

Live Well to  
Learn Well

Web:  
health.cornell.edu

Phone (24/7):  
607-255-5155

Fax:  
607-255-0269

Appointments:  
Monday–Saturday

Check web for hours,  
services, providers,  
and appointment  
information

110 Ho Plaza,  
Ithaca, NY  
14853-3101

\* Adapted from  
Hunter, Goodie, Oordt,  
& Dobmeyer, 2009

# Assertive Communication

Assertive communication involves interacting in a way that respects both your rights and the rights of others. Assertive communication often results in one's needs being met, while also promoting respectful relationships. The ability to appropriately ask for and obtain what you need, while preserving important relationships, has numerous benefits for your physical and emotional well-being.

Communication Styles			
Passive	Passive-Aggressive	Aggressive	Assertive
✓ Respectful ✓ Appropriate ø Honest ø Direct Others' needs are the priority.	ø Respectful ø Appropriate ø Honest ø Direct Neither person's needs are met.	ø Respectful ø Appropriate ✓ Honest ✓ Direct Your own needs are the priority.	✓ Respectful ✓ Appropriate ✓ Honest ✓ Direct Needs are equal.

## Assertive Communication Tips

- Use "I" statements that focus on how you feel in a specific situation.** "I" statements help the listener know exactly how you feel and why you feel that way. "I" statements reduce the likelihood that the listener will feel accused, blamed, or defensive. Example: "I feel disrespected when you show up late without calling."
- State your needs clearly.** Don't assume the other person knows what you want or how you prefer to see them behave. Don't make them guess — tell them what you need or how you would like things to be different in the future. Example: "I would like you to call ahead of time when you know that you will be late."
- Keep the conversation present-focused.** Try to avoid bringing up the past, or using statements such as "you always" or "you never." Maintaining present-focus allows you to address one need at a time, and can prevent feelings of frustration that may lead to conflict escalation.
- Practice good non-verbal skills.** Speak calmly, stand or sit-up straight, and look the other person in the eye, without glaring.

The XYZ* Formula for Assertive Communication			
I feel X	when you do Y	in situation Z	and I would like
emotion	specific behavior	specific situation	what you want
I feel disrespected	when you're on your phone at night	and I'm trying to sleep	I would like you to text instead of talking after 10 pm.
I feel uncomfortable	when you bring someone home for the night	and you don't talk with me about it first	I would like to know your plans ahead of time so I can make other plans if I choose.
I feel anxious	when we don't discuss the progress on my research	at our weekly meetings	I'd like us to reserve some time each week to discuss it.

