


# How Self-Assertive are You?



Behavioral scientists know that your ability to be assertive, or to stand up for your rights, can contribute importantly to your emotional well-being. But some people do not know what assertive behavior really is. And many find they are assertive in some situations, but not in others. Here is a quiz to help you determine just how assertive you are and at the same time show you what assertive responses look like.



# Assertiveness Quiz

First, write down numbers from 1 to 10 on a piece of paper. Second, depending on your choice in each question, write a, b, or c after each number. Third, after answering all of the questions, refer to the Score Interpretation Key for your results.



# Assertiveness Quiz

1. **You are in a restaurant and order a steak medium-rare, but it is served to you well done. You would:**
  - a) Accept it since you sort of like it well done anyway.
  - b) Angrily refuse the steak and insist on seeing the manager to complain about the poor service.
  - c) Call the waiter and indicate you ordered your steak medium-rare, then turn it back.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**2. You are a customer waiting in line to be served. Suddenly, someone steps in line ahead of you. You would:**

- a) Let the person be ahead of you since he/she is already in line.
- b) Pull the person out of line and make him/her go to the back.
- c) Indicate to the person that you are in line and point out where it begins.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**3. After walking out of a store where you purchased some items you discover you were short-changed. You would:**

- a) Let it go since you are already out of the store and have no proof you were short-changed.
- b) Go to the manager and indicate how you were cheated by the clerk, then demand the proper change.
- c) Return to the clerk and inform him/her of the error.



# Assertiveness Quiz

- 4. You are in the middle of watching a very interesting television program when your spouse comes in and asks you for a favor. You would:**
- a) Do the favor as quickly as possible, then return to the program to finish watching it.
  - b) Say "no," then finish watching your program.
  - c) Ask if it can wait until the program is over and, if so, do it then.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**5. A friend drops in to say hello, but stays too long, preventing you from finishing an important work project. You would:**

- a) Let the person stay, then finish your work another time.
- b) Tell the person to stop bothering you and to get out.
- c) Explain your need to finish your work and request he/she visit another time.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**6. You ask a gas station attendant for five dollars worth of gas. However, he fills up your tank by mistake and asks for twelve dollars. You would:**

- a) Pay the twelve dollars since the gas is already in your tank and you will eventually need it anyway.
- b) Demand to see the manager and protest being ripped off.
- c) Indicate you only requested five dollars worth of gas and give him only five dollars.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**7. You suspect someone of harboring a grudge against you, but you don't know why. You would:**

- a) Pretend you are unaware of his/her anger and ignore it, hoping it will correct itself.
- b) Get even with the person somehow so he/she will learn not to hold grudges against you.
- c) Ask the person if they are angry, then try to be understanding.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**8. You bring your car to a garage for repairs and receive a written estimate. But later, when you pick up your car, you are billed for additional work and for an amount higher than the estimate. You would:**

- a) Pay the bill since the car must have needed the extra repairs anyway.
- b) Refuse to pay, and then complain to the Motor Vehicle Department or the Better Business Bureau.
- c) Indicate to the manager that you agreed only to the estimated amount, then pay only that amount.



# Assertiveness Quiz

- 9. You invite a good friend to your house for a dinner party, but your friend never arrives and neither calls to cancel nor to apologize. You would:**
- a) Ignore it, but manage not to show up the next time your friend invites you to a party.
  - b) Never speak to this person again and end the friendship.
  - c) Call your friend to find out what happened.



# Assertiveness Quiz

**10. You are in a group discussion at work that includes your boss. A co-worker asks you a question about your work, but you don't know the answer. You would:**

- a) Give your co-worker a false, but plausible answer so your boss will think you are on top of things.
- b) Do not answer, but attack your co-worker by asking a question you know he/she could not answer.
- c) Indicate to your co-worker you are unsure just now, but offer to give him/her the information later.



# Score Interpretation Key

In general, there are three broad styles of interpersonal behavior. These are:

- a) Passive
- b) Aggressive
- c) Assertive



# Passive Style

The passive style of interpersonal behavior is characterized by inaction. People utilizing this style tend to be easy to get along with and pleasant, but unwilling to stand up for their rights, for fear of offending others. They are very uncomfortable expressing anger and usually deny or suppress this feeling should it occur.

As a result, resentment can easily build under the surface producing stress and tension. In time, these people learn to fear close relationships because they have no way to protect themselves from the petty annoyances and inadvertent intrusions that occur in most relationships.

