



Oxfordshire Adult Autism Diagnostic and Support Service



Assertiveness, Confidence and Self-Esteem

A workshop by ASPiration



Part 1: Assertiveness



- What is assertiveness?
- Assertiveness is all about standing up for your personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways without hurting and upsetting others or becoming upset yourself.



How assertive are you?



Activity:

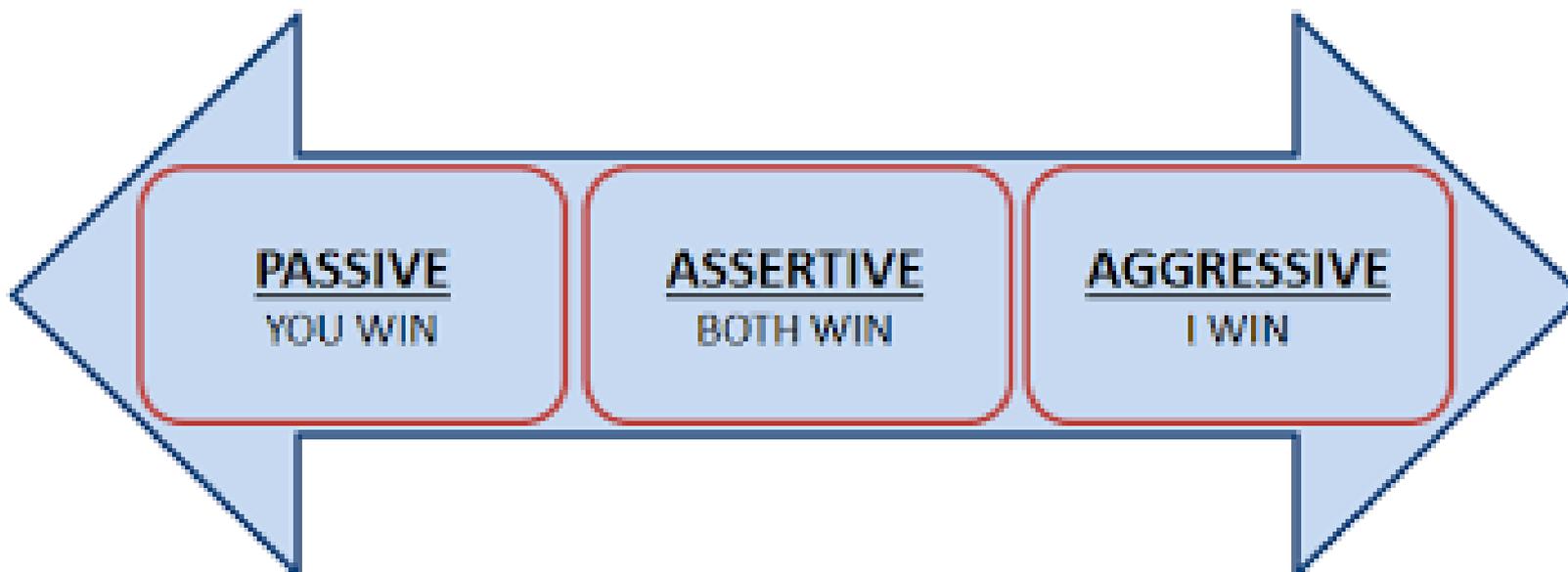
Assertiveness Quiz



- **• If your total is 60 or higher, you have a consistently assertive philosophy and probably handle most situations well.**
- **• If your total is 45-60, you have a fairly assertive outlook. There are some situations in which you may be naturally assertive, but you should be able to increase your assertiveness through practice.**
- **• If your total is 30-45, you seem to be assertive in some situations but your natural response is either non-assertive or aggressive. You may want to change some perceptions and practice new behaviours in order to handle things much more assertively in the future.**
- **• If your total is 15-30, you have considerable difficulty being assertive. You need to practice and allow yourself time to grow and change. You can become much more comfortable in situations where asserting yourself is important.**



Passive, Aggressive and Assertive



The Balance



- **Passive responses lead to complying with others without consideration to your own rights and self-confidence**
- **Aggressive responses undermine the rights and self-esteem of others.**
- **Assertiveness is often seen as the balance point between passive and aggressive behaviour.**
- **Handout – passive, assertive and aggressive**



What is assertive behaviour?



