

Assertiveness - the quality of firmly requesting your rights without harming the rights of others

From *When I say No, I Feel Guilty* by Manuel J Smith

The right to be the final judge of yourself is the prime assertive right which allows no one to manipulate you. It is the assertive right from which your other assertive rights are derived. Your other assertive rights are only more specific everyday applications of this prime right. The other rights are important since they provide you with the details for coping with the most common ways that other people psychologically manipulate you, violate your personal dignity and self-respect. Examples of the ways other people try to manipulate you by setting up themselves or some arbitrary standard as the ultimate judge of your behavior are given with each of the specific assertive rights that follow.

A BILL OF ASSERTIVE RIGHTS

I: You have the right to judge your own behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon yourself.

II: You have the right to offer no reasons or excuses for justifying your behavior.

III: You have the right to judge if you are responsible for finding solutions to other people's problems.

IV: You have the right to change your mind.

V: You have the right to make mistakes—and be responsible for them.

VI: You have the right to say, "I don't know."

VII: You have the right to be independent of the goodwill of others before coping with them.

VIII: You have the right to be illogical in making decisions.

IX: You have the right to say, "I don't understand."

X: You have the right to say, "I don't care."

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY NO, WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY

End of quote.

The promotion of assertiveness is based on it being seen as an alternative to any attitude or act that honours violence in any form.

Assertiveness and aggressiveness are often confused. Assertiveness means you stand up for your own rights without violating another person's rights and expressing your needs and desires and opinions in an honest and plain way.

Assertiveness is asserting your rights without trampling on the rights of anybody else. Aggression is involved when you are getting your rights by showing angry disrespect to others.

Assertiveness demands that you never back down on your rights as long as you are respecting the rights of others. It demands you diagnose a situation properly and understand yourself and the people you are dealing with.

When you look deeper into assertiveness you see that nothing is simple or easy about it.

It is possible to be aggressive without feeling aggressive. It is possible to be assertive as a means of being aggressive. It is possible to be aggressive as a means of being assertive. If you calmly tell somebody they are useless it is said that you are practicing aggression though you may not feel any. The aggressive person says, "You are useless!" The assertive person says, "You are useless!". So what is the difference? The assertive person has no choice but to say this if it is true and nothing good can be said. It is not always clear where the difference is. In fact a lot of the time there is no difference. This will lead to many people being offended by assertive behaviour. It will make them bristle in anger.

All correction or attempted correction of others is patronising. It is acting the superior. An assertive trainer might say to the trainee secretary, "I used to make mistakes on the phone too. Please don't be offended at me pointing out your mistakes. I am only trying to help". In other words, don't be offended at me correcting you for I made mistakes too. You mean that you only get the right to correct if you made mistakes. That makes no sense and is in fact degrading yourself and denying you have any such thing as a right. If you have the right to degrade yourself then you have no rights at all! The trainee wants to hear you say what you said so that shows how deeply they really care for you! They care for themselves. You mean too that you have to look back on your mistakes before you can correct. Forgiving yourself is a big part of self-esteem. If you look back it is like having buried the hatchet and now you are marking the place where it was laid. You diminish your self-esteem and who you are now by looking back. When the trainee thinks about it, he or she will see that the trainer is still claiming to be superior to the trainee now. The snob who had humble beginnings is not made any less of a snob or a superior by these beginnings.

Suppose there were two trainees and one of them was better than the other. Suppose God appeared saying to you that one of them had to die at his hand. And that he left it to you to choose which one. You will pick the better one. The point is that people do not consider or treat everybody with the same value. Sensing that others are better than us disturbs us. It hurts our sense of self-preservation- the strongest instinct we have!

In Christianity, the only rights you have is to be abandoned by God and sentenced to death by God and sent to Hell forever when you die. Jesus said that when you were struck on one cheek turn the other. So you are not allowed to feel any aggression. To be assertive is a sin as well for he didn't say, "If anybody hits you on one cheek and you can't get away, turn the other cheek. Don't say like an assertive person would that you are going to report them to the law if they hit you again for their own sake as much as your own." He would have seen assertiveness as sinfully affirming rights you don't have and therefore as a form of aggression. He did not assert his rights while on trial for his life and indeed seemed to want to be crucified for he was provocative. He is put forward as an example for us by his apostles and he continually said that people must copy him.

Somebody insults you and you are assertive. Then you say to them in a firm but not angry tone, "You have no right to say that to me. Maybe we need to talk about this problem and maybe solve it". You are still exercising violence. You are taking advantage of the human weakness that is so susceptible to influence to make a declaration in an attempt to cause a change in another person. You are objecting to another person's freedom. In other words, they show they are weak and thus any response to them to change them is trying to use a weak person to get them to change.

You may object, "That would be true if you were playing on the fear people have of not fitting in or of being thought to be bad by others. But you are only reminding the man or woman that they can do better and that is no aggression." It is still aggression for the person knows that they are doing wrong and you are patronisingly reminding them. Patronising is a form of violence, it attacks the dignity of the other person by implying your dignity is more important than theirs.

Just because you act assertive, that does not mean you intend to be assertive. In the same way, just because you do somebody a favour that does not mean that you intend to do them good. Perhaps you are only trying to suck up to them to use them in bed. Back to assertive. You can be assertive while wanting to do it to make the bully or difficult person feel inferior. It is aggression disguised as assertiveness. The rules against aggression and which support assertiveness only look at outwards appearances.

When you respond to a bully with aggression you could argue that if you upset the bully then that is the bully's problem. You could say we are all responsible for our reactions. If you responded to a bully with assertion you could still upset the bully. You would be saying then that it was his or her problem. So you have to say the same in relation to aggression. Bullies have the same nasty attitude then as assertive people: "If they are hurt by what I do or say then tough shit!"

