# Being confident and assertive

## What is self-confidence?

* Thinking and feeling confident comes from inside, what we think about ourselves
* Having belief in ourselves and our own abilities
* How we see ourselves compared with other people
* How we feel about certain situations that we experience
* Whether we think we are confident or not
* Whether we act confidently in our dealings with other people

## Feedback

* Confidence also comes from feedback from other people.
* Feedback can be positive or negative.
* If we receive negative feedback, this is when we need to keep feeling confident so that we can deal effectively with setbacks and solve problems.



## Types of feedback

There are two types of feedback:

* for what we are – for example, you are tall, you are small, your age
* for what we do - for example, you can be on time for meetings, you are good at listening, you are conscientious

Negative feedback about what we are is not helpful as it can affect our confidence. It also does not give us information about what we can do to improve and turn the negative into positive feedback.

For example, I am trying to learn something new and someone calls me stupid because it is taking me a long time to learn it. Aside from this being mean and untrue, this is likely to make me feel bad about myself. It does not help me to learn how to do the new task.

You can choose not to feel bad about negative feedback about what you are. This is where being and acting assertive is useful.

Feedback about what we do is the most useful as it gives us information about what we are doing well and where we could choose to do things differently.

For example, I attend an interview and I do not get the job. The feedback I receive is that I did not answer the questions fully and gave very short answers. Using this feedback, I can practise how I answer interview questions to give myself the best possible chance of creating a positive impression at my next interview.

Everyone experiences self-doubts; it is human nature. Learning about being confident will help you to spend less time having doubts about your skills and abilities and more time feeling and being confident.

## The 4 sources of confidence

There are 4 sources of confidence. These are important in feeling, thinking and acting confidently:

1. Knowing that we have succeeded in the past. This can help us to feel confident about ourselves.​
2. Seeing people we know doing well can reassure us that if they can do well, we can too.
3. Positive feedback from others regarding a specific task or skill.​
4. Feeling positive about ourselves, having positive thoughts and acting positively around other people.​

## Behaving confidently

* Underpinning self-confidence is the ability to behave assertively.
* People who feel, think and act confidently have good assertiveness skills.
* People who lack confidence tend not to behave assertively or behave aggressively.

## Being aggressive

* Manipulating people
* Getting your own way at the expense of other people
* Making sure you always come out the winner regardless of what happens to anyone else
* Giving no consideration to others at all

## Not being assertive

* Downgrading your needs or assuming others’ needs are more important
* Not communicating what you want
* Allowing others to choose and decide things for you
* Apologising too much
* Putting yourself down

## Being assertive

Assertiveness is based on the belief that in any situation:

* You have needs to be met
* The other people involved have needs to be met
* You have rights and so do others
* You have something to contribute and so do others
* Being honest with yourself and others
* Being able to say what you want, need and feel but not at the expense of other people
* Being self-confident and positive
* Understanding other people’s points of view
* Behaving in a rational, logical way
* Being able to negotiate and reach workable compromises

## Skills to make you assertive

### Asking for what you want

* Know exactly what you want
* Express it clearly and specifically
* Make ‘I’ statements and take ownership of your request
* Listen carefully to the other person’s point of view
* Understand what you do not want but, if necessary, know what you would be prepared to settle for
* Keep control over your emotions - asking does not mean getting
* Aim for a solution where, if possible, both sides ‘win’

### Broken record technique

This is a useful technique when people are putting pressure on you to agree to something, find time for something or even buy something you do not want.

Be clear about what you want to say without getting angry, uncomfortable, irritated or loud.

### “No... but”

This is a way of saying ‘no’ to the current request ‘but’ leaves room for negotiation.

Example: No, I can’t help you this afternoon but I might be able to spare you some time tomorrow.

### Asking for time

Use this when people make requests of you, give orders or ask a favour and you are not clear about how you wish to respond. It’s important to give yourself time to think about what is being asked so:

* Listen carefully to the request.
* Make sure you understand what is being asked of you.
* Pause, take a breath and acknowledge the request but say “I can’t decide now - I need time to think about it.”
* Specify the time you need and how you will notify the person of your decision

## Thinking, feeling and acting positively

It’s possible to change negative thoughts and unhelpful beliefs into thoughts and beliefs that will support feelings of self-confidence by thinking, feeling and acting positively by:

* identifying or becoming aware of these thoughts
* challenging them
* replacing them with a more positive thought

Example: Someone you know walks past you in the street without saying ‘hello’:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Negative thought** | **Challenge (s)** | **Positive thought** |
| No-one wants to bother with me. | What evidence is there that this person was deliberately ignoring me?  Does it mean everyone doesn’t want to bother me?  Does it matter?  Am I making things sound worse than they really are? | Oh well, perhaps she was daydreaming and didn’t see me/was in a bad mood/needs new glasses.  Anyway, if she was ignoring me, it doesn’t really matter . |