

#22



Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is a valuable tool that helps us to take control of how we express ourselves—including our needs, wants, and boundaries—in a way that feels honest and authentic, while still respecting the other person.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit supportgroups.saprea.org.** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

Group Activity

PRACTICING ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Assertive communication is the ability to honestly express your opinions, attitudes, and rights while also respecting the rights of others. This type of communication includes setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, being firm when needed, delivering messages clearly, and acting with respect, fairness, and empathy. It also allows you to acknowledge both your feelings and the feelings of others.

Sometimes this means acknowledging truths about your own behavior and taking ownership of your choices before you approach another person. Sometimes it means looking to change the way you interact with another person. Whatever the case may be, this activity can help you look at a specific situation with open eyes and honestly acknowledge your truth..

ACTIVITY STEPS

Think of a situation in your life where you want to communicate a concern or problem to another person. In your journal, write out possible statements you can make to express your concern using the steps below.

Your situation:

Your best friend has been running late more and more often.

1. Ask if this is a good time.

Is now a good time to talk?

2. Use empathy and validation.

Listen and work to understand the other person's feelings or point of view.

It sounds like you have a pretty busy schedule, which can make it difficult to be on time.

3. State your concern.

Describe your difficulty and tell why you need something to change. use the "I feel" statements.

I feel upset when you're running late and don't keep me in the loop. I then worry my time isn't important to you.

4. Identify what you want or what you're willing to negotiate.

Be specific with your requests. If you are looking for a specific behavior, circumstance, or situation, be sure to voice that. Speak specifically to the behavior rather than labelling the other person.

I think I would feel less frustrated if you let me know when you are running behind.

5. Give the other person a chance to respond.

Listen and reflect on what the other person shares. Work on creatively solving the problem together.

*Maybe, in the future, you could text me if you think you'll be more than ten minutes late.
What do you think?*

IF TIME ALLOWS

Many survivors struggle with saying no to the people in their lives. You may have concerns that you'll be perceived as rude or aggressive, that it makes you selfish, or that it might upset the other person and make them feel rejected. The most common reason survivors don't say no is believing that others' needs are more important than their own. When you practice assertive communication, you can say no when you need to and still feel respectful and respected.

1. Think of a situation in your life where you need to say no. Go over this list of reminders to empower yourself to say it without guilt.

- Other people have the right to ask, but I have the right to refuse.
- When I say no, I am not rejecting that person, only their inquiry.
- When I say no to one thing, that allows me to say yes to another.
- When I say no, I'm being truthful and avoiding feelings of resentment towards the other person.
- By honestly expressing my feelings, it makes it safe for others to do the same.
- My needs are important, and it's important for me to set healthy boundaries.

2. Now that you have reviewed the list, create a statement using the steps of assertive communication you can use to say no. Once you have written your statement, practice saying it in your head or, if you feel comfortable, communicating it aloud by role playing with another participant.

Grounding Exercise

5-4-3-2-1

This simple exercise is an example of sensory grounding, which involves directing your attention toward one or more of your five senses.

So let's begin.

Activity Steps

- 01** Take a moment to get comfortable and focus on the setting around you.
- 02** Name 5 things you can see. As you do so, label each one in your head.
- 03** Name 4 things you can hear.
- 04** Name 3 things you can feel.
- 05** Name 2 things you can smell.
- 06** Name 1 thing you can taste. Some people will carry oils or a mint so they have them ready should they need to ground using their senses.
- 07** Finally, take a moment to notice any other details around you or sensations you might be experiencing in this moment. Take a few deep breaths and allow yourself to simply be.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at saprea.org.

- **NAVIGATING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS**
- **ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION**
- **PRACTICING BOUNDARIES**

NEXT TOPIC:

#23



PRACTICING BOUNDARIES

While building healthy connections is a key part of healing, equally important is identifying, maintaining, and communicating your boundaries.