

SOME WAYS THAT OTHERS MAY TRY TO BLOCK YOUR EFFORTS TO BECOME MORE ASSERTIVE IN YOUR LIFE

- **DENIAL:** Your thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, or the other person's behavior that you are addressing or confronting are not even acknowledged.
 - e.g. *"You've really misinterpreted what I was saying," "I didn't do that," "I would never say something like that to you"*
- **MINIMIZING:** Your thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, or the other person's behavior are made into less than what they really are to you.
 - e.g. *"It really wasn't that big a deal," "You're just too sensitive," "Aren't you just over-reacting to this?"*
- **JUSTIFYING:** The other person gives reasons and makes excuses for or explains away what you are confronting with your assertive behavior.
 - e.g. *"I just said that to you because I was drunk," "I only did that because I'm under too much pressure right now at work"*
- **"WHY, WHY, WHY:"** Your assertiveness is blocked with a series of "why" questions, attempting to get you to "explain" and "justify" your feelings or your request to their satisfaction.
 - e.g. *"Why do you think that?," "Why won't you just change your mind?," "Why are you blowing this all out of proportion?," "Why are you acting this way?," "Why is this such a big problem for you? It isn't for anybody else in my life."*
- **ACCUSATIONS/BLAMING:** You are held totally responsible by the other person for the problem or issue you are raising with them.
 - e.g. *"It's your fault that I had to do it that way," "You're the real reason this is such a problem for us"*
- **HUMOR:** Your assertiveness is answered with a "joke" or a sarcastic or "snarky" comment.
 - e.g. *Someone smiling or chuckling about what you are communicating to them, someone saying "Well, excuuuse me for living"*
- **DELAYING:** Your assertiveness is met with statements to "put you off" or a refusal to address your concern so you won't be able to talk about the issue at that moment.
 - e.g. *"Not now, I'm too busy to deal with this," "We'll just have to get to this some other time," "Come back later"*
- **"FORGETTING:"** The other person says that they "don't remember" what you're trying to assert yourself about or address with them.
 - e.g. *"I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about," "I don't recall saying anything like that to you"*

- **“POOR ME:”** Your assertiveness is met with self-pity, “looking hurt,” pouting, tears, and other attempts to make you feel guilty, with the strong message that you are simply being “mean-spirited,” cruel, and spiteful.
 - e.g. *“How can you say something like that to me?” “How can you treat me this way?” “I guess you're not the kind of friend (brother, sister, wife, husband) I that thought you were”*
- **“OVERAPOLOGIZING:”** In reacting to your assertiveness, the other person may apologize again and again and may become or act overly humble or deferential toward you in the future.
 - e.g. *“I'm so very very sorry,” “I'm really sorry, I'm sure it'll never happen again” (in an exaggerated tone of voice)*
- **“NIT-PICKING:”** The other person wants to debate or “quibble” with you about the validity of what you think or feel or about the importance of the situation or issue that you have raised with them.
 - e.g. *“You shouldn't really feel that way about what I said to you.”*
- **“BACKBITING:”** The other person is unhappy with your assertiveness and doesn't express this openly and directly but rather “bad-mouths” you to others about what a “jerk” you are or about how “difficult” you have become to be around.
 - e.g. *“Do you know what Dave said to me the last time we got together? I just don't know what's gotten into him. He's really got problems.”*
- **WITHDRAWAL/AVOIDANCE:** The other person may refuse, either directly or indirectly, to continue to spend time with you or have anything to do with you.
 - e.g. *“I'm just not willing to get together with you anymore because of how you're treating me,” “I don't have much time these days,” “It's just too hard being around you when you're like this”*
- **THREATENING:** The other person gives you hostile, intimidating, and bullying messages about what will happen if you continue to stand up for yourself with him or her.
 - e.g. *“If you keep this up, you're really going to ‘get it’ from me;” “I'm not going to put up with your bullshit for very much longer.”*
- **“PAYBACK”/“GET BACKS:”** The other person attempts to get revenge, “get even with you,” and “make your life miserable” whenever possible because of what you have said or done.
 - e.g. being even later for get-togethers after you have confronted the other person about their tardiness with you
- **HOSTILITY/ABUSE:** Your assertiveness is answered with a personal and vicious “attack” by the other person to try to get you to “back off.”
 - e.g. shouting/yelling/“ranting and “raving”, name-calling, put-downs, cussing, swearing, pushing, grabbing, slapping

- **PHYSICAL “REACTIONS:”** The other person may experience somatic complaints and symptoms and even actual illness in response to your attempts to be assertive with them.
 - e.g. experiencing headaches or an upset stomach whenever the two of you plan to get together, are spending time with one another, or after you have been together; saying *“I’m going to have a heart attack if you keep treating me this way”*

- **SILENCE:** The other person simply ignores or doesn’t respond in any way to what you are saying to them.
 - e.g. refusing to talk or say anything in response to your feelings, thoughts, wants, or needs or your request of them

- **ACTING INDIFFERENT:** The other person has a *“so what?”* or *“who gives a damn?”* attitude in response to what you have said to them.
 - e.g. saying *“I don’t really give a damn about what you feel/think/want/need”*

- **INTERRUPTING:** The other person refuses to listen to you and continually “butts in” or tries to talk over you to keep you from being able to actually present to them what you want or need to say.

- **“CRAZY-MAKING:”** The other person intentionally misinterprets and “twists” what you are trying to say to make it seem like nonsense.

- **EXITING THE SCENE ABRUPTLY:** The other person simply turns around and leaves when you are trying to be assertive with them about something important to you.