

BUSINESS - LIFE - RELATIONSHIPS

THE  
ASSERTIVENESS  
*Solution*



STEP  
INTO YOUR  
POWER AND  
STAY THERE

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### ***Assertiveness: It's a Good Thing***

We all learn tools and strategies as we walk through life, and we use these tools and strategies because they work for us. We have learned that these behaviours are useful as they often get us what we want. Now notice that I have not commented on whether these behaviours are positive or negative, only that they are working in our lives and we know that they are working because we are still using them. For example, if a child doesn't get what they want, often they will throw a temper tantrum until their parent finally gives in and gives them what they want. As that child becomes an adult, chances are that they will throw an "adult temper tantrum" until they get what they want because they have learned that "temper tantrums" get them what they want.

Now, this strategy works..... until it stops working. As we get older the people around us may not want to put up with tantrums and we may find ourselves unable to create strong and lasting relationships. All the tools we use work for us until they stop working.

That is where I come in, well, let's rephrase that. That is where we are going to partner. Together, I will give you everything you need to step into your power and stay there, but and this is the partner aspect, it is up to you to take action with the tools and strategies provided. No one can do that for you. We are going to take those old tools and strategies and replace them with new, healthy and empowering tools and strategies. As you start to step into your power and stay there, you will start to see changes in your life. Your business will start to take off, your life will start to become happier and more fulfilling and your relationships will be filled with healthy and respectful communication.

Before we can begin anything though, it is extremely important to understand what assertiveness is. We hear the word more and more in today's world, but few people truly understand what it means. Assertiveness is not aggressive or passive communication. Assertiveness is respectful communication that allows you to voice your opinion and thoughts about anything and everything in a safe and respectful manner while understanding that others are entitled to their own opinions and their opinions and thoughts do not have to impact on yours.

There is a safe space for us all to have our own thoughts and opinions while still respecting each other. When we use assertive communication, we are not playing games with what we are trying to say, but saying what we mean directly, confidently and self assuredly in a respectful manner that takes into account others feelings thoughts and opinions.

We don't beat around the bush as to what we are trying to say or what our intentions are. We are very clear and others always know what to expect from us. There are no surprises later on. But, respect is key here as well. Through my work, I have gained a unique perspective on just how many people engage in what I call The Four Non-Assertive Styles of Behavior:

- Passive;
- Aggressive;
- Passive-Aggressive;
- Manipulative.

These non-assertive behaviors make victims of ourselves and tyrants of others, and it's my goal to wean you off these destructive behaviors and steer you more confidently, with more self-esteem, to a more assertive, and emotionally healthy, life.

Many people confuse assertiveness – which is a healthy behavioral model for engaging with others – with anger, which is an unhealthy emotion that damages relationships, affects our careers and even wounds our fragile self-esteem.

In *The Assertiveness Solution*, I will not only help you understand the critical difference between assertive and aggressive communication, but I will also help you build your self-esteem so that you no longer need to go to that “angry place” or “passive place” to express your feelings, but can do so by being healthily assertive instead.

I am on a mission to help people transform their lives in every way. My broad knowledge has allowed me to create programs that are not only insightful and empowering, but that also provide specific strategies, tools and techniques that are actionable. It is not just enough to gain knowledge and insight, it is what you do with it that matters.

I am also aware that it is the fear of change, the fear of becoming someone extraordinary and the feeling of being overwhelmed that culminate and hold people back from taking the action necessary to step into their power and stay there. I have helped my clients to overcome their internal barriers, create actionable strategies and meet their own desired goals, and I would like to help you do the same.

That's why the book you hold in your hands today is so important. Inside are the tools you'll need to create your own *Assertiveness Solution* and in doing so, increase your self-esteem and step into your power...and stay there.