If aggression is bad for it can't work with a bully, then how is assertion going to work? If a bully bullies despite you bullying her or him back, then it is no solution at all to tell you to be assertive. Being nice or as nice as an assertive person can be is guaranteed to make it worse for bullies are cowards deep down. The assertive person is to tell the bully that he or she is hurting her or him. That is just what the bully wants to hear. The rules show no real concern about helping the victims of bullies. The rules just want them to bully themselves by practicing a silly and impractical philosophy. The rule-makers want the esteem and glory of making what look and sound like fabulous rules at the expense of the victims. Its similar to that great champion of the family, the Roman Catholic Church urging married couples to pass on AIDS rather than use condoms for condoms are detrimental to family cohesion and stability.

Survival of the fittest is the law. Aggression is necessary for survival.

Somebody could say to you, "So you didn't win the singing contest? What matters is that you tried."

Nobody joins a competition to just try. They join it to win. They join it to be judged the best. You don't try for the sake of trying but for the sake of winning. Trying to win is what matters until you lose! It doesn't matter when you lose! Does it matter or not? The hypocrites cannot make up their minds, they and their simpering consolations!

Nature operates by the law of survival of the fittest. We eat cows and lambs for they are no match against us. Those who have money have it because they are keeping it or taking it from those who don't. The advice above is asking you to be happy about trying and not winning. It is asking you to be happy about not being the fittest or if you are the fittest not being thought to be the fittest! It is asking you to accept danger and to deny that winning matters more than trying! You may say that winners didn't just become winners. They had to try as well. You may say then that trying is more important than winning. But the winners don't feel that. The person that tries hardest and fails to win will not be as happy as the person who tried less and won. To say that John and Joseph are equally good except that Joseph is an untidy writer is to say that if there is a choice Joseph should be allowed to die because he is not as good as John. To attack or condemn the fault is to attack the person.

Assertiveness is a lower level of aggression. It is a hypocritical form of aggression for it pays homage to the ridiculous notion that you can hate what somebody did but not them. When we feel somebody has done something evil it is the character of the person that offends us. We see the PERSON as evil.

Better outward aggression than that simmering poisonous fake alternative to aggression that is called assertiveness. Faked goodness is worse than outright evil.

Religion and its co-conspirators in hypocrisy prevent you seeing that if somebody is violating your rights that the person is the problem. Seeing the things they do as the problem will only stupefy.

"I love John but I don't approve of what he did. It was despicable."

To say that John's action was despicable is the same as saying he is despicable if he was responsible for it. To say it was despicable is to say implicitly that John is despicable. It is to infer that John is despicable. The person might be saying explicitly that John's deed was despicable and implicitly that John is despicable but that doesn't mean that one is meant any less or said any less than the other. There is a perception that what is implied is not as important as what is made clear. That perception is wrong. You can't separate the sin from the sinner for it is not sin that people abhor but the character of the sinner. In other words, they despise the kind of person the sinner is. To hate the sin is to hate the sinner.

The hypocritical claim that you can love the sinner not the sin is foundational to the Christian, Jewish and Islamic system so the whole system is based on a lie. Would you believe a person who said to you, "I have nothing against you. It is just your sin I have something against"? Love the sinner and hate the sin means love the sinner in spite of the sin which you hate so it is grudging love - if it can be called love at all. It can hardly mean you must love the sinner because of the sin you hate for that is impossible - you can't both hate the sin and love it. Religious love is fake love.

"You were very nasty there! There is no need for that!"

Translation: If there was need for it then it would be fine. I judge you by telling you that you had no need to do it. Say you had a mental disorder that made you bad and dangerous then you did have a need to do it.

It is no answer to say that it is never fine. What about the hypothetical? What if it were?

Your response to the nasty person is hypocritical and judgemental.

What you need is a private matter. Is it really for anybody else to tell somebody what they need?

Many who experience assertive treatment from others feel they have been treated aggressively. Their instinct is telling them something!!

An essay on the subject

Stand up for yourself without upsetting anybody else!

Assertiveness is when you stand up for your feelings, beliefs, desires and needs and declare them in an honest way that does not violate respect for others.

Assertiveness is a form of respect for others. If you encourage people to harm you by saying nothing against it to them then

that is not respect.

Assertiveness is an important skill. It would be expected of everybody in the workplace and everybody in a relationship.

To refuse requests assertively simply say something like, "No I don't want to"/"I prefer not to". Do not say sorry. If you don't want to do it why would you be sorry? Why are you suggesting that you are somehow bad for doing what you want and not what another wants? Do not insult the other person by implying they were asking you to do what you didn't want to do. That is what sorry says. It also says you are bad for not wanting to do it. Try and use constructive assertiveness as much as you can. That entails making an offer to the person to help them. But it must be some kind of help that you want to give. For example, if you refuse to do a weeks work for someone you can offer to ask a friend if they could do it.

You don't have to give an explanation and sometimes an explanation can sound like an excuse.

Keep away from, "I should not". Don't say it. Don't think it for that is worse than saying it. You are your own God. There is nothing to tell you what you should do, or what you should not do, so there is no need for any other God.

Do not try to force yourself to do anything. Do you drink too much? Do not say, "I will stop drinking." You are saying you will stop whether you intend to or not. You are saying you can force the future to arrange it so that you will not drink. But you cannot control the future. Say, "I allow myself to try and stop." That respects and honours yourself and your freedom. It is not up to God to allow you. That does nothing for you. You have to do it yourself simply because nobody else can do it for you. Remember the power of simply saying, "I allow myself ..."

To express disagreement with another person say, "No, I don't agree with that". Don't attack another person's ideas by saying anything along the lines of "That would be no good" or "That will not work". Say something like, "You think we should do y. Do you think there would be a difficulty there such as etc?"