BEING ASSERTIVE

1 hour

Create a safe and positive learning environment by agreeing ground rules for the lesson.

In this lesson we will learn:

→ to recognise how being assertive can help in expressing feelings
→ to speak assertively
→ how being assertive can help manage conflict.

Resources

- slides – external and internal conflict
- statement cards.

Digital resources

- Being assertive film ‘homework’
- Being assertive film ‘gig.’

Activity

1. Explain that there are different types of conflict: **external** – when we struggle with something else, an object or another person, or **internal** – when we struggle with ourselves, and give examples of each. Use the slides to help demonstrate. Ask students to think of examples – discuss in pairs and feedback.

2. Ask students if they know the difference between **passive**, **assertive** and **aggressive** responses. What does this mean?

*Definitions:*

**Passive behaviour** usually means putting up with a situation in which you feel uncomfortable rather than being honest about what you really think or feel. It involves being apologetic about your own views and putting yourself down rather than expressing them positively.

**Being assertive** is usually defined as standing up for your own rights without dismissing on the rights of others. It means being honest with yourself and others, putting forward your own views and stating clearly and honestly what you want, think and feel. It means being self-confident and positive but not dogmatic. Behaving assertively means being firm in expressing an opinion but understanding the other person’s point of view and being prepared to reach a workable compromise.

**Aggressive behaviour** means asserting your rights regardless of the rights and feelings of anyone else. In other words getting your way at others expense. Aggressive behaviour has control at its heart.

3. Watch the passive response film clip of either ‘homework’ or ‘gig’. Ask students what they noticed? Did the response help the situation? How do they think the people felt before and after the discussion?
4. Repeat for the aggressive response and assertive response. Discuss the differences and how helpful each can be. What are the consequences of these responses? What did they notice the person in the assertive response situation doing? Record these.

5. Role play: Group students into threes, labelled A, B and C.
   A is the person being talked to
   B will practice an assertive response
   C will be the observer feeding back how the response went.
   An assertive response is:
   - say what happened
   - say how you feel
   - say what you would have liked to happen differently.

   Hand out statement cards to each group, ask them to practice this response using different scenarios and taking it in turns.

   Discuss: How did it feel doing this exercise? Which of the three was the most difficult type of response to give? How can learning to be assertive affect our ability to manage a situation and how we feel about it?

   Key message
   It can be really difficult to know what to do when someone is being aggressive towards you. It is easy to get angry yourself but if you can keep calm and assertive it is more likely that the situation will not escalate and you may be able to resolve the problem. Being assertive can help reduce feelings of frustration and anger and can be empowering by letting people know how you feel and what you need to happen.

   Reflection
   Where in my life do I experience conflict?
   Do I feel able to use an assertive response?

   Links to: Let it out | Building resilience | Managing stress | Aggression | My support network

Make sure young people know what support is available and how to access this support.