In this book you will learn some valuable tools, such as:

- Assertiveness in Everyday Life
- Priorities and Boundaries
- The Four Non-Assertive Styles of Behavior
- The Goal – Assertiveness, Self-Esteem, and Self-Care
- Self-Care – When to Say “Yes,” When to Say “No”
- Self-Esteem – You Are Who You Think You Should Be
- Perception – It's Role in Our Lives

So if your ready, your journey to a new, more self-confident, more assertive, more powerful you begins on the very next page:

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Assertiveness in Everyday Life – Respect Starts within Oneself*

Let's clear the air right from the start: assertiveness is NOT a dirty word. Let me repeat: it is NOT wrong to be assertive. And yet, for many of us, the simple act of asserting our own, undeniable needs is equated with being:

- Angry
- Aggressive
- Bossy
- Annoyed
- Irritated
- Moody
- Mad
- Irate
- Demanding
- Unfair

Even looking up synonyms for the word "Assertive" results in a mixed bag of emotionally positive terms – and we'll get to these in a minute – like "self-confident," "self-assured" and "firm" to less positive terms like "forward" and "pushy". No wonder there is so much confusion.

The fact is, this couldn't be further from the truth. Assertiveness is actually a respectful and healthy communication and behavioural style. Assertiveness is actually a way of taking care of yourself, of respecting yourself and, just as importantly, showing others that they should respect you, too.

Being assertive is also a way to respect others. The truth is, you can never get into trouble by being assertive. Don't get me wrong, others may not always agree with you, but it is very difficult to get upset with someone who is communicating openly and honestly and listening to what the other person has to say. By stepping into your power you will feel confident to keep your own opinions, even if others do not agree with you or you don't necessarily agree with those of others.

Now, as for aggressiveness, that is another matter altogether. Frankly, you will always get into trouble by being aggressive or passive. Anger will always feed anger and that tends to spiral out of control very quickly, regardless of how

much you try to control it. At the other end of the spectrum, passivity will always leave you feeling used and taken advantage of. This will also spiral out of control unless you learn to do things differently.

Life is a series of conversations, both verbal and non-verbal. From the minute you first come into contact with people – at home, on the bus, in the lobby of your workplace, in appointments and meetings, in class and on the street – you are communicating, whether you know it or not.

So many people think that to communicate you must verbalize, but how you approach the world – your body language, how you stand, whether or not you make eye contact, the tone of your voice, your facial expressions – this all steamrolls into verbal and non-verbal communication, and it speaks volumes about how you think of yourself.

Human nature is such that we size others up almost immediately: the loudmouth, the bully, the wimp, the boss, the jerk, the good girl, the bad boy. These calculations are almost immediate and come as a result of the picture we present to the world, often without even realizing it.

So, what are you saying to the world – even when you don't say anything at all? You can display assertiveness verbally, by saying something respectful about yourself that lets the other person know you have various personal and professional boundaries, such as:

- "I'm sorry, I was next in line."
- "I wish I could help you, Brad, but I don't have the bandwidth to work on your project this week."
- "Could you take this back to the kitchen, I asked for it medium-rare."
- "Mom, honestly, when you ask me if I'm still the same dress size, I know exactly what you're saying and it upsets me."

Or you can assert yourself nonverbally, by the way you use your body language, i.e. facial expressions or even how close you stand to someone. For instance:

- Stepping back from someone you feel is standing too close to you.
- Gently removing yourself from a verbal confrontation.
- Not smiling when you are in a tense situation.

Regardless of how you communicate, letting others know that you matter is a simple, but significant step toward reclaiming your self-confidence and learning to assert yourself in personal and professional situations. It's important to let others take note of your self-assertion, whether verbally, or nonverbally. It's all about taking care of, and being responsible for, yourself.

If you've ever flown anywhere, I'm sure you're aware of the part in the airline attendant's speech where he or she tells you to put the oxygen mask over your face first so that you can then assist your family, traveling companions or other

passengers with theirs.

In order to step into your power you must be able to breathe, to live, to survive and thrive before you can be of use to anyone else in your life.

