

# *Assertive Communication*

Here are some tips on how to communicate more assertively with others:

## **Think and talk about yourself POSITIVELY.**

- Eliminate adding qualifying statements to your opinions or requests (e.g., “you’ll probably think this is crazy, but...”, “...I guess”, “but that’s just my opinion”).
- Reduce tag questions (e.g., “does that make sense?”, “is that okay?”).

## **Consciously take responsibility for yourself and avoid taking responsibility for others.**

- Eliminate “should”, “ought to”, and “have to”.
- Practice using the phrase “I choose to”.

## **Giving and getting information**

- Recognize yes/no questions. When you are asked a yes/no question respond with a yes/no answer. You do not need to elaborate upon or justify any response you give.
- Recognize information questions. Give as much information as you feel comfortable in response to the question but don’t feel you have to justify your answer.

## **“I” statements**

- Avoid using “you” statements that distance you from your feelings. Instead, use statements that begin with “I feel \_\_\_\_\_”.
- Avoid using “you” statements that accuse. Many people interpret statements that begin with “you” as blaming and often become defensive in response.

## **Giving and receiving constructive criticism**

- Talk about the behavior, not about the person. Be as specific as possible.
- Couple the criticism with a compliment.
- Learn to discriminate between something that is **your** problem from something that is **their** problem.

## **Feeling talk**

- Specify feelings (e.g., I see, I hear).
- Practice “I feel...” statements rather than using “I think...” statements.
- Recognize that no one can tell you how to feel. There are no right or wrong feelings, feelings just are.

## **Statements without explanations**

- You have a right to your opinions and decisions.
- A simple “no” is enough, without excuses.

## **Persistence**

- Use the broken record technique: repetition of a simple statement of fact (e.g., "I am not available at 2:00, our original time is better for me").
- Use fogging: reflect what the other person has said and then say "but" before you say your statement. When you use fogging, you show that you are listening to the other person.

Texas Woman's University Counseling Center, 2005.