

Not being a victim

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To identify how a situation might be avoided
- To understand how to be assertive without being aggressive
- To recognise assertive body language
- To practise assertive behaviour



RESOURCES

- Video equipment and short clip(s) taken from a current TV soap at a point where conflict is taking place; or a range of action photos from TV soaps (Engage activity)
- Copies of Resources 1–3 and 5
- Speech-bubble cards prepared from Resource 4
- Body-language cards prepared from Resource 6
- Pictures of people showing different kinds of body language (Activity 4)

RELATED THEMES

Home security (pages 301–308)

HEALTH SKILLS

A person's mental state can affect the way they cope with situations. Anyone can feel vulnerable or suffer victimisation in certain social situations or at certain points in their lives – if they are experiencing low self-esteem or suffering from depression, for example. Vulnerable people may misread or misunderstand social situations, lack assertiveness or confidence, or be taken in by unscrupulous people. It is important for everyone to understand that there are times when you must say no.

Related health information

Local Crime Prevention office and staff

SKILLS FOR LIFE

Learners are likely to have had experience of coping or not coping in certain social situations. Human relationships and emotions can be complex and people need to react or adapt to different circumstances. In order to be assertive rather than compliant, learners need to:

- understand how to be assertive without being confrontational
- read other people's body language and use appropriate body language with others
- think about the consequences of their actions.

Core curriculum

Activities in this theme will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- read messages given by body language (L Rt/L1.3)
- express thoughts and feelings in a way that suits the situation (L SLc/L1.1)
- use body language to convey messages (L SLlr/L1.3).

- Discuss everyday situations where people may feel vulnerable, for example being in an interview or walking past a group of strangers in the street.
- Discuss the terms 'assertive' and 'aggressive' and the difference in meaning (though assertive behaviour can be aggressive in its extreme form). Ask learners to think of examples of aggressive behaviour from their own experience or knowledge, such as being shouted at by other drivers.
- Play one or more video clips from television soaps or programmes that show examples of awkward moments, confrontation or victimisation. Pause the video clip at a suitable moment and ask learners to predict what they think will happen next.
- If learners struggle to predict the situation:
 - give any information that helps them follow the 'story' at that point
 - give them alternatives to choose from.
- Ask learners to discuss the posture, gesture and facial expression used by the actors or people involved. If it is clear, ask learners what they think the person is feeling and why they think so.

What sort of situations can make people feel uncomfortable or anxious?

What is the difference between being assertive and being aggressive?

How do you know what people are feeling?

How assertive are you?

ACTIVITY 1

Complete a multiple-choice quiz to test assertiveness

- Give learners the multiple-choice quiz on Resource 1 and invite them to try it. Explain that this is to find out how they react to difficult situations.
- Make sure learners know how to mark their answers, then give them the feedback sheet (Resource 2). Go through the first question with them, showing how the answers relate to it.
- When discussing answers to the quiz, be aware that learners' responses may depend on cultural attitudes. For example (question 6), in some cultures looking at the floor or above the head and not making eye contact is a sign of respect to an older person or one with authority and would be the correct answer, while in others such behaviour might be interpreted as shifty or uninterested. When handling responses to such culturally sensitive questions, allow time to discuss perceptions of each of the three options in the UK.

Support

Go through each situation and the choices with learners and encourage them to take their time to answer honestly.

ESOL

- Go through the quiz items with learners, helping them with words and expressions they don't know, for example 'threaten someone', 'upset someone', 'calm down', 'fall out with someone'.
- Alternatively, ask learners to try out the questionnaire in pairs, where possible pairing them with native English speakers who can support them in understanding the situations.
- Encourage learners to record the expressions in their personal glossaries along with sample sentences to show how the expression is used.

ACTIVITY 2

Use a storyboard to consider solutions to problems

- Hand out Resources 3A and 3B and discuss the situation and the problem for the seated man, Dave, picking up clues from the speech- and thought-bubbles. Point out the mistake that Dave made (giving information away too soon to a relative stranger).
- Give learners the cards from Resource 4 and ask them, in groups, to think about the possible responses that could complete frame 6. Get confident volunteer readers to read through the responses so that the rest of the group can hear them.
- Encourage the groups to discuss these responses and to choose one or more that they think would help Dave out of the situation without causing trouble. They should be prepared to explain their choices. They may prefer to add their own response in the empty speech-bubble.
- Invite a spokesperson from each group to explain the group's choices and reasoning to the whole group.

Support

- Ask learners direct questions about the situation, such as 'Does that mean he can stay or he can't stay?'
- Encourage them to test out the responses on each other to hear how they sound.

ESOL

- Discuss the meanings of the idioms on Resource 3, for example 'sleeping rough', 'down on my luck', 'skint', 'get by', 'crash at yours' and 'dead hungry'.
- Focus on the body language in the pictures and what it means. Draw out similarities and differences in how it would be interpreted in a UK cultural context and in the learners' own cultures. Ask learners to comment on the men's posture, eye contact, facial expressions, the gestures, and the amount of distance they keep between each other.

What can you do or say to look more assertive?

TIP

Repeat the assertive phrases clearly and calmly to help learners understand that pace and volume of language are important.

ACTIVITY 3

Encourage learners to experiment with body language

- Discuss the information on Resource 5 with the learners, relating it to the pictures of the men. Encourage pairs of learners or groups of three to copy and discuss the body language shown in the pictures. Encourage learners to talk about whether they feel comfortable or uncomfortable when people stand close to them. (This tends to be culturally based.)
- Ask learners questions about how the body language makes them feel. Write as many of their comments as possible on the board. (They can take turns in trying out the positions.)
- Ask learners to discuss how the seated man, Dave, could change his position / body language to help him look or feel more assertive / in control.
- If possible, learners should try this out with one of their chosen responses from Resource 4 to see if it feels more assertive.