Sadly, we tend to act in much the opposite way: rushing around giving everyone else our “oxygen” until, sadly, we pass out or die – at least, emotionally and soulfully – from lack of what we need from life. The cost of not taking care of ourselves is way too high - we become miserable, resentful, stressed, depressed and angry. We become an emotional wreck and spiritually numb.

That’s because we often equate self-care with the first part of that term, “self” instead of the second part: "care". “Self” can sound an awful lot like "self-ish" particularly in the modern world where we all tend to be doing more with less:

- Work
- Gym
- Finances
- Classes
- Relationships
- Family
- Kids
- Duties
- More work
- More responsibilities

In fact, think back to the last time you told someone you were going to get a massage. Do you remember their response? The one that gets reported back to me most often is a sarcastic, “Oh, it must be nice to be able to do that. It must be nice to be able to have the time for a massage. It must be nice to be able to afford that massage.”

I mean, really, by the time you’re finished talking to other people, you feel guilty for actually taking care of yourself, as if you’re doing something wrong – or being selfish.

What people don’t understand is that it’s even more selfish to not take care of yourself. There is no need to arrive home and start yelling at everyone and resenting life because you have not taken the time you need, and deserve, to take care of yourself. It is the lack of self care that destroys relationships; not using self care.

With plates so full and time such a commodity, it can actually feel selfish to take care of yourself, but if you don’t do it: who will? That’s the whole self-care dilemma.

If you are trying to make your coworkers lives easier, your children’s lives easier, your parents’ lives easier, your neighbors lives easier... how about you? Self-care teaches that it’s okay to take care of yourself first, even if it’s only so that you’ll have enough emotional, spiritual and physical energy to take care of others.

Much like the proverbial oxygen mask, if you can't breathe, it becomes impossible to help others breathe. You can help so many more people in so many more ways as long as you're functioning optimally. Without taking the time to care for yourself, it's going to be harder to do all those things that make life worth living.

In the way we live our lives and communicate with others verbally or nonverbally, we essentially teach people how to treat us. When we respect ourselves enough to be assertive, we "teach" others to show us the same level of respect that we have for ourselves.

However, when we lack self-respect, we often show this in a myriad of ways: apologizing for every little thing we do; never saying "no" to the requests of others, putting others first to the point of exhaustion, yelling at others until they say "yes". When these things occur what we are actually doing is "teaching" others not to respect us. We are "teaching" others how to walk all over us and how to not be honest with us. At the same time, we are sending the message that we will not be open and honest with others about how we are coping and what is ok or not ok with us. When we don't respect ourselves, it becomes challenging to respect others in a healthy way as well. It becomes a never ending cycle.

Unfortunately, once that lesson is learned, and others figure out that they don't need to respect us, it's very hard to go back and "un-teach" others how to treat us, which is why being assertive from day one helps spread the message that you're not afraid to push back or stand firm when you feel your own needs are being trampled on to the exclusion of everyone else's.

Another "truism" I find quite helpful in explaining the topic of assertiveness is that "people will take as much as you will give". It's only human nature: if someone is offering us something, be it their time, energy, effort or to take some of the load off of our shoulders, we instinctively want to let them. Whether it's letting your mother still cook Sunday dinners long after you've left the house or handing off some of our files to a junior team member who seems more than willing to do them for us. Most companies will never turn to their employees and say, "It is time to go home now." Especially not when their employees are willing and able to put in overtime at no extra cost, hassle or complaints. Most companies will not say, "Please don't work so efficiently, you're getting too much done."

What you will hear regularly, though, is an employer saying, "You started off your time here getting more done than everyone else and now you're slacking off because you're only doing what normal people would be expected to do, so let's go back to doing more."

If you don't set limits on giving, you will give until it quite literally hurts. If you don't learn to say, "no," your body will say it for you when it literally gives out on you!

