

If you know a man/woman who can. Pass whatever it is on to someone else, who could do just as good a job as you.

Buy time. This is a really good assertiveness technique if you can master it. One of the ways non-assertive people get 'caught' is that they get drawn into someone else's agenda and find it really hard to make their own equally (if not more) important. Practise some good time-buying phrases so they roll off your tongue easily:

"I can't give you an answer right now, why don't we schedule a meeting

"I'll ring you back; I'm just in the middle of something I need to finish."

"You've caught me at a bad time. I'll get back to you later."

The key here is that none of these are lies; what they offer is time for you to collect yourself, take a breath and decide, out of the heat of the moment, what you actually want to do about whatever it is you were asked to do.

Along with buying time is another simple assertiveness technique called 'Giving them the good news'. So at the same time that you might say, "I really can't finish this by 6 o'clock," you add, "But what I can do for you is to give it top priority and finish it as soon as I get in tomorrow."

Pre-empt. There are loads of situations that you can see coming a mile away. When the phone rings and you hear the familiar 'I'm going to ask a favour' tone, get in there first, "I know what you're going to ask, and I'm so sorry, I already have plans."

Validate where they're coming from: it's always good to let the other person know you understand their point of view.

Take yourself seriously. If you're not quite up to that, take whatever is on your

agenda seriously.

What we are saying with this list of assertiveness tips (and there are many, many more small things available for you to try) is that in each case they are small, barely noticeable things. When you use one of them, no one is going to accuse you of going on an assertiveness course; they should be practically invisible, except to you. It may feel really big to you, but to the outside world, it won't make a ripple.

Another thing to add is that when you try any of our assertiveness suggestions (in your own words, of course), make a big effort to 'zip your lip' and not go babbling on to make it all right. Say what you have to say, and keep the mouth shut for a reasonable amount of time, till you get a response from the other person. Many times, people will throw away a perfectly good opportunity by talking too much and justifying what they've just said.

To help reinforce your taking steps into the middle of the spectrum, see if you can identify a friend, colleague, buddy who will support your attempts at new assertive behaviour. Whenever you get even the smallest 'win' let that person know. It's great to get acknowledgment for even the simplest triumph.

This way, you also build yourself up to be able to tackle the real tough ones ("I'm so sorry Mother, this year we won't be coming to Christmas lunch, but the good news is that Frank and I will drive over the weekend before to give you your presents and have a lovely meal together.")

Finally, you aren't alone. Many unassertive people can feel very isolated because their unconfident behaviour is like a magnet for unpleasant things to keep happening.

By practising small things, in your own time, you, too, will gain confidence and will surprise yourself that you can even begin to 'play' at assertiveness when you choose.

SHROPSHIRE COUNSELLING SERVICE

Are you too nice for your own good?



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People come to therapy for different reasons. Whilst good therapy works with you on the issues that matter to you, it also helps you understand and change things you may not realise contribute to your main issues.

One common issue I often encounter with my clients is their tendency to be **'too nice' for their own good**.... Here are some examples:

You take on too much because you can't say "no", so you end up exhausted.

You don't challenge someone, or get angry to their face if they insult you, put you down or violate your boundaries, because showing direct anger or displeasure 'isn't nice'.

You find that friendships often become one-sided, with you doing all the listening and giving, while your friend seems happy to take. You notice they only contact you when they want something.

You often help others above and beyond what is expected, only to find that they have a go at you, or let you down later on.

Are you too nice for your own good?

Assertiveness

Family members have you running in circles for them and don't seem to understand that you have your own life.

Your partner feels neglected or resentful of others using up your time and energy with their demands.

You can't understand why you have been bullied or picked on so often, when you are nice to people.

You criticise yourself harshly, call yourself names or shame yourself after getting angry or losing your temper.

If any of this sounds familiar, then you may be just 'too nice for your own good'.

Ironically, people usually find that being 'less nice' makes them nicer to be around. Not everyone will like it but the people who genuinely like and love you, will be happy to see you happier and less downtrodden.

It's important to get clear that the vast majority (this means you) of people who are too nice weren't born that way. How many unassertive, accommodating infants do you know?

I think there are some really positive qualities to people who aren't assertive. People who aren't assertive tend to be sensitive, interested in people, caring, insightful and really helpful. These are good qualities to keep hold of, so no throwing the baby out with the bathwater please.

We all know from experience that small changes in behaviour are the ones that will

stick when the going gets tough, so that's what we'll concentrate on here.

First give up your picture of assertiveness. The one that says you're going to change overnight. You aren't. That's why I recommend small changes that fit your style, rather than one big, I'M ASSERTIVE NOW, SO DON'T MESS WITH ME!

Assertiveness - A Few Things to Try

Traditional assertiveness training says, "Just say 'No'" Given everything we've talked about so far, it's really hard to do that without coming across as a bulldozer, if you haven't practised assertiveness in a long time. Well, we have a few other things you can practise which don't involve saying 'no'.

Since you're probably already really good at apologising, over-apologise. Say that you really, really wish you could help them (whoever the 'them' is) out, but you're so sorry, this time you just can't (do the school run again, stay late, cook for 10 extra people, etc.).

Offer solutions - lots of them - that don't involve you. Use your creativity to think of other options that could do just as well.

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