- Being open about expressing your wishes, thoughts and feelings and encouraging others to do the same.
- Listening to the views of others and taking them into consideration.
- Expressing appreciation for the things people have done.
- Admit to mistakes and apologise for them.
- Maintain self control
- Behave as an equal to others.



Worksheet



ANALYZE THIS RESPONSE

CONFLICT	RESPONSE	Aggressive	Passive	Assertive
1 A girl is upset that her friend Lulu has been making fun of her to Amina. She says:	a. Lulu, I'm upset that you were making fun of me.			
	b. Lulu, you're the dumbest person in the world and I'm going to spread stories about you!			
	c. Oh, it's okay, I guess.			
2 Comfort passes a magazine seller on the way home. He offers her chocolates. Comfort does not want to accept them. She says:	d. Um, thank you.			
	e. I have no interest. I do not want you to ask me again.			
3 A boy asks a girl to go out with him. She does not want to. She says:	f. Thank you, but I do not want to. Sorry.			
	g. Um....okay.			
	h. I would never go out with someone like you. Just get away from me.			
4 Lanre's friend calls him for a copy of the answers to the homework. Lanre says:	i. Can't you do anything on your own?			
	j. I do not feel comfortable about it. We're expected to do our work on our own.			
	k. If I have to . . .			



How to be assertive



- Assertiveness is quietly and non-aggressively, but firmly exerting your rights (including refusing demands that you feel are unreasonable or that you are unable to meet); whilst also recognising the rights of others to make requests of you and receive a polite response.





AUTISM AT
KINGWOOD

- **1. Know what is most important to you. This helps you draw boundaries and keep them. For example, “Protecting my health” or “Not getting in trouble” may be your priorities.**
- **2. Take a clear position: Convey your message calmly, honestly, directly, and courageously. For example, “I want to apply to be a student leader. I’d like to ask for your support.”**
- **3. Use “I” statements. Rather than putting your message in terms of someone else, speak up on your own behalf. Say what you want or feel.**
- **4. Practice assertive body language: Your body language should match your message. Stand straight, look someone in the eye, practice using a strong tone of voice (Smiling while you refuse something may lead to your being misunderstood).**



- **5. Give reasons for your position (especially if it is not a stranger), such as: “I’d like have a pet because I’m lonely at home most times since my brother left for boarding school“, or “No, keeping late nights exposes me to danger“, or “No, I have decided to finish school before dating” or “No, we could get expelled” or “No, I am too young to marry“, or “No, I don’t like being around people who are always drinking alcohol or smoking cigarette“, “I want to continue to university because it will prepare me to have a satisfying career.”**
- **6. Turn the discussion: If need be, try saying something like: “I always thought you were smarter than that” or “I can’t believe you would ask me to do that. I thought you were my friend”.**
- **7. Rely on your instincts or self-conviction: If a situation doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t right. If you are in danger, leave immediately without discussion. Walk away with a confident attitude. Be sure not to return to that same scene as that may suggest you have had a change of mind.**

- **The “ASSERT” Formula**

Another way to think about assertiveness is the following formula of what assertiveness entails:

- A - Attention: Get the other person to agree to listen to you. Find the right time, place, or method that helps him/her focus.
- S - Soon, simple and short: Speak up when possible, as soon as your rights have been violated. Look the person in the eye and keep comments to the points.
- S - Specific Behaviour: Focus on the behaviour that compromised your rights, not on the person. Tell the person exactly what behaviour disturbed you.
- E - “Effect on me”: Share the feelings you experienced as a result of the person’s behaviour. “I get angry when...” “I get frustrated when...” (NOT You did to me.)
- R - Response: Describe your preferred outcome, what you would like to see happen instead and ask for some feedback on it.
- T - Terms: If all goes well you may reach an agreement on how to handle the situation in future, agree to disagree or simply come to a compromise. Even if no agreement is reached, you have asserted yourself with dignity.

