

Assertive Listening

Assertiveness is a clear, honest, and effective way of communicating. It involves expressing yourself in a way that shows respect for you and the other person.

An important part of assertiveness is listening. Assertive listening means giving the other person your full attention, focusing on what they say and how they say it.

When you listen assertively, other people feel heard and understood. This helps reduce misunderstandings and makes it more likely that they will listen to you in return. Over time, assertive listening helps you build healthy, respectful relationships.

How to listen assertively

Assertive listening doesn't mean staying silent or waiting until it's your turn to respond. It is an active process that requires effort, concentration, and focus. Use each of the steps below when you listen to someone.

Give them your full attention

Stay present, avoid distractions, and focus on what the other person is saying.



"I'll turn off the TV so I can really listen."

Let them finish

Allow the other person to speak freely without rushing or interrupting them.



"Take your time, I'm following."

Show them you're engaged

Use nods and eye contact to signal that you're paying attention.



"I understand what you're saying."

Ask clarifying questions

Check you've understood by asking questions and showing genuine interest.



"Can you explain that a bit more?"

Summarize what they've said

Let the other person know you've heard the key parts of what they've said, like their needs, feelings, and opinions.



"Just to confirm, what you're saying is..."

Sharpening your assertive listening skills:

You can practice and fine-tune your assertive listening skills in lots of ways.

- **Practice during everyday conversations.** Try asking clarifying questions or summarize what the other person has said before you respond.
- **Reflect on conversations.** After a conversation, ask yourself if you were fully focused on what the other person said and how they said it. How much of the conversation can you remember?
- **Use assertive listening in difficult situations.** Use your assertive listening skills in challenging conversations, like when you disagree with someone or they give you critical feedback.

Assertiveness means hearing and being heard

Assertive communication is a two-way process. Assertive listening shows care and interest for the other person, but it's also important that you speak up. When you express yourself clearly and respectfully, people are more likely to listen, understand you, and respond in helpful ways too.