

ASSERTIVENESS 201

non-assertiveness (passive)—ASSERTIVE--AGGRESSIVE

What's the difference?

Passive: The proverbial "doormat." When you allow the needs, opinions, and judgments of others to become more important than your own, you are likely to feel hurt, anxious, or angry. This behavior is often indirect, emotionally dishonest, and self-denying.

Assertive: The ability to express yourself and your rights without violating the rights of others. It is appropriately direct, open, and honest communication that is self-enhancing and expressive. It is the ability to express your thoughts and feelings in a way that clearly states your needs and keeps the lines of communication open with the other person.

Aggressive: Aggressive behavior is typically punishing, hostile, blaming, and demanding. It can involve threats, name-calling, and even physical contact. It can also involve sarcasm, catty comments, gossip, and "slips of the tongue." You express your rights but at the expense, degradation, or humiliation of another. It involves being so emotionally or physically forceful that the rights of others are not allowed to surface. Aggressiveness usually results in others becoming angry or vengeful, and, as such, it can work against your intentions and cause people to lose respect for you. You may feel self-righteous or superior at a particular time, but, after thinking things through, you may feel guilty later.

ASSERTIVE RIGHTS

- ❖ The right to decide how to lead your life. This includes pursuing your own goals, dreams, and establishing your own priorities.
- ❖ The right to your own values, beliefs, opinions, and emotions – and the right to respect yourself for them, no matter the opinion of others.
- ❖ The right not to justify or explain your actions or feelings to others.
- ❖ The right to tell others how you wish to be treated.
- ❖ The right to express yourself and to say "No," "I don't know," "I don't understand," or even "I don't care." You have the right to take the time you need to formulate your ideas before expressing them.
- ❖ The right to ask for information or help – without having negative feelings about your needs.
- ❖ The right to change your mind, to make mistakes, and to sometimes act illogically – with full understanding and acceptance of the consequences.
- ❖ The rights to like yourself even though you're not perfect and to sometimes do less than you are capable of doing.
- ❖ The right to have positive, satisfying relationships within which you feel comfortable and free to express yourself honestly – and the right to change or end relationships if they don't meet your needs.
- ❖ The right to change, enhance, or develop your life in any way you determine.