The “a” choices in the quiz are representative of the passive style. Thus, the more “a” choices you made, the more passive you are. Six or more “a” choices suggest you are probably passive in your interpersonal behavior.



# Aggressive Style

The aggressive style is characterized by intrusiveness. People who utilize this style tend to go after what they want, but are unconcerned about how this will affect others. Their angry, dominating manner tends to alienate people who, in time, may seek to oppose them.

Aggressive individuals are usually suspicious of others and are often on the look out for infractions or violations of their rights. Thus, the aggressive style produces stress and prohibits the development of close, trusting, and caring interpersonal relationships.

The “b” choices in the quiz are representative of the aggressive style. Thus, the more “b” choices you made, the more aggressive you are. Six or more “b” choices indicate you are most likely aggressive in your interpersonal behavior.



# Assertive Style

The assertive style is characterized by both fairness and strength. Assertive individuals are able to stand up for their rights, but remain sensitive to the rights of others. People who choose this style are usually relaxed and easy going, but are honest about their feelings. This is the best style for minimizing stress and maintaining long-standing intimate relationships.

The “c” choices in the quiz are representative of the assertive style. Thus, the more “c” choices you made, the more assertive you are. Six or more “c” choices suggest you are probably assertive.

Look at the “c” answers again. If you move your everyday behavior closer to the “c” style of response, you will likely experience an increase in feelings of self-esteem and a decrease in feelings of stress.



# How Self-Assertive are You?

There are always exceptions to these situations. Some will call for more aggressive reactions while others are better handled using a more passive approach. Whatever the situation dictates, be sure that you are professional and conduct yourself in a manner that will not offend others or cast a bad light on you from your employer's and co-workers perspectives.



## Developing Assertiveness Can Help You:

- Stay calm under stress
- Set limits (ex. saying no without feeling guilty)
- Improve your communication skills
- Handle criticism
- Improve your relationships
- Feel more in control of your life



# Body Language

When asserting yourself:

- Look the person in the eye
- Hold your body upright
- Consciously relax your shoulders
- Try to breathe normally and don't hold your breath
- Keep your face relaxed
- Speak at a normal conversational volume (don't yell or whisper)



# Keeping Your Head

Despite your best efforts to be direct and calm, the other person will sometimes behave like you're having an argument and want to yell, and criticize:

- Tell the person you'll take up the subject again at another time and leave
- If you decide to stick it out - remain calm, steer the conversation back to the original point, and try to understand the other person's point of view
- Appreciate there may be other issues motivating their behavior
- Don't take heat-of-the-moment criticisms to heart
- Afterwards, learn from the experience and try to think up better ways to negotiate a similar scenario



# Assertive Ways of Saying “No”

- Brevity, clarity, firmness, and honesty
- Begin your answer with the word “NO” so it is not ambiguous
- Make your answer short and to the point
- Don't give a long explanation
- Be honest, direct and firm
- Don't say, “I'm sorry, but...”



# Steps in Learning to Say “No”

- Ask yourself, “Is the request reasonable?” Hedging, hesitating, feeling cornered, and nervousness or tightness in your body are all clues that you want to say NO or that you need more information before deciding to answer
- Assert your right to ask for more information and for clarification before you answer
- Once you understand the request and decide you do not want to do it, say NO firmly and calmly
- Learn to say NO without saying, “I’m sorry, but...”



# A Learned Skill

Like any other skill, assertiveness takes time to learn:

- Decide that you want to be assertive rather than aggressive or passive
- Think about a recent conflict and imagine how you could have handled it in a more assertive way
- Practice talking in an assertive way alone or with a friend
- Respect the wants, needs and feelings of others, and accept that their viewpoints may be different from yours
- Take a problem-solving approach to conflict, and try to see the other person as your collaborator rather than your opposition



## Contact the Office of Career Services

to schedule an appointment for a mock interview, discuss career options, or get assistance in writing your cover letter and resume, and other career-related matters.

**Monday, Wednesday 12-4:00pm**  
**Tuesday, Thursday 9:00am-1:00pm**  
**Friday 10:00am-12:00pm**

**SBE, Suite 230**  
**672-1205**  
**[www.uncc.edu/CareerServ/](http://www.uncc.edu/CareerServ/)**

References: "How Self-Assertive are You?", Donald A. Cadogan, Ph.D., 1990