What's it like looking down on someone when you speak?

Support

Let learners use the body-language cards from Resource 6 to give them ideas for the small-group discussion. They can try these out as before.

ESOL

- Discuss what body-language gestures indicate that someone is in control in the learners' cultures. Draw out similarities and differences in the body language in the picture.
- Ask learners to share experiences where they have misinterpreted someone's body language or their body language has been misinterpreted.

ACTIVITY 4

Explore the topic further

- Work individually, in pairs or small groups, on one or more of the following activities. Differentiation in levels is suggested for general guidance only.
- **Match it up** (less confident learners). Suggest that learners match the body-language cards from Resource 6 with some of the speech-bubbles on Resource 4. (Remind them that the speech comes from the man on the right – Dave.)
- **Play it out** (all learners). Learners can role-play the scene from Resource 3 with more assertive behaviour from Dave – using the 'rewind' technique to go back to any moments where they lost the assertiveness.
- **'He said, she said'** (more confident learners). Set up groups. Give each group a mixture of photos from books, magazines, etc., and ask them to write speech-bubbles for the people in the pictures. Encourage them to use the body language to give them clues about what they think the people are saying.
- Invite groups to show their work and discuss it with the others.

Support

- Help learners to select the activity they can best cope with and get the most out of to do first.
- Learners might prefer to do only one activity rather than feel time-pressured to do them all.

ESOL

- As preparation for the role-play, learners will need support in planning what to say so that Dave sounds polite but assertive.
- Encourage learners to talk about cultural variation they have picked up on in order to enrich the final whole-group discussion.

How can body language help you to look more assertive?

How can words and body language work together?

What can you do to improve your assertiveness?

Action

- Suggest that learners observe behaviour during the week and make a note of any assertive behaviour they see, either on television or in real life.
- Suggest that learners also think about their own behaviour during the week, focusing on body language and vocabulary from the session. In what situations did they feel they wanted to be more assertive? What stopped them?

How assertive are you?

Tick one answer to each question.

- 1 If your friend borrowed money from you and did not give it back, would you:
 - a threaten to go to the police
 - b remind your friend that you are owed the money
 - c say nothing but remind yourself not to lend any to your friend again?

- 2 If you are discussing something with a person who has strong views which you do not agree with, do you:
 - a get into a fight with them or call them names
 - b calmly put forward your own point of view with reasons
 - c pretend to agree with them just to stop them getting angry?

- 3 If you fell out with your best friend or a close family member over something that was not your fault, would you:
 - a not speak to them until they apologised
 - b wait until you had both calmed down, then try to talk things through again
 - c apologise for upsetting them?

- 4 When you meet people for the first time, do you:
 - a ask questions to find out as much as you can about their background
 - b try to find a shared interest that you can talk about
 - c find it difficult to start any sort of conversation?

- 5 If a friend asked you to do something you think is wrong, would you:
 - a accuse your friend of trying to get you into trouble
 - b give a clear reason why you do not want to and will not do it
 - c do it anyway so as not to upset your friend?

- 6 When you speak to people face to face, do you mostly:
 - a stand very close to them
 - b make eye contact
 - c look at the floor or above their heads?

Add up how many a, b and c answers you had.

How assertive are you?

QUIZ ANSWERS

Mostly a

It is good that you can stand up for yourself, but you tend to be more aggressive than assertive in some situations. Perhaps you act first and then think later. This can lead to arguments, fights and bad feeling. You should try other ways to say what you think without causing offence to others.

Mostly b

You can stand up for yourself and say no or get your point across without getting into bad arguments or fights. This is because you are assertive and react to situations in a way that other people can respect.

Mostly c

You are thoughtful about other people's feelings, but you do not always stand up for yourself. If you continue to let people get away with things, they will see you as an easy target for getting what they want. Although you may feel this is the only way to get a quiet life, you have to put your foot down from time to time to save yourself or rescue a situation in the long term.

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RESOURCE 3A

1



I could do with the company, and he looks OK.

2



3



I ought to help him, but I've only seen him once before. I don't know him.

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RESOURCE 3B

4



5



6



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RESOURCE 4

a

Sorry, mate. I can't help you. I'm not allowed to have people staying. The landlord's very hot on it.

b

Get lost mate. I don't want to speak to you any more, OK?

c

Well, as long as it's only for a couple of nights. I sort of can't have people staying too long. You know what I mean?

d

I'd like to help you, but I've been in this situation once or twice before and it hasn't worked out. I'm not going to do it again.

e

There's not much to eat in the flat and I haven't got any spare bed covers but you can kip on the settee for one night if you want.

f

Well, I'm not really sure. I think it might be better if you went to a hostel or something. But, you know, if you really can't find anywhere else, you could come back, maybe.

g

I know how you feel – I've been in your situation. There's a good hostel in town – they'll give you a room and food. I've got their phone number. Here you are. Give them a ring.

h

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RESOURCE 5

You can give messages to others without using any words at all.
Try it out!

In control

Head
Held upright.

Body posture
In a relaxed but upright position.

Eye contact
Looking straight at the other person.

Position
At a higher level than the other person.



Not in control

Head
Bowed.

Body posture
A closed body position with arm folded against the body and knees up.

Eye contact
Looking down to avoid making eye contact.

Position
At a lower level than the other person.



How can he make himself look more in control?

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RESOURCE 6

a



b



c



d



e



There are no audio scripts for this theme.

ACTIVITY 1 / RESOURCE 1

Feedback on Resource 2.

ACTIVITY 2 / Resource 4

Suggested choices of assertive responses: a, d and g.

ACTIVITY 3 / Resource 5

Suggested answer: the seated man (Dave) would look more assertive if he stood up to be on the same level and made eye contact with the other person.