



Guide to Self-Esteem and Assertiveness

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This package was created by Healthy U: Peer Health & Wellness at the University of Manitoba. We are a group of trained, non-judgmental, and confidential student health and wellness leaders on campus.

We provide outreach activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for our fellow students on a variety of health and well-being topics. Feel free to drop in to chat or pick up more information packages.

If you would like to request or attend one of our workshops or events, check out our website for details.

What is Self-Esteem?

Most people's thoughts and feelings about themselves fluctuate somewhat based on their daily experiences. Your grades, how your friends and family treat you, and the ups and downs in romantic relationships can have a **temporary impact** on how you feel about yourself.

Your self-esteem, however, is the **bigger picture** about how you see yourself. People with good self esteem may experience temporary changes in how they feel, but only to a limited extent. People with poor self-esteem find that negative events have a very big impact on how they see themselves.

Example: You are trying on outfits with your friend, and you show them one that you like. They tell you they don't think it looks good on you.

- If you have **poor self-esteem** you may feel that you are ugly, have horrible taste, or that your friend hates you.
- If you have **good self-esteem** you may feel offended, but you turn your attention towards finding something that will look great.



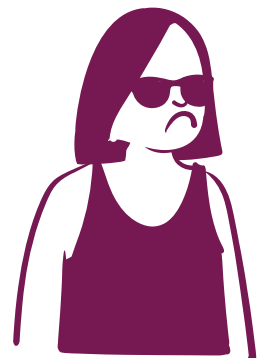
Poor vs. Healthy Self-Esteem

People with **poor self-esteem** often rely on how they are doing **in that moment** to determine how they feel about themselves. They need **reassurance** (such as compliments or good grades) to fight the negative thoughts and feelings. Even then, the good feelings don't last very long.

Healthy self-esteem is based on our ability to see ourselves accurately and still be **accepting of who we are**. This means we can acknowledge our own strengths and weaknesses, while recognizing that we are worthy and worthwhile.

What causes low self-esteem?

- Experiencing failure (i.e. in school, sports, or other activities).
- Being made fun of or bullied.
- Physical, verbal, or sexual abuse.
- Being highly criticized by parents, teachers, or peers.
- Being from a perfectionist family or community.
- Unrealistic expectations from others.
- Overprotective or authoritarian parents.



How does low self-esteem affect my life?

School

You may find yourself not studying, pushing yourself, or attending class because you think you'll fail no matter what.

Friends

You may not be asking your friends for what you need. Many people with poor self-esteem isolate themselves because they don't think anyone wants to spend time with them.

Daily life

Having low self-esteem can take the enjoyment out of many things, such as eating, exercise, hobbies, or interactions.

Planning for the future

People with low self-esteem may find themselves not setting or working towards their goals because they don't see the point.

You deserve to feel better - please seek help!



When to get help

- You have a hard time making your own decisions.
- When making decisions, you focus on pleasing others rather than yourself.
- You often feel depressed, lonely, or worthless.
- You have a tendency to become involved in unhealthy relationships.
- You often find yourself doing things you're uncomfortable with in order to keep your relationships with others.



Self-Help

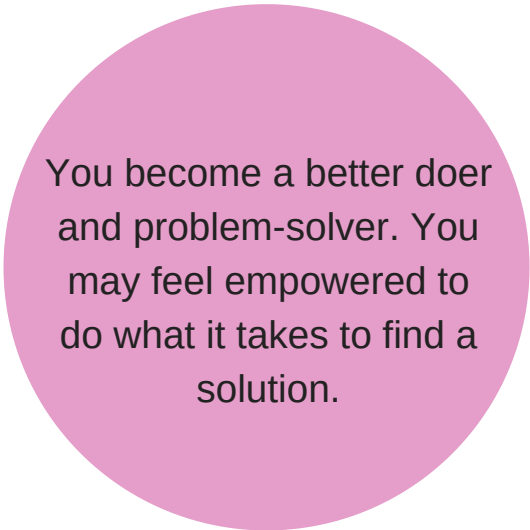
- Make sure you're eating well and getting regular exercise.
- Try to sleep 7-9 hours each night.
- Spend time doing activities you enjoy.
- Try not to focus on other people's achievements - unfollow people on social media if you need to.
- Make time to visit your friends instead of isolating yourself.



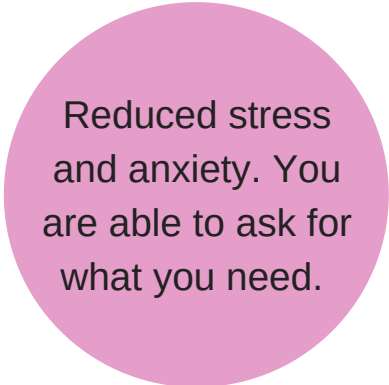
What is Assertiveness?

Being assertive means being upfront about what you want and need, while still considering the rights, wants, and needs of others. It allows you to get your point across firmly, fairly, and with empathy.

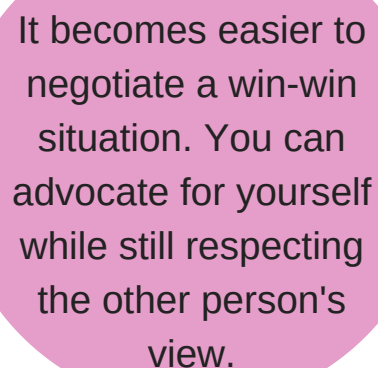
What are the benefits of being assertive?



