

practicing assertive communication

OVERVIEW: Students review assertive behaviors, discuss cultural implications, and practice using assertive communication in situations where rights are being abused.

OBJECTIVES: To enable students to communicate more assertively when they need to; to strengthen their dialogue skills.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Begin with these guiding questions:

- Today we will learn more about assertive communication. Sometimes it is difficult to say clearly what you want (for example, that you want to be considered for a leadership position at school). It may also be difficult to say what you do not want (for example, that you do not want to eat what someone prepared for you).
- Who can remember a time when you were unsure how to express your desires or wishes clearly? *[Notice whether girls or boys are more likely to respond to this question.]*
- Speaking up can be difficult even when the situation really matters to us, or when real physical or emotional consequences might be an issue. Practicing respectful, but assertive, communication is helpful.
- Take out your notebooks. I will read a series of questions or statements that are “prompts.” For each one, write a response that is assertive but not aggressive. Use complete sentences.
- The first prompt is: “Tell me why I should vote for you for class president.”

- Who can share an assertive response? *[Help students arrive at an appropriate response, such as: “I believe I am the most qualified candidate for class president. I hope I can count on your support.” Be sure that the responses are complete sentences.]*

2 Repeat the process for each prompt (see list).

3 Wrap up by discussing the following questions:

- Some people may think that being assertive goes against their culture or is rude. What is a situation in which a person should be assertive even if such a response is considered rude? *[Probe for: when you feel your rights are being violated.]*
- Are girls who are assertive treated in the same way as boys who are assertive? Is someone who is assertive viewed differently if that person is from an ethnic or racial minority group? How can such biases limit people’s ability to stand up for themselves?

Homework: Practice being more assertive at least once in the next couple of days. Write down what happens and how you feel.

DURATION:
30–40 minutes

MATERIALS:
Your copy of the list of prompts and sample responses

TO PREPARE:
Read over the prompts and sample responses; you may wish to modify some of them to be more culturally appropriate.

list of prompts and sample assertive responses

Use the following statements to prompt assertive responses. Sample responses are also included below in case your students have difficulty arriving at an appropriate response.

- 1 Prompt:** "Will you let me copy your test? The teacher won't know."
Sample Response: "Sorry. I do not believe in sharing test answers."
- 2 Prompt:** You see your supervisor from work and want to ask for a raise.
Sample Response: "Supervisor, I would like to speak with you about a raise that I think I have earned."
- 3 Prompt:** Tell your father you wish to continue in school next year, despite his wishes.
Sample Response: "Father, I respect your views, but it is extremely important to me to continue my schooling. I want to discuss my reasons with you."
- 4 Prompt:** "Why don't you like sports like everyone else does? What's wrong with you?"
Sample Response: "Everyone is different. I enjoy reading and music."
- 5 Prompt:** "Come hang out with us behind the old factory; the police never go there."
Sample Response: "No, thanks. I'm not interested."
- 6 Prompt:** "I'm the mayor. I hear that you are requesting use of one of the city buildings for your after-school club?"
Sample Response: "Yes, Mr. Mayor. We are responsible and will make good use of the space. Would you like more information about our plans?"
- 7 Prompt:** "If you can convince the two classmates next to you to work on the mural with you, we will let you paint the wall." (Respond to the classmates.)
Sample Response: "We have permission to paint a mural if two more students join in. Would you like to join me?"
- 8 Prompt:** "We are taking a field trip. Where do you think we should go?"
Sample Response: "I would like to go to _____ and I think it would be interesting for others as well."
- 9 Prompt:** "That new kid from the other class is walking this way. Let's trip him."
Sample Response: "Leave him alone. He has done nothing to us."
- 10 Prompt:** Now think of the situation you remembered at the start of this activity, when you were asked about a time that you wish you had expressed your wishes more directly. Write down what you might have said in that situation. You will not be asked to share this response.