

HOW TO GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Constructive criticism or feedback, is not motivated by a desire to hurt but to communicate and get your needs met.

- Choose the time and place - away from the situation, don't wait until the next time it happens
- Describe the behaviour clearly and your feelings, - "when you play your music loudly I feel".. don't blame or label the behaviors
- Ask for a specific change - "please turn your music down after 9pm"
- Be realistic in describing consequences, avoid empty threats
- Ask them how they feel.

GENERAL ASSERTIVENESS TIPS:

- Start sentences with "I". This helps you to own your feelings and thoughts. For example "I feel"
- Try and present your ideas in short, simple sentences
- If you want something - ask for it - but be prepared to be turned down
- Be direct in your requests and insist others are too.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you would like to make an appointment to see a counsellor to learn more about this topic, please contact the counselling service on your campus.

Distance students can contact any one of the campuses. Please tell the receptionist if you need an urgent appointment.

CONTACT DETAILS

ALBANY

Health and Counselling

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (09) 443 9783

Email: Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz

MANAWATŪ

Student Counselling Service

Turitea Campus, Palmerston North

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (06) 350 5533

Email: s.counselling@massey.ac.nz

WELLINGTON

Student Counselling Service

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

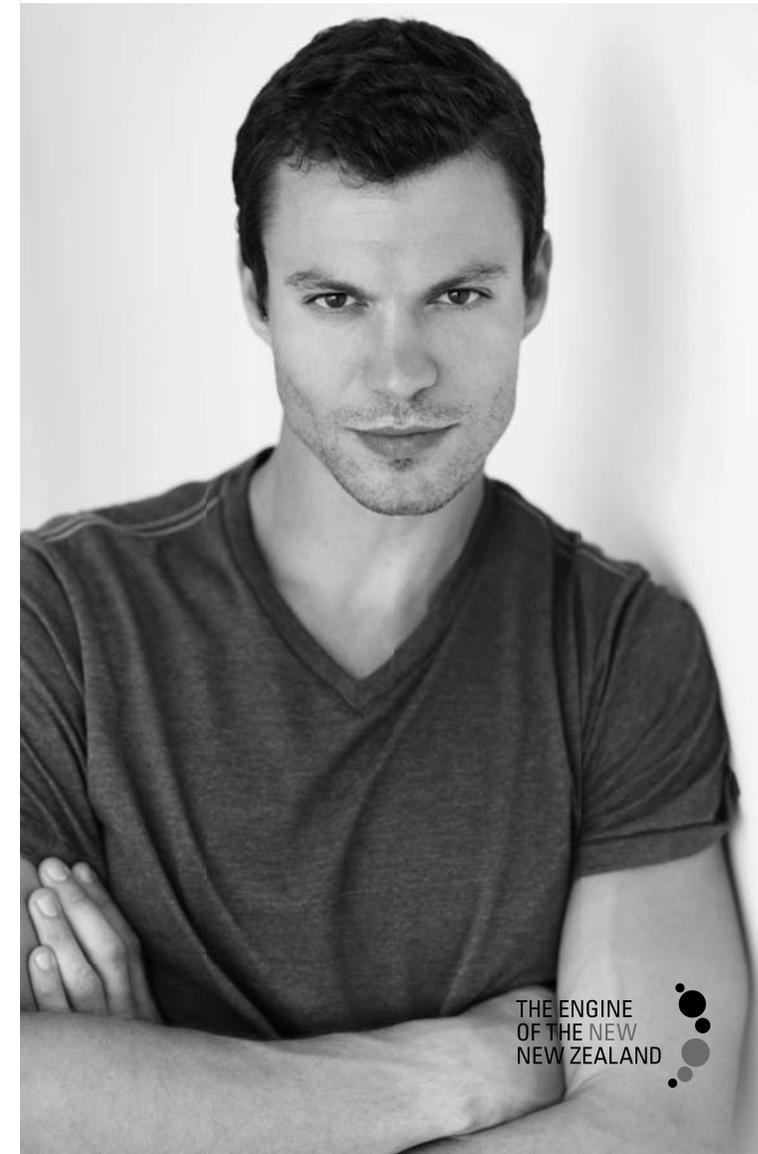
Phone (04) 801 2542

<http://crow.massey.ac.nz>

<http://health-counselling.massey.ac.nz>

HOW TO BE ASSERTIVE

STUDENT COUNSELLING



ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is about being able to say no, having your boundaries and limits respected, getting your needs met and keeping yourself safe. It will help you achieve your goals

WHY DO I SAY YES, WHEN I REALLY MEAN NO?