You become a better doer and problem-solver. You may feel empowered to do what it takes to find a solution.



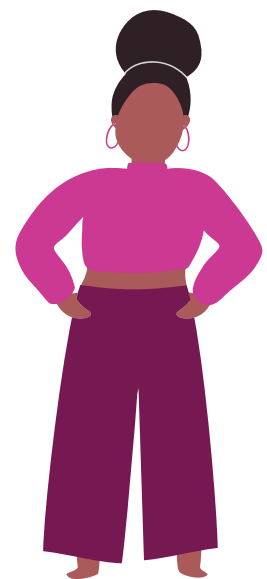
Reduced stress and anxiety. You are able to ask for what you need.



It becomes easier to negotiate a win-win situation. You can advocate for yourself while still respecting the other person's view.

What can I do to become assertive?

- Understand and value your rights. You have a right to be heard, to be treated well, and to be respected.
- Voice your needs and wants confidently. Don't wait for someone else to recognize what you need.
- Learn to say no.
- Acknowledge that you can't control other people's behaviour.
- Be open to compliments and criticism.
- Express yourself while still being respectful of others.



Communicating Assertively

If you have a hard time asking for what you need or communicating in a way that doesn't put everyone else before yourself, the following communication skills may help you.

Use clear and confident phrases.

"I think"  "I know"

"I'd kind of like"  "I need"

Use 'I' statements instead of speaking through someone else or making accusations.

"You're mad at me"  "I feel like you're upset with me, is that true?"

Know that it's perfectly okay to ask for more time when you need it.

"I'm not able to visit you this week - would next weekend work?"

Remember to express empathy.

"I understand you're stressed."

"It sounds like you're overwhelmed."

Know when to escalate.

"I'd mentioned earlier that it would be good to get this done. Can you finish by Friday please?"

Becoming Assertive

What is assertiveness?

Being assertive means being upfront about what you want and need, while still considering the rights, wants, and needs of others. It allows you to get your point across firmly, fairly, and with empathy.

What are some benefits of being assertive?

- It becomes easier to negotiate a win-win situation. You can advocate for yourself while still respecting the other person's view.
- Reduces stress and anxiety. You are able to ask for what you need.

How do I develop assertiveness?

- Understand and value your rights
- Voice your needs and wants confidently - don't wait for someone else to recognize what you need.
- Know that you can't control other people's actions
- Express yourself respectfully
- Be open to compliments and criticism
- Learn to say no
- Gain some communication techniques.
- Become more clear by using phrases like 'I need' instead of 'I'd kind of like', or 'I know' instead of 'I think'.
- Know when to escalate. For example, if someone hasn't responded to your request, follow up with a stronger request or discussion.
- Use 'I' statements such as "I feel" or "I noticed"
- Remember to express empathy ("I understand you're stressed," "I hear that you're overwhelmed.")



Becoming Assertive

Read the following scenarios and write how you could respond below, so that if you ever find yourself in a similar situation, you might feel more prepared to answer assertively.

A stranger touches you inappropriately, laughing.

Your best friend gets drunk and tries to make out with you. You don't want to.

You and your partner are about to have sex. You ask them if they have protection and they say no. They want to keep going, you don't want to without protection.

You've been dating someone for a while and want to know if they've been tested for STI's, because you think the two of you may become sexually involved soon.

You've been with the same partner for 2 years, and they try to initiate sex but you just aren't feeling it today.

A friend makes a light-hearted comment about how many sex partners you've had, and this makes you feel uncomfortable and a little hurt.

Resources

On Campus

Student Counselling Centre*

474 UMSU University Centre
204-474-7558

Offers individual counselling, groups, and workshops.

<http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/counselling-resources-students>

Healthy U*

474 UMSU University Centre

Talk to a peer health and wellness volunteer about self-esteem and assertiveness.

Follow our social media accounts to learn about outreach events and resources.

Check out our Facebook for hours

<https://www.facebook.com/healthyumanitoba>

The Body Project*

Peer-led group sessions on campus for female-identifying students to improve body image. Visit <http://umanitoba.ca/student/health-wellness/body-project.html> to register.

Off Campus

Klinic

167 Sherbrook Street

204-784-4090

<http://klinik.mb.ca/>

*There are no in-person services at the University of Manitoba currently.
Check the relevant websites for remote services and updates.

Assertive Communication Worksheet for Improved Relationships & Self-Esteem

Summary

Assertive communication is the ability to express your opinions in an open, honest, and direct way. It allows us to take responsibility for ourselves without judging or blaming others. Communicating assertively means expressing your ideas in a civilized way without being too aggressive or too passive.

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
too nice, weak	firm but polite	mean, harsh, sarcastic
overly compliant, gives in when conflict arises	compromise	take
avoids eye contact	warm, friendly eye contact	glaring eye contact
speaks softly	conversational tone	speaks loudly, threatening tones
puts down self	builds up others and self	puts others down
emotionally dishonest	appropriately honest	inappropriately honest
allows others to walk all over you, bullied	stands up for self	walk all over others, bullies

Record instances where you've communicated assertively and list the emotions you felt afterwards.

1. _____

Emotions: _____

2. _____

Emotions: _____

3. _____

Emotions: _____