

TRADITIONAL VS. ASSERTIVENESS BELIEFS

The deep-seated core beliefs that you have about yourself, your rights as a human being, and the world around you have a lot to do with whether you will make the decision to be assertive in your day-to-day life. Below are some examples of traditional beliefs (which are actually unrealistic core beliefs; see the self-talk articles on this website for more information about unrealistic core beliefs) that interfere with your actually being assertive and some assertiveness beliefs that help promote your speaking up for yourself in a more open, clear, honest, effective, and respectful way.

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

You're a bad and self-centered person to put your wants and needs before others.

It's never okay to "mess up." You should always know what to do and have the correct answer in any situation.

You shouldn't ask questions because it shows that you're dumb and don't really know what's going on around you.

You should always be logical, rational, and consistent.

You should be flexible and adjust to others' needs and expectations since they probably have good reason for their behavior even if it doesn't make any sense to you.

You shouldn't waste others' time with your concerns, feelings, and needs. No one is really interested in you and people are already busy with their own lives.

If you can't convince others that your feelings are reasonable, then there must be something wrong with you and you need to change how you feel.

You always need to offer a good reason for whatever you think, feel, say, and do.

Whenever someone is having difficulty, you should always give them whatever assistance they need.

ASSERTIVENESS BELIEFS

You have the right to put yourself first at times.

You don't have to be "perfect." Human beings are imperfect and have the right to make mistakes (and then hopefully learn from them).

You have the right to ask questions and ask for information and clarification whenever you need to do so.

You have the right to change your mind and to be "illogical" (to others) at times.

You have the right to decide what makes sense and seems okay to you and to directly address confusing, unfair, unreasonable, hurtful, and disrespectful treatment by others toward you.

You have the right to ask for help and emotional support from other people, especially the people who are important to you and care about you.

You have the right to accept your emotions as valid for you even if others don't like or accept what you are feeling or cannot relate to what you are feeling and sharing with them.

You have the right not to have to justify and explain yourself to others.

You have the right to choose whether you wish to offer your help to other people.

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

You should always try to take care of and please other people.

You should always believe what others say, especially if they are “authority figures” or “experts.”

Whenever someone takes the time to give you suggestions and advice, you should take them very seriously and do what they tell you to do.

People get uncomfortable hearing your bad feelings, so you should just keep them to yourself.

Conflict just creates more problems so don't disagree with others or “make waves” in your relationships with them.

You should always be very sensitive to the wants and needs of others, even when they aren't clear about what they actually want or need.

It's always important to stay on “the good side” of others so you should do whatever you need to do in order to accomplish this.

Realizing that you did something well should be enough reward for you. Don't talk about your accomplishments and things you feel good about or people will think you're a blowhard and braggart and won't like you.

You should never turn down social requests from other people or they will think that you're “stuck up” or don't like them.

If others ask you a question or want something from you, you need to respond right away no matter what is going on in the rest of your life.

ASSERTIVENESS BELIEFS

You have the right to set limits and say “no,” even if others become angry, hurt, or unhappy with you about what you have said or done.

You have the right to form and express your own ideas and opinions, even if they contradict people in authority or anyone else.

You have the right to ignore and not act on ideas and feedback that don't seem to make sense to you or fit for you.

You have the right to experience and share your emotional hurt and pain with those who are important to you and care about you.

You have the right to disagree and to have your own perspective even if it is different from someone else's beliefs.

You have the right not to try to “mind-read” or guess at what others want and need from you.

You have the right not to continually focus on trying to maintain good will with other people when it doesn't make sense for you to do this.

You have the right to get recognition for who you are and what you do and to talk about the things you feel proud about in your life.

You have the right to spend time by yourself even if others request that you spend time with them.

You have the right not to respond immediately or at all to other people.