



ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

BREATHE

You don't have to respond immediately when you are being harassed or bullied. Take a moment to breathe, acknowledge how you are feeling, and choose a wise response. Take a moment to put your vulnerable or angry feelings aside and connect with the clear strong part of yourself.

THE LOOK

Keep your chin level and make strong, consistent eye contact. Relax your facial expression so you appear as neutral as possible. It is important not to smile as it gives a mixed message. Silence and eye contact ('The Look') can be a clear and powerful message.

THE STANCE

Ground yourself. Plant your feet firmly in a well-balanced stance; standing up straight but not rigid. Keep your hands relaxed and still or bring one hand up firmly to signal, "STOP". Remember – you are standing strong for your right not to fight.

THE MESSAGE

Choose a message based on what you want/don't want, what you like/don't like about what is going on. Keep your message simple and begin your message as much as possible with 'I'. By using 'I' messages, you will be more likely to be heard and less likely to create defensiveness in the other person. Repeat your message three times if necessary and back it up with 'The Look'.

THE TONE

If you choose to speak, speak firmly and calmly. Do not escalate in volume. A slight decrease in volume can strengthen your message. Keep your voice neutral and relaxed. Do not make statements that end with a "?" mark and do not let your voice dwindle out at the end of a sentence.

WHAT IF... IT DOESN'T FEEL NATURAL USING THESE SKILLS?

Being assertive doesn't come naturally or easily for most of us. In the beginning you may feel like you're 'faking it' and you'll be aware that you're using body language to 'mask' what you're really feeling. After using and experiencing success with these skills, however, you'll find that they'll become an authentic expression of who you are.

WHAT IF... YOU ARE TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND BLOW IT?

If you respond with fear or anger you can recover your composure and start again. You can walk away maintaining good eye contact as you go, take a time out and revisit the situation later, or resolve to try again when a similar situation arises. You have the right to choose your own timing to discuss or confront difficult issues or situations.

WHAT IF... YOUR MIND IS BLANK?

Breathe, acknowledge your anxiety, ground yourself, make eye contact and wait for the fear to subside and your mind to clear so that you can find the right words or action. Know that you are giving a strong message even as you stand in silence.