

Assertiveness and Resilience

Assertiveness



“Don’t say everything you think,
but think everything you say.”

Assertiveness is the ability to recognize our own feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves to manage emotions appropriately both within ourselves and in our relationships with others.

Being assertive essentially means respecting ourselves and others, knowing that our own opinions, beliefs, thoughts and feelings are as important as those of any other person.

We can say that a person is **assertive** when they are able to exercise and/or defend their own rights, for example by **saying “no”**, expressing disagreements, giving an opposite opinion and/or expressing negative feelings, without being manipulated as a submissive person would be, and without manipulating or violating the rights of others.

What are the rights of an assertive person?

- The **right** to be treated with respect and dignity
- The **right** to be wrong and to take responsibility for your own mistakes
- The **right** to have your own values and opinions
- The **right** to have your own needs and for them to be as important as those of others
- The **right** to be your own judge, to experience and express your own feelings
- The **right** to change your opinion, idea or course of action
- The **right** to protest when you are treated unfairly
- The **right** to change what is not satisfactory

- The **right** to stop and think before acting
- The **right** to ask for what you want
- The **right** to be independent
- The **right** to refuse requests without feeling guilty or selfish
- The **right** not to justify yourself to others
- The **right** not to be dependent on the goodwill of others
- The **right** to choose to respond or not to respond
- The **right** to do anything as long as it does not violate the rights of another person
- The **right** to feel and express pain

Assertiveness is linked to high self-esteem and is something **we can learn** as part of an emotional development process.

Being assertive also means **communicating** effectively, saying firmly what we want to convey, while being respectful and empathetic towards others and ourselves. Assertiveness, in short, is our ability to communicate effectively.

We can distinguish between three communication styles:

- **Passive or non-assertive communicators** tend not to defend their personal boundaries, thereby allowing aggressive people to hurt them.
- **Aggressive people** tend not to respect the personal boundaries of others, and are therefore compelled to harm others while trying to influence them.
- **People communicate assertively** when they are not afraid to speak their mind or to try to influence others, but do so in a way that respects the personal boundaries of others. Assertive people are also willing to defend themselves against aggressive incursions.

One of the reasons why people are not assertive is that they think they are not entitled to their beliefs, rights or opinions. In this regard, assertiveness training teaches us that we are all entitled to defend our rights when faced with situations that are clearly unfair.

Techniques for being assertive

- **Positive assertiveness:** Consists in expressing genuine affection and appreciation for other people. Positive assertiveness implies that we remain attentive to the goodness and value within other people and communicate the awareness of these qualities verbally or non-verbally.
- **Empathic assertiveness:** Empathic assertiveness allows us to hear and understand the needs of our interlocutor and to act based on them, and to be, in turn, heard and understood by them.



- **Confrontational assertiveness:** Confrontational assertive behavior is useful when we notice an apparent contradiction between the words and actions of our interlocutor. With a calm voice and words, without using an accusing or reproaching tone, we must limit ourselves to inquiring, asking questions, and then expressing directly a legitimate wish.
- **Negative interrogation:** Negative interrogation consists in asking to clarify comments made by another person. The goal is to clarify whether the comments are constructive or manipulative criticism.
- **Selective ignoring:** When during a discussion the other person insists on mixing topics that are not related to the central topic of the discussion, we can ignore these topics and only respond when the person is saying something about the topic of interest.
- **Disarming anger or rage:** Consists in refusing to argue with a person who is irritated or annoyed while they are in this state.
- **Sorting out problems:** In a conversation or discussion, we should deal with only one topic at a time and not move on to another one without having exhausted the first.
- **Assertive irony:** Responding to hostile criticism with a “thank you”.
- **Processing change:** Shifting the focus of a discussion to the analysis of what is going on between you and your interlocutor, leaving aside the issue that apparently provoked the discussion.
- **Breaking down the process:** Responding to provocative criticisms with laconic phrases: yes, no, maybe, etc.

Social skills, and more specifically assertiveness, are basic skills for daily life. People have different interests and ways of seeing the world, so interpersonal conflicts are to be expected. However, when these skills are not sufficiently developed or are used in the wrong way, frustration and dissatisfaction arise.

Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. Do you think you are an assertive person? If so, in what way?
2. Do you think it is possible for a non-assertive person to become assertive?
3. Which of the techniques for being assertive have you used? Which ones have you not used?
4. Would being an assertive person make the collaboration among your group members easier?



Resilience



“From suffering emerge the strongest souls. The strongest characters are riddled with scars.”

- Gibran Jalil

During our lives, we may face situations that cause us anxiety, worry, uncertainty, and this may cause us to give up on our goals. In response to such situations, it is important to develop resilience.

What is resilience and how can we develop it?

Resilience is a virtue that consists in overcoming and adapting to adverse situations, with the confidence that you will be able to move forward and grow from these experiences.

There are many events that can affect you emotionally: a breakup, financial difficulties, failed projects, an illness, among others. All of these can put your resilience to the test.

Being resilient does not mean that a person does not experience difficulties or anxiety. Emotional pain and sadness are common in people who have suffered great adversity or trauma in their lives. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to be filled with obstacles that affect our emotional state.

Resilience is not a characteristic that people either have or do not have. It includes behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed by anyone.

You are a resilient person when:

- **You have emotional intelligence**, meaning that you know your emotions and how to manage them, but you can also identify and understand the emotions of others.
- **Your self-knowledge is well developed**: you are aware of your capabilities and limits, which allows you to set realistic goals.
- **You are tolerant and flexible when faced with change**, because you know that it is often inevitable. As a result, you face problems with greater confidence and creativity.
- **You are optimistic** and see obstacles as opportunities to learn and grow in every way.
- **You feel confident**, and therefore you have initiative, patience and perseverance to achieve what you set out to do.

- **You are able to communicate your concerns** to feel understood and comforted, without letting your ego interfere.
- **You try to surround yourself with people who have several of these characteristics**, since forming a team of resilient people is essential to accomplishing shared projects.

How to build resilience

- **Build relationships:** It is important to build good relationships with close family members, friends and other important people in your life. Accept help and support from the people who love you and listen to you. Belonging to an AIC group can strengthen resilience.
- **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable obstacles:** You cannot stop stressful events from happening, but you can change the way you interpret and react to them.
- **Accept that change is part of life:** It is possible that as a result of an adverse situation you may not be able to achieve certain goals. Accepting the circumstances you cannot change can help you focus on the circumstances you can change.
- **Move towards your goals:** Develop realistic goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that you cannot seem to accomplish, reflect on the things you can accomplish today that help you move in the direction you want to go.
- **Look for opportunities to discover yourself:** Many people who have experienced difficult situations have great personal strength, a sense of improved self-esteem and a strengthened spiritual life.
- **Cultivate a positive view of yourself:** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
- **Never lose hope:** An optimistic outlook allows you to expect good things to happen in your life. Try to visualize what you want instead of worrying about what you fear.
- **Take care of yourself:** Pay attention to your needs and desires. Take an interest in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps keep your mind and body ready to face situations that require resilience.
- **Maintain an attitude of tolerance and flexibility:** Trusting yourself will lead you to trust others and accept them as they are.



Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. What kinds of events have been the most difficult for you and how have they affected you?
2. When faced with a difficult experience, who have you turned to for help?
3. What have you learned about yourself and about your interactions with others during difficult times?
4. Have you been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how did you do it?
5. What makes you feel most hopeful about the future?

