

TWU Counseling Center

Assertive Communication

Here are some tips on how to communicate more assertively with others:

Think and talk about yourself **POSITIVELY**.

- Eliminate adding qualifying statements to your opinions or requests (e.g., “you’ll probably think this is crazy, but...”, “...I guess”, “but that’s just my opinion”).
- Reduce tag questions (e.g., “does that make sense?”, “is that okay?”).

Consciously take responsibility for yourself and avoid taking responsibility for others.

- Eliminate “should”, “ought to”, and “have to”.
- Practice using the phrase “I choose to”.

Giving and getting information

- Recognize yes/no questions. When you are asked a yes/no question respond with a yes/no answer. You do not need to elaborate upon or justify any response you give.
- Recognize information questions. Give as much information as you feel comfortable in response to the question but don’t feel you have to justify your answer.

“I” statements

- Avoid using “you” statements that distance you from your feelings. Instead, use statements that begin with “I feel _____”.
- Avoid using “you” statements that accuse. Many people interpret statements that begin with “you” as blaming and often become defensive in response.

Giving and receiving constructive criticism

- Talk about the behavior, not about the person. Be as specific as possible.
- Couple the criticism with a compliment.
- Learn to discriminate between something that is **your** problem from something that is **their** problem.

Feeling talk

- Specify feelings (e.g., I see, I hear).
- Practice “I feel...” statements rather than using “I think...” statements.
- Recognize that no one can tell you how to feel. There are no right or wrong feelings, feelings just are.

Statements without explanations

- You have a right to your opinions and decisions.
- A simple “no” is enough, without excuses.

Persistence

- Use the broken record technique: repetition of a simple statement of fact (e.g., “I am not available at 2:00, our original time is better for me”).
- Use fogging: reflect what the other person has said and then say “but” before you say your statement. When you use fogging, you show that you are listening to the other person.