We all have "comfort zones," those places we inhabit in our lives that feel "comfortable" to us. They exist in almost every facet of our lives:



- Where we like to sit in a classroom, conference room or even the bus: front, middle, back, left, right
- How close to or far away from people we stand in polite conversation
- How loud we talk or like to be spoken to
- What we like to watch on TV or at the movies, listen to or read
- How much work we can accomplish in any given day
- How much stress, positive or negative, we can carry until we snap

These comfort zones are unique and personal to us and a human right, and they define how we approach the world as individuals. We seek comfort in every area of our lives.

At work, we like to get a certain amount done every day – just enough, hopefully, and not too much – so that we can be “comfortable” with the next day’s workload. At home, we have certain habits – come home, kick off our shoes, grab a drink, put on the TV or some music, sit on the porch and talk to our loved ones, get on the computer and play a game or engage in social media. Everyone has their own personalized routine depending on who they are and what is comfortable and relaxing for them.

Sometimes our lives are very comfortable, and at other times outside elements – people, commitments, deadlines – make our lives uncomfortable. How much discomfort we’re willing to put up with is a matter of personal respect – for ourselves and others. Naturally, in life, we must learn to “play well with others” and often have to do things we don’t necessarily want to do, but “need” to do to keep the peace – or our jobs.

The problem becomes when others begin to invade your personal comfort zone, professionally or personally, verbally, or non-verbally. When they stand too close for comfort, speak to you in a way that is uncomfortable or, frankly, unacceptable.

How will you react?

What will you do?

How will you respond?

The answers to those very important questions lie in how much you respect yourself. If you feel unworthy of being respected, for whatever reason, others will sense that and treat you accordingly, trampling on your comfort zone until it shrinks to the point of being non-existent.

That is why assertiveness is so important. In the traditional one-sided relationship, where someone with confidence takes advantage of someone who lacks confidence, that person who is insecure will take it and take it and take it until they snap: lashing out at either their abuser or the very next person to cross the line they’ve finally drawn in the sand. In the process they hurt feelings, damage reputations, sever relationships and often lose work, clients and even a job.

But it doesn’t have to get to that point. Instead, you can be assertive in little ways, in all ways, of your everyday life. It doesn’t happen overnight, but continually making small changes and working with the tools, strategies and

knowledge in this book, you will be lead to big results, solutions and changes. Gradually, slowly, confidently, you can begin to reclaim your self-confidence – and step into your own personal power – by asserting yourself on a case by case basis. It is your right to feel comfortable – at work, at home, on the subway, in a movie theatre, in line at the grocery store, in your neighbourhood – wherever and whenever you choose.

Learning to be assertive in everyday life is a valuable lesson to learn, particularly at the outset of our journey together, because you can begin to work on it chapter by chapter, day by day.

A little here, a little there, and I promise you: you will get addicted to respecting, standing up for and, above all, caring for yourself. It will feel good to take back your personal space, extend your comfort zone, feel important and loved and become the authority on how you want to design your life and redefine what's possible for you. You will start to feel better about yourself, feel more stability in your life and relationships and become happier.

And I remind you: there is nothing wrong with feeling important. Why? Because you are important. You have just as much right to a satisfying, fulfilling and happy life as anyone else on this planet, but you will never get to take full advantage of your existence if you don't respect yourself enough to demand the life you were meant to lead.

Assertiveness is a way to consistently communicate in a healthy and respectful manner. We tend to associate it with being pushy, aggressive or even angry. In an earlier example I shared the common pattern of being pushed to your limit until, eventually – inevitably – you snap. What is important to understand is that the snap came because you weren't being assertive, you weren't letting others know your honest feelings. By trying to avoid the negative feelings that were coming up, it actually made that feeling so big until you couldn't control it and snapped. Others snap back because they become confused. They don't understand why you are upset because up until this point you showed no evidence of being unhappy or disagreeing with them (even if they asked). That is why it becomes so important to communicate in a healthy and respectful manner so everyone knows where they stand and there are no surprises. This way you are teaching the people in your life to treat you with respect and you are, in return, learning how to respect yourself as well as others.

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