

## ASSERTIVE MESSAGES

Three-part assertive messages look like: description of Behaviour + Emotion + Effect

**“When you** (describe behaviour), **I feel** (emotion), **because** (tangible effect this behaviour has on you personally)”

- 1) Describe behaviour – non-judgementally describe the behaviour that effects you; be specific and objective. Don't interpret their motives or attitude. Avoid character assassinations and absolute statements, (you always/ you never...). Aim to be brief and concise
- 2) State the emotion you feel relative to this behaviour. If you are unsure about the exact emotion, describe the sensations (ie. my stomach feels upset). Avoid judgement laden words, (ie. “I feel abused” implies that the other person is an abuser; instead try, “I feel hurt.”
- 3) State the effect this behaviour has on you Personally. Avoid speaking about how this affects a third party. Avoid imposing your values; if there is no effect on your physical or psychological space, then your assertion may just be a violation of their space.

When you make plans with me and then cancel at the last minute, I feel irritated because it is too late for me to make plans with other friends.

When you don't take accurate phone messages, I feel frustrated because I can't properly return my messages.

When you don't acknowledge our anniversary, I feel hurt because I imagine you don't love me.

While you are learning this skill, writing out the three-part message can often help you get clear about what you are really trying to say, and it will definitely help with your precision and objectivity.

## Submissive? Aggressive? Assertive?

Submissive	Aggressive	Assertive
Denies own importance	Overvalues own importance	Has balanced view of own importance
Inhibited	Expressive	Expressive
Decisions are made by others	Makes decisions for others	Makes decisions for self
Soft, hoarse voice	Loud, arrogant voice	Calm, articulate voice
<b>Uncertain message</b>	<b>YOU messages</b>	<b>I messages</b>
Blames self for the conflict	Blames others for the conflict	Blames no one for the conflict, seeks joint advantages
Apologises even when he/she is right	Expects others to give in even when they are right	Is aware that his/her request is right and expects it to be met
Avoids eyes	Staring into eyes	Friendly exchange
Defensive posture	Threatening posture	Easy-going posture