Sometimes other people can seem intimidating, especially if you have had experience of them being abusive. We are afraid and, to avoid conflict, we comply with their wishes. We can also be afraid of people's rejection, especially if we are close to them and rely on them for some emotional support.

The message here is that they won't like me unless I do what they want. There may be a belief about yourself behind this, like - "I'm not worth knowing for who I am but for what I do for people". In both cases there is a power imbalance in the relationship and assertiveness helps ensure a fair and respectful relationship.

SOME COMMON BEHAVIOURS YOU WILL COME ACROSS INCLUDE:

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR:

Being pushy and bossy. It doesn't take the other person's point of view into account and denies them respect or consideration. The aggressive person will try to get their own way at any cost to others.

This behaviour is saying "I am more important than you".

PASSIVE BEHAVIOUR:

You behave passively when you allow others to fulfil their wants and needs whilst ignoring your own.

This behaviour is saying "you are more important than me".

PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR:

Guilt is the key to "getting your own way" with passive-aggressive behaviour. It is a form of manipulation and involves playing the martyr so that the other person feels so guilty that they give in to you.

In a sense this behaviour is saying "I don't respect or value your point of view and I have no confidence that I have a right to my point of view either".

ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR:

There is respect for both people and each person has equal value. Assertive people are honest about what they think and feel, they choose what they want to do and what they don't want to do and don't feel guilty about saying "no!".

This behaviour is saying "we both have valued perspectives and needs which should be taken into account".

NO IS NOT A DIRTY WORD:

Saying no to someone's requests that conflicts with your own needs and desires is honest. You have the right to say no, without feeling guilty.

Usually saying "no thank you" or "no I'm not interested" in a firm, polite manner should suffice. If someone persists, then simply repeat yourself without apology! If you want to give an explanation then you could:

- i. acknowledge the request by repeating it, then say no and explain your reason for declining it
- ii. suggest an alternative proposal where both people's needs are met.

Practise saying no over little things with safe people, and as your confidence increases so will your ability to say no to anyone!

HOW CAN I BE ASSERTIVE WHEN I'M HAVING ALL THESE STRONG FEELINGS?

Strong feelings can arise when someone criticises you or acts aggressively. These feelings such as anger or hurt have lots of energy that can be used and expressed, the key is to 'use it not lose it'. Anger arises when we think we are trapped or threatened, it's a sort of fight or flight response.

Sometimes things can trigger past anger to emerge that has nothing to do with the current situation.

Care needs to be taken with our anger as it can do damage if expressed abusively. For this reason some people are afraid of their anger, try and suppress it and then they may experience a temper outburst over a minor matter.

It's important to monitor your feelings, and withdraw from situations to keep yourself safe when you need to. You might say, "I am feeling too angry now to talk to you." Sometimes a few deep breaths will be enough for you to compose yourself so you can express yourself effectively.



HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO CRITICISM?

Criticism creates many barriers between people. It can be useful but is often seen negatively as "moaning". It is seldom given directly, is usually misinterpreted, and can be the tip of an iceberg of pent-up frustration.

Also people often hear criticism where there is none intended and react accordingly.

Listen carefully to what is said, decide how valid it is for you, choose your response.

Options include:

- agreeing with them - this communicates the desire to stop the discussion
- selectively ignore - respond to the bits you decide you want to respond to and ignore the rest
- question them - to be specific, how it affects them, if there is anything else
- do some sorting - point out that there are several issues and offer to discuss one
- say no - you don't agree with them and tell them what your position is, or how you feel about it.