



Guide to Self-Esteem and Assertiveness

What's inside

What is self-esteem?

What causes poor self-esteem?

Self-care

What is assertiveness and why is it important?

Communicating assertively

Resources

This package was created by the Healthy U program at the University of Manitoba. Healthy U is a UM student group made up of a team of friendly volunteers who are trained student health educators.

We provide students with validated health information through our health packages and outreach events, online resources, and one-on-one support. Health topics that we provide resources on include mental health, sexual health, physical health, substance use, social and cultural wellness, and finding a balance.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions at:
healthyu@umanitoba.ca

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.



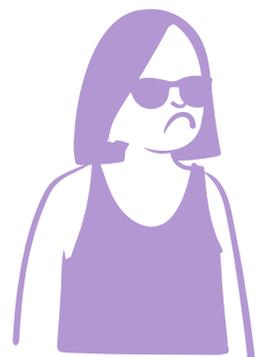
Poor vs. Healthy Self-Esteem

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

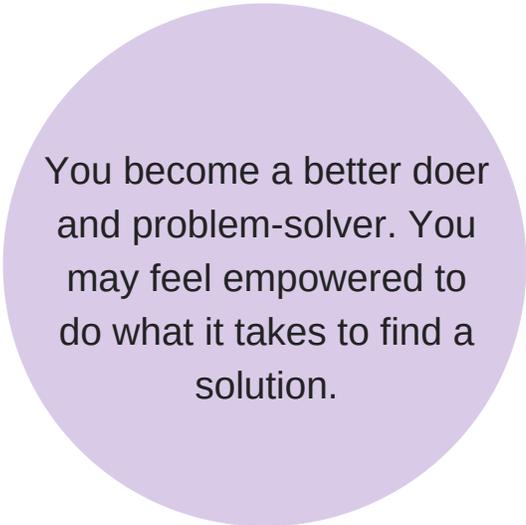
- Make sure you're eating well and getting regular exercise.
- Try to sleep 7-9 hours each night.
- Spend time doing activities you enjoy.
- Try not to focus on other people's achievements - unfollow people on social media if you need to.
- Make time to visit your friends instead of isolating yourself.



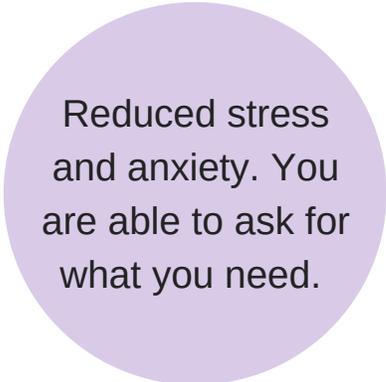
What is Assertiveness?

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.

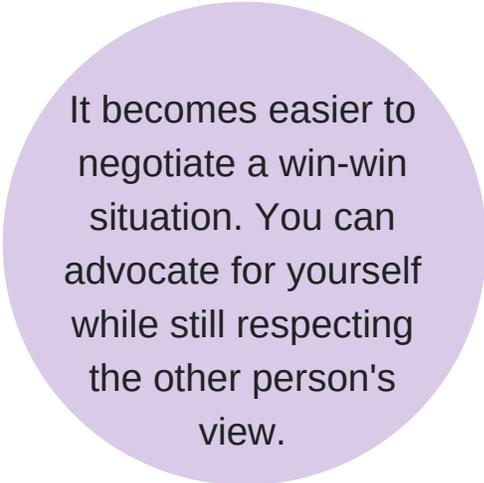
What are the benefits of being assertive?



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



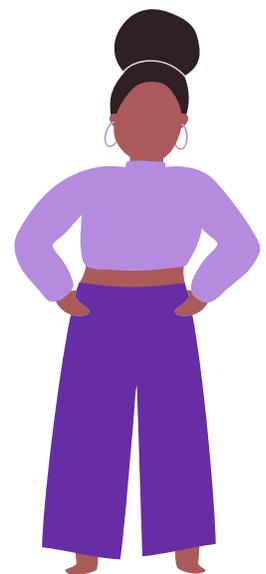
Reduced stress and anxiety. You are able to ask for what you need.



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.

UM Resources

Self-Esteem and Assertiveness

Student Counselling Centre (SCC)

The SCC provides students with supports for their mental wellness. The offer offers individual counselling, workshops, and groups.

474 UMSU University Centre

204 474-8592

<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/student-health-and-wellness/student-counselling-centre-scc>

Health and Wellness

The Health and Wellness Educator is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse and available to talk about health and wellness topics.

469 UMSU University Centre (within the SCC)

204-295-9032

healthandwellness@umanitoba.ca

<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/health-wellness>

Console

Console is a mental health service available to UM students who have insurance through the university. Console offers 24-hour crisis support, daily journal, wellness assessment quizzes, mental health literacy training, and self-guided therapy. Console also connects students with mental health professional support VIA telephone.

https://studentcare.ca/rte/en/IHaveAPlan_UniversityofManitoba_Console_Console

Indigenous Student Centre (ISC)

The Indigenous Student Centre welcomes and supports Indigenous students and offers programming for students at any level of study, including Indigenous leadership development. They also provide opportunities for students, staff and the wider community to learn about First Nations, Inuit and Métis culture.

Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge

isc@umanitoba.ca

204-474-8850

<https://umanitoba.ca/indigenous/student-experience>

Healthy U

Healthy U provides students with health and wellness resources.

healthyuofm@umanitoba.ca

<https://www.healthyuofm.com/>

Sexual Violence Resource Centre (SVRC)

Provides support, resources, information and referral services for any student, faculty or staff member who has been affected by sexual violence

537 UMSU University Centre

svrc@umanitoba.ca

204-474-6562

<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/sexual-violence-support-and-education>

Resources

Self-Esteem and Assertiveness

Winnipeg and Manitoba

Klinik

167 Sherbrook Street

General line: (204) 784-4090

Crisis line: 204-786-8686

klinik@klinik.mb.ca

klinik.mb.ca

YMCA-YWCA Winnipeg: Mental Health Services

The YMCA-YWCA offers courses and workshops throughout the year including courses in building self-esteem and communication.

Registration Line: 204-989-5890 / 204-989-4194

<http://www.ywinnipeg.ca/programs/health-management/mental-health-services/>

Online

Mayo Clinic

[https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/self-esteem/art-](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/self-esteem/art-20047976#:~:text=Self%2Desteem%20is%20your%20overall,on%20your%20opinions%20and%20ideas.)

[20047976#:~:text=Self%2Desteem%20is%20your%20overall,on%20your%20opinions%20and%20ideas.](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/self-esteem/art-20047976#:~:text=Self%2Desteem%20is%20your%20overall,on%20your%20opinions%20and%20ideas.)

Centre for Clinical Interventions

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Assertiveness>

The Self Compassion App

A toolkit for managing the ups and downs of life. Increase your confidence, be kinder to yourself, reduce feelings of shame and low self-esteem, and develop your relationships.

<https://balancedminds.com/the-self-compassion-app/>

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: _____