Assertiveness Techniques



- **Fogging – arguments are thrown at you but are not returned.**

Example of fogging

Person: What time do you call this? You're nearly half an hour late, I'm fed up with you letting me down all the time.

You: Yes, I was concerned that you would be left waiting for almost half an hour



Assertiveness Techniques



- **The stuck record technique – employs the key assertive skill of ‘calm persistence’**

Example of the stuck record technique

You: I bought these last week and would like to return them for a refund please

Other person: It looks like they have been worn a lot and they were only designed for occasional wear.

You: I have only had them a week and they are faulty. I would like a refund please.

ETC.



Quiz and Answer Key:



- Assertive responses are: a; e; f; j
- Passive responses are: c; d; g; k
- Aggressive responses are: b; h; i



Try to use assertiveness for the following comments



- Your doctor prescribes a medicine but doesn't tell you what it is for or if there are any side effects.
- _____
- You are eating lunch and the person next to you smokes throughout the meal; this really bothers you.
- _____
- You went to a party with some people but the person who was driving had too much to drink and refuses to let anyone else drive.
- _____
- You are walking home with a friend and realize it is getting late. A car pulls up and asks if you want a ride. Your friend is tired and wants to take the ride but you think it's too risky.
- _____



Part 2: Confidence



- **What is confidence? The belief that you can achieve success and competence. In other words – believing yourself to be capable.**
- Having confidence is taking action. We all want to do or try certain things but fear they are just beyond our reach and yet we worry about failing. Those nerves are normal – everyone has them. The difference between a confident person and an unconfident person is simply that the confident person acts on their ambitions and desires and who does let that fear of failure stop them.
- And the notion of confidence as action is a virtuous circle. The more we act, the more our confidence grows. We try something, and the next time round we feel a little bit easier about trying it again. Even if we fail we have learned something valuable, namely that taking the risk of trying didn't kill us. That's useful, confidence building knowledge.



Why is having confidence important?



- Learning how to be confident is a really important life skill. It impacts your happiness, success and well-being. There will be things in life that you want to achieve and so having confidence will help you to get there.

Your life improves in every way, the more self confident you become. So that's why it's worth your time, effort, and energy to do so.



Part 3: Self Esteem



- If you have healthy self-esteem, your beliefs about yourself will generally be positive. You may experience difficult times in your life, but you will generally be able to deal with these without them having too much of a long-term negative impact on you.
- If you have low self-esteem, your beliefs about yourself will often be negative. You will tend to focus on your weaknesses or mistakes that you have made, and may find it hard to recognise the positive parts of your personality. You may also blame yourself for any difficulties or failures that you have.



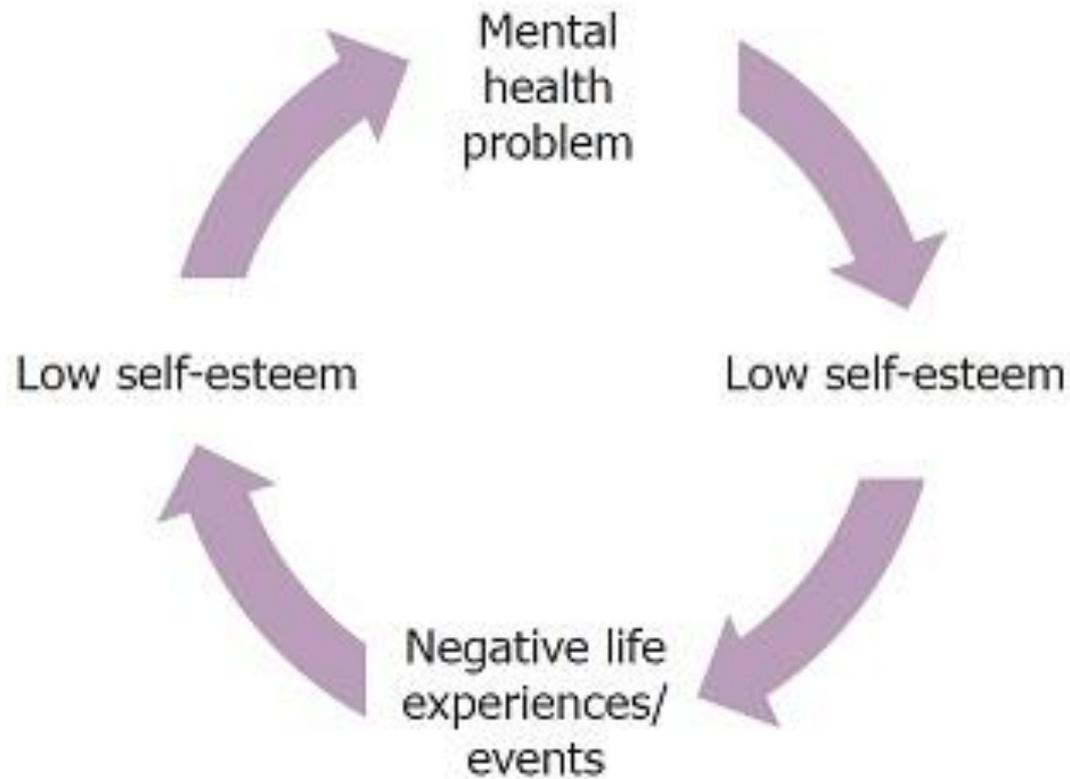
Consequences of low self esteem



- Negative thinking patterns associated with low self-esteem, such as assuming you will fail at things you do, can develop over time and lead to mental health problems such as depression or anxiety.
- Low self-esteem can make it hard to try new things or complete tasks, such as starting a new hobby or completing a job application. This can stop you from living your life the way you want, and lead to frustration and depression over time.



Self Esteem Diagram



Causes of low self esteem



- Feeling 'different' – feeling like the 'odd one out', or under peer pressure to conform to social norms you don't agree with, can affect the way you see yourself.
- Relationships with other people – other people may feed into your low self-esteem, being negative about you or making you feel like you have little worth. Or you may feel you don't live up to other people's expectations.
- Discrimination and stigma – if you are discriminated against for whatever reason, this can affect the way you see yourself.
- Negative thinking patterns – you may learn or develop thinking patterns that reinforce low self-esteem, such as constantly comparing yourself to others or developing high standards for yourself that you can't achieve.
- Social isolation and loneliness – if you have limited social contact with other people, or find it hard to maintain relationships with other people, this can lead to poor self-image.



Focus on Positive Things



If you have low self-esteem, it can take practice to get used to thinking more positively about yourself. One way you can do this is by making a list of several things that you like about yourself.

You might include:

- things about your personality
- things about the way that you look
- things that you do
- skills you have developed.

Take your time and aim for 50 different things, even if this takes several weeks. Keep this list and look at a different part of it each day. If you are feeling down or worried about an event that is coming up, such as a job interview, you can use it to remind you of the good things about yourself.



Self esteem journal



- Activity – complete for today, then share with everyone else



- **10 tips to increase your self-esteem**
- **Remember these top tips to help you build your self-esteem.**
- **•Do activities that you enjoy.**
- **•Spend time with positive, supportive people.**
- **•Be helpful and considerate to others.**
- **•Try not to compare yourself to other people.**
- **•Try to do regular exercise, eat healthily and get enough sleep.**
- **•Be assertive – don't let people treat you with a lack of respect.**
- **•Use self-help books and websites to develop helpful skills, like assertiveness or mindfulness.**
- **•Learn to challenge your negative beliefs.**
- **•Acknowledge your positive qualities and things you are good at.**
- **•Get into the habit of thinking and saying positive things about yourself.**

