direct about what they are. Don't expect people to read your mind.
2. *If I assert myself and people do become angry with me, I will be devastated. It will be awful.*
 - Even if others do become angry and unpleasant, I can handle it without falling apart.
 - I don't have to feel responsible for the person's anger. It may be he/she who has a problem.
 - I don't have to be vulnerable to other people's moods.
3. *Although I prefer others to be straightforward with me, I'm afraid that if I am open with others and say "no" I will hurt them.*
 - Other people may or may not feel hurt.
 - If I prefer to be dealt with directly, it is quite likely others will too.
4. *If my assertion hurts others, I am responsible for their feelings.*
 - Even if others are hurt by my assertive behavior, I can let them know I care for them while also being direct about what I need or want. I am not responsible for anyone's' feelings but my own.
5. *It is wrong and selfish to turn down legitimate requests. Others will think I'm terrible and won't like me.*
 - Even legitimate requests can be refused assertively.
 - It is OK to consider my own needs, sometimes before those of others.
 - I can't please all of the people all of the time.
6. *At all costs, I must avoid making statements and asking questions that might make me look ignorant or stupid.*
 - Its okay to lack information or make a mistake, I'm human.
7. *Assertive women are cold, castrating bitches that others don't like.*
 - Assertive women are not aggressive women – they are simply honest, direct, and open, not passive.
8. *Be modest and humble. Do not act superior to other people.*
 - You have as much right as other people to show your abilities and to take pride in yourself.
 - It is healthy to own both your strengths and limitations in life.
 - Everyone's opinion is just